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How do the promoters of independent UK music festivals organise and implement events?

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Degree of

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London College of Music

University of West London

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Abstract

The promoters of music festivals form part of an under-researched and somewhat neglected topic in the academic literature. Focus on events has largely centred on the needs and motivations of audiences, and on the consumption of festivals within a participatory culture. The emphasis in music studies has also been concentrated on the recorded music industry, with the live sector often viewed as a secondary or less important area of study, despite the continued growth of the music festival industry. This thesis, therefore, redresses the balance in both these related areas, by exploring the practices and motivations of the behind-the-scenes promoters who organise and implement these social and cultural events. The thesis looks first at the structures of the contemporary music industry and the place of independent UK music festivals in the live music ecology. It then considers, through the phenomenological perspective of the promoters, how music festivals are organised through a web of social, economic and political relations and initiatives, and argues for the key role of the promoters in the production and distribution of these experiential goods. Finally, it considers the individual practices and motivations of the festival promoters as the mediators of physical and social spaces, and questions the effects of implementing events on their mental health and wellbeing.

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Abbreviations

Association of Independent Festivals (AIF)

British Phonographic Industry (BPI)

Higher Education Institution (HEI)

International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM)

Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)

Music Venue Trust (MVT)

Office for Students (OfS)

Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)

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Finally, a big thanks to Jo, Spike and Tex, and all my family. Festivals continue to play a significant (if somewhat unintended) part in all our lives.

Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of West London or any other institution.

Danny Hagan

August 2019

Chapter One: Introduction

Music festivals are conspicuous sites of production and consumption. As areas of economic growth, they have become a staple of social interaction and a significant driver in the music industries. Despite their importance, it is my assertion that the promoters of music festivals have largely been ignored or overlooked in the research and everyday discussion of these annual events. Following Webster (2011), those 'backstage' figures in the live music sector – namely, the promoters of live events – need to be acknowledged for their role in preserving what Frith et al. (2010) describe as the 'ecology' of live music. However, the term 'promoter' does not cover the extended range of the activities involved in promoting and producing these particular types of events. This is not a matter of scale, as many live events take place in arenas with audience capacities in the tens of thousands, but refers to the variety of tasks to be undertaken alongside the impermanence of the locations. The Killers' performance at the Macron Stadium (2018) can be 'promoted', but their appearance at the Latitude festival (2018) is 'organised'.[1] However, since no term adequately captures this distinction, 'promoter' is used here as synonymous with the work of the organiser or festival producer.

Academic research in this area has focused heavily on the recorded sector. However, initiatives such as the Live Music Exchange, which fosters links between academia and the music industries and which emerged from a three-

[1] The Latitude festival is part of the Live Nation portfolio of events but organised under the aegis of Festival Republic, illustrating the complex ownership arrangements of contemporary promotion companies.

year study of the live music sector, demonstrates a growing interest in the subject. However, even though new studies have highlighted the cultural value of live music (Behr, Brennan & Cloonan, 2014) while the UK Live Music Census 2017 (Webster, Brennan, Behr, Cloonan & Ansell, 2018) attempted to capture and support the sector, music festivals still remain largely outside the purview of this work. Indeed, while the work of the Music Venue Trust[2] and others has helped to push the dangers that the sector faces into the public consciousness, it is reasonable to view the growth in music festivals as being partly responsible for some of the problems in terms of diminished audiences and rising costs. As Webster's (2014) report for the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) details, festivals are popular avenues for new music discovery, removing the necessity of catching the support band at a local venue while the UK Live Music Census 2017 reports that 34% of the respondents were concerned about their impact (Webster et al., 2018: 63) on the rest of the live music sector. It is timely, therefore, to consider the work of the festival promoters within this critical context.

The shifting balance between the recorded and live music industries has also increased the need for a PhD-length exploration of festival promoters' activities. After a long period of decline and stagnation, the recorded sector appears to be entering a period of sustained growth. The British Phonographic Industry (BPI) reported a 10.6% rise in recorded music revenues in 2017, the fastest rate of growth since 1995 (BPI, 2018) and one

[2] Music Venue Trust is a UK Registered Charity which acts to protect, secure and improve UK Grassroots Music Venues for the benefit of venues, communities and upcoming artists (MVT, 2018).

driven by a 45% increase in streaming subscriptions. It is now several years since a series of annual PRS reports highlighted the growing economic strength of the live sector (Page & Carey, 2009, 2010, 2011)[3], noting the move toward investment in this sector and stressing the need for a critical understanding of the contemporary UK live music industry and the music festival sector. Anderton's (2019) overview of UK Music Festivals and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music's (IASPM, 2018) call for papers in June 2018 for a special issue of the journal highlights a continuing interest in the sector, however, there remains the possibility that this might prove to be the high-water mark of academic endeavour in the area, as no discrete field of live music studies exists as yet.

This thesis, therefore, examines the role of independent UK festival promoters and their position within the music industries. As the key figures in organising and promoting events, promoters' desire and ability to bear the risk inherent in their activities is a pivotal – yet rarely discussed – cog in the industrial machine of live music production. In order to explore their role in more detail, this thesis takes Negus' (1999) two-layered macro and micro model of the music industry and argues for the insertion of a meso level. The addition of the meso level allows for a broader examination of the web of social interactions in which festivals are constructed and a far more nuanced understanding of the multiple and dynamic relationships through which events are conceived, designed and produced. The insertion of this layer also adds

[3] Will Page's move in 2012 from Chief Economist for Music at PRS for Music to Director of Economics at Spotify (Jones, 2012) is a symbolic marker of the renewed strength of the recorded industry.

greater individuality and distinctiveness to the micro study of the organisers as individuals whose own personal value systems determine their attitudes to the overarching balance of risk and reward.

The willingness of the promoters to initiate events or maintain their practices over extended periods of time plays a vital role in the sustainability of a healthy music ecology. With a growing recorded music sector that now sees the delivery of music on demand, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the role of music festivals still plays a vital part in the discovery and development of new music. Given a backdrop of corporate expansion in the festival sector, continuing logistical burdens, and rapid changes in patterns of consumption, promoters' roles as cultural producers, social facilitators and individual actors are in need of critical examination. This thesis then considers the short-term and long-term effects of planning, organising and implementing events on the mental health and wellbeing of the festival promoters and discusses the personal and unsaid harm that can accrue beneath the economic and social imperative that always demands 'the show must go on'.

Aim and approach

The aim of this thesis is to explore the practices of independent UK music festival promoters. Focusing on the experiences and motivations of festival organisers, it examines the underlying music industry structures within which events take place and consider festivals as particular cultural goods or services. This is approached in three ways:

1) A study of the UK music industries, including both the recorded and live sectors and the place of music festivals in the development of this industrial ecology;

2) An ethnographic exploration of the practices of the music festival promoters in organising events by drawing on human, social and economic resources;

3) An ethnographic consideration of the influence of the promoters' individual characteristics in implementing events and the potential effects on them as producers.

The parameters within which these discussions are framed begins with a definition of music festivals and then considers changes in the music industries over the course of this study. The chapter will then detail the structure of the thesis and provide an overview of the following chapters.

Defining music festivals

This thesis is cross-disciplinary although is grounded in the field – or sub-field – of Festival Studies. Festivals are cultural celebrations (Berridge, 2011b) characterised by the level of audience participation while music festivals can be seen as annual events that predominantly programme music (Webster & McKay, 2016). Music festivals can also be understood as particular types of live music experiences that take place outside those venues comprising the live music network and which the Live Music Forum (2007) has listed as ranging from back rooms in pubs through to large arenas such as Wembley Stadium. Webster & McKay's (2016) study of the impact of British festivals demonstrates the breadth and variety of the UK music festival sector, ranging from the promotion of opera at Glyndebourne to the popular music attractions of the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts. The report also highlights the significant growth in the UK music festival sector, which doubled in size between 2005 and 2011 and now comprises an estimated 500 outdoor festivals each year (Anderton, 2019).

In addition, the performance of live music has important social functions. As Frith (2007a) argues in *Live Music Matters*, 'The value of music (the reasons why people are prepared to pay money for it) remains centred in its live experience' (p.4) while the growth in the music festival sector is testament to that appeal. Furthermore, Behr, Brennan & Cloonan (2014)[4] set forth the need to consider the cultural value of live music, in an attempt to highlight the fragility of live music's ecology and to underline the need to support small to

[4] The authors also acknowledge the assistance of music industry stakeholders including UK Music, PRS for Music, and the Musicians Union.

medium independent venues under threat of closure, although music festivals continue to lie outside this more challenging narrative. Indeed, music festivals are more generally singled out for their positive economic impacts, with the umbrella organisation UK Music (2017b) estimating that the sector attracts over 3.9 million attendees each year with music festivals forming a central plank of a music tourism sector that sustains almost 40,000 full-time jobs. Hence, while the Live Music Forum (2007) caution that if one link on the live music chain is broken 'it endangers the fragile infrastructure that supports our successful live music industry (p.67), the place of music festivals in that chain is often viewed as an uncritically positive contributor to the ecology.

While a music festival can be self-defined and promoted as any collection of artists performing at a venue for any length of time, for the purposes of this thesis they will be considered more narrowly as organised activities that form part of the wider music industries. Issues, therefore, that affect the music festival sector – such as the homogeneity of festival line-ups and the gender imbalances of headline artists – are considered throughout this thesis.

Context of study

The UK Live Music Census 2017 took place over 24 hours from noon on Thursday, 9 March 2017 and focused on three primary snapshots, Glasgow, Newcastle-Gateshead and Oxford. Data was also captured in Brighton, Leeds and Southampton and later in Liverpool. An online survey was open from March until June. The census results show a number of concerns for the state of a live music industry struggling against a range of negative impacts. Focusing on the response of the promoters, 50% saw the main issues as

‘paying bands’, 42% highlighted ‘diminishing audiences’, while 38% cited the ‘competitive environment’ (Webster et al., 2018: 72). One of the respondents, Chris Cusack (Events/Venue Manager, BLOC+, Glasgow), explained one of the challenges facing independent promoters in a changing live music environment:

> There are a number of venues in the city now which are ostensibly small venues but are really just branches of much bigger companies that are putting on arena shows and that are using those small venues to do favours for booking agents who represent bigger acts (Webster et al., 2018: 87).

The activities of the ‘bigger companies’ are also affecting the UK music festival sector’s competitive environment. An Association of Independent Festivals press release in August 2017 urged the Competition and Markets Authority ‘to further investigate Live Nation’s increasing dominance of the UK’s live music sector’. The press release underlines not only Live Nation’s share of the total capacity of UK music festivals, which currently stands at around 23%, but also the practice of vertical integration ‘from venue and festival ownership, through to control of ticketing with Ticketmaster, ownership of two of the “big four” secondary ticketing sites and security and management businesses’ (AIF, 2017b).

Alongside corporate expansion, there are three main interrelated concerns which raise doubts over the future of the independent music festival sector, namely, health and safety of attendees, secondary ticketing and general economic uncertainty. The first issue, following the November 2015 assault on the Bataclan, Paris, the Ariana Grande concert in Manchester in 2017 and the

Route 91 Harvest music festival in Las Vegas, Nevada, highlights the risks to the sector from general concerns around health and safety and the specific threat of terrorist attack. While there is of yet no data to suggest that these concerns have affected live music audiences, fears of terrorism have been identified as a factor in a fall in museum attendance in 2015-16 (Ellis-Petersen, 2017a) and, even though these fears naturally affect all promoters, the cost of implementing any extra measures to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of festival attendees will have a proportionally greater impact on smaller events. Moreover, the recent publicity surrounding the ongoing risks of harm to attendees associated with drug taking and bad weather has highlighted perception that the 'boom in small festivals' has placed audiences at greater risk due to 'poor health and safety measures' (Slawson, 2018). Although there was little to back up the headline claims, independent promoters are evidently easy targets for blame's apportioning.

The second issue is around secondary ticketing, the process whereby concert and festival tickets are re-sold at a higher price than their original face-value. The independent review into online secondary ticketing facilities led by Professor Michael Waterson (2016) saw a tightening of consumer protection measures in the Digital Economy Act 2017 (UK Government, 2017) but no move towards new legislation. Efforts to highlight the issue around the Ed Sheeran tour by the promoters Kilimanjaro (Snapes, 2018) have helped to raise public consciousness of the issue, but it remains to be seen if these actions gain universal approval, with the targeting of fans reminiscent of the legal challenges to individual music downloaders in the early 2000s and the subsequent negative publicity that this engendered. Thirdly, and perhaps of

most concern, is the general economic uncertainty following the UK's decision to leave the European Union. While the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (DCMS, 2018) has discussed the potential impacts on the creative industries and tourism – both key factors in the composition of the UK festivals market – the reports of promoters giving away free tickets to high-profile concerts by Taylor Swift and the Rolling Stones (Unger, 2018) and the poor sales for Lorde's US tour (Snapes, 2018) are possible harbingers of present and future dangers.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is set out in the twelve chapters that follow. Chapter Two reviews the body of existing knowledge and outlines the dissertation's theoretical framework. Chapter Three details the methods used and the justification for the data collection and analysis. Chapters Four to Twelve present the empirical findings in three parts, while Chapter Thirteen discusses the main findings and makes recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two therefore sets out to understand what is already known about the promotion of independent music festivals. It considers the question in three ways: what are the discourses within Festival Studies; how are music festivals situated in the structures of the music industries; and what is already known about the practices of festival promoters. The literature review argues that the work of festival promoters is little understood and that a PhD-length examination is both timely and appropriate.

Chapter Three outlines and justifies the methodological approach used. To explore the practices of independent UK music festival promoters, a study of the structures underpinning the music industries was required in order to ascertain the particular workings of the UK music festival sector and the effective operation of the independent segment within that grouping. It was then necessary to understand the organisation of the elements that comprise the conception and staging of a music festival, which involve a web of social interactions and communications in a wide array of networked and physical settings. The phenomenological experiences that point to the skills and personal motivations of the promoters is captured in a series of interviews that allow for contrasts and commonalities to be explored and understood.

The empirical research is then presented in three sections. Part One focuses on the structures of the music industries and is divided as follows:
Chapter Four argues that the recorded music industry relies on the creation and exploitation of copyrights and is therefore subject to policy initiatives informed by a neoliberal doctrine based on deregulation and individualism. The control of circulation central to that business model is not therefore sufficiently regulated, especially when the enforcement of such a policy is considered to be detrimental to the activities of the global technology corporations. Chapter Five then examines the live music industry and the effects of the concentration of ownership of the different factors of live music production. It argues that live music's ecology is at risk, especially regarding venues operating at the grass roots level. Chapter Six focuses on the music festival sector and explores how ideologies of the good life and countercultural expression often underpin these social events. It argues that

the growth in the sector has been driven by the independent sector and that promoters tend to act within the industry's structural confines.

Part Two is focused on the organisation of the social and physical elements that comprise the music festival and is divided into three chapters: Chapter Seven examines how the growth in the music festival sector has been facilitated by the assistance of a variety of stakeholders while promoters are responsible for distributing these cultural goods within the marketplace. Chapter Eight further argues that promoters are cultural intermediaries who leverage their position as creative brokers to bring given projects to fruition. This involves the organisation and management of a web of social and communal relationships. Chapter Nine then explores the promoters' understanding and manipulation of the cultural signs and symbols upon which festivals are commodified and examines the relationship between festival producer and consumer.

Part Three examines the implementation of music festivals with regards to the skills and motivations of the individual promoters. It is again divided into three chapters: Chapter Ten examines the personal experiences of the promoters and outlines parallels with the recorded industry in the way that roles and responsibilities add value to live music events. Chapter Eleven argues that promoters undertake the position of mediator between artist and performance, and between audiences and space. It further considers the extent to which these actions can be seen as curatorial. Chapter Twelve examines the operation of taste and how the performance of creative labour affects the

mental health and wellbeing of the promoters, including from initiation to the sustainability of music festivals in a competitive marketplace.

Chapter Thirteen, then, draws the main findings together and considers the aims and methodological approach used. The main findings are discussed to determine what has been ascertained about the structures of the music industries and the practices of independent UK music festival promoters, and recommendations for future research are made.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

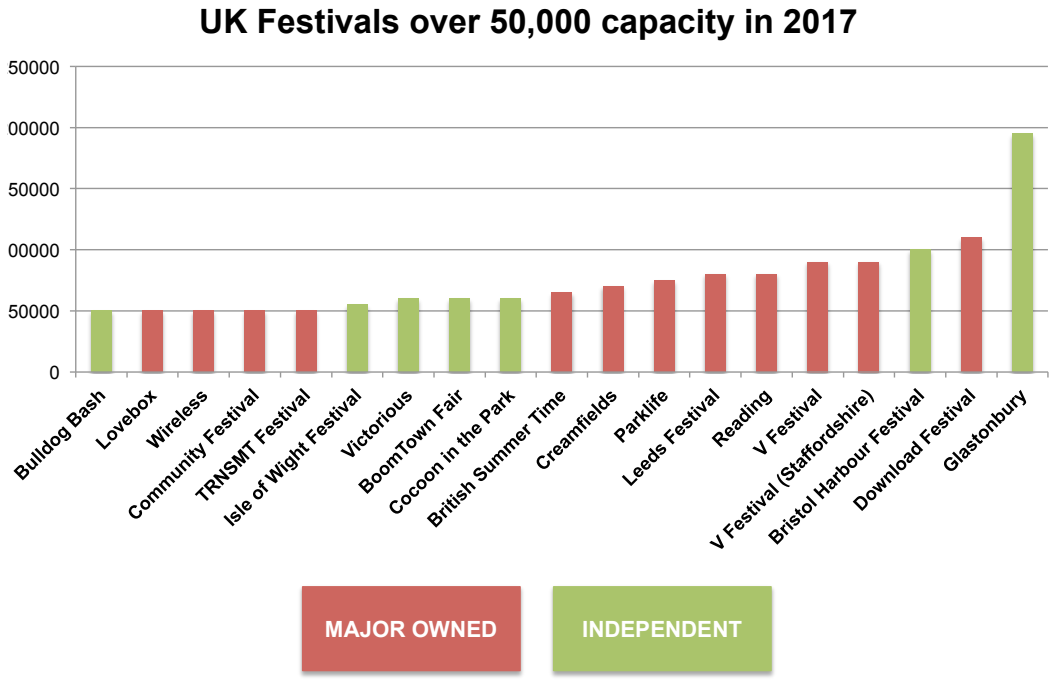
This literature review sets out to understand what is already known about the promotion of independent music festivals. The latter are sites of complex matrices of production and consumption, policy and economy, society and the self while the multidisciplinarity of these issues means that different scholars can 'focus on the same area of study but remain strictly within their various disciplinary boundaries' (Grix, 2010: 98). This thesis, however, which is situated within the field or sub-field of Festival Studies, takes an interdisciplinary approach and draws insights from more than one discipline (Lyall et al, 2011: 17), including Cultural Studies, Political Economy and Social Anthropology. This breadth is reflected in a literature review that is divided into three interlocking and interweaving sections. Firstly, the literature examines the organisation of music festivals within the field of festival studies, which Getz (2010) identifies as comprised of three discourses: Event Tourism, Event Management and Classical. Secondly, the literature review considers the organisation of music festivals drawing on Peterson's (1976) concept of a production of culture perspective, Becker's (1982) notion of 'art worlds' and Bourdieu's (1984) identification of the role of cultural intermediaries. It then asks how music festivals are situated in the music industries' structures and how they have been shaped by neoliberal policies (Harvey, 2005) as elements of the creative and cultural Industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Thirdly, the review examines what is already known about the practices of

promoters (Webster, 2011; Cloonan, 2013) as a distinct aspect of live music's ecology (Frith et al., 2010).

Festivals may be defined in many ways. As historical sites of ritual and worship and as a time of carnival (Bakhtin,1984), festivals can be placed within most societies at almost all times. They vary according to factors such as size, location and purpose while being particularly difficult to categorize. However, for the purposes of this study, and adopting a definition from Webster & McKay's (2016) large-scale literature review, they are seen as annual events which predominantly programme music. Defining 'independent', however, is difficult. Fonarow's (2006) in-depth study of the British independent music scene proposes 'a set of principles' (p.25) and an ethos and aesthetic judgement that embodies notions of self-expression and self-control. While that indeed captures and embodies many of the events that populate the sector, it does not cover the myriad festivals that are classified as independent by the simple of virtue not being identified as corporate.

A more useful heuristic is to follow Fonarow's (2006) identification of independent for the recorded sector as 'a type of musical production affiliated with small independent record labels with a distinctive mode of independent distribution' (p.26). For the live music sector, this equates to the type of event owned or controlled by individuals or organisations that would entitle them to become members of the non-profit trade association, the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF). This means that a festival is considered independent provided that the owners do not control more than '5% of the global market share of the live music industry' (AIF, 2016). The live music

sector supports over 25,000 full time jobs, over 13,000 of which are estimated to be engaged in music festivals (UK Music, 2016) while the AIF calculates that UK festivals with a capacity of 5,000 attendees or more have a combined audience capacity of 3,911,494. Of this total, approx. 75% is owned or controlled by those deemed to be independent (AIF, 2017a) (see Fig. 1).



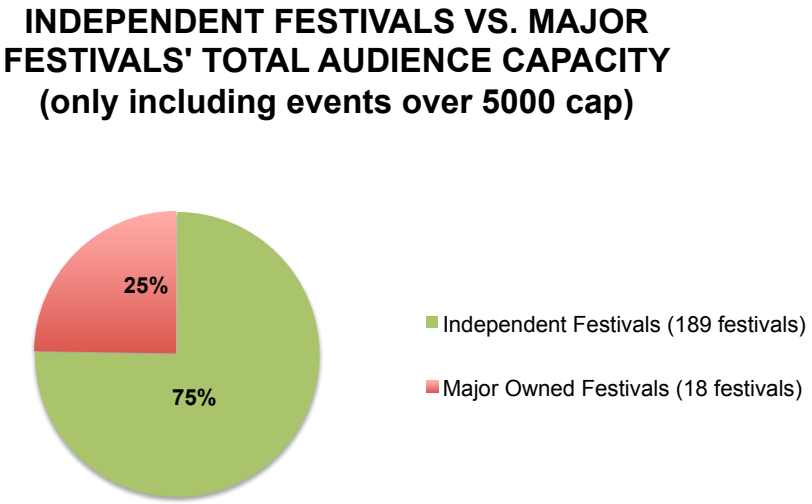


Figure 2-1: Independent Festivals vs. Major Festivals' Audience Capacity
Source: AIF, Festival Research, 2017.

Practices and discourses within Festival Studies

The wider events industry has been characterised by a period of continuing growth and proliferation, contributing an estimated £42.3bn to the UK national economy in 2015 (BVEP, 2015). Consisting of a range of activities such as sporting, music and business events, corporate hospitality, exhibition and trade fairs, the events industry is marked by both complexity and heterogeneity. With their longer-term importance recognised, from global events such as the Olympic Games through to local, national and international business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) exhibitions and trade fairs, the study of these phenomena has developed into the field of Event Studies. This field shares many of the foundation characteristics with the more established area of Leisure Studies, but is distinguished by a greater focus on planned event experiences and the meanings attached to them (Patterson & Getz, 2013). For this reason, the research emphasis in Event Studies differs from Leisure Studies by including, not only a view of events as a personal and social phenomenon based on audience motivation and needs (Gelder & Robinson, 2009), but also a wider consideration of the planning and management of events and event experiences (Berridge, 2011a).

Like Leisure Studies, the field of Event Studies can be viewed through a variety of disciplinary lenses, including Cultural Anthropology, Sociology and Geography. This has been developed largely through examining events within the area of Tourism Management, where the impacts of planned events on destination brand and image (Mackellar, 2014; Lai & Li, 2014), visitors' motivations in attending a cultural festival (Kim, Savinovic & Brown, 2013), and the importance of facilitating positive visitor experiences (Nordvall et al.,

2014), are all concerned with events as part of tourist attraction or business development. Other research concerns include the segmentation of target market audiences (Blešić et al., 2013), community development (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2013) and interrogating events for their effects on environmental behaviour (Mair, 2014). As this demonstrates, the topics covered here are extensive and far-reaching but offer little on the subject of festival organisers or promoters.

In order to delimit the growing body of literature in this area, Getz (2010) conducted a wide-scale literature review. Analysing 423 articles published in the English-language scholarly press, Getz discerned the emergence of three distinct discourses which he terms Event Tourism, Event Management and Classical. He sees the discourse of Event Tourism as largely instrumental in nature while it can be most easily distinguished by the way in which it addresses the issues around events' impacts. Event Management is the most recent discourse and is again largely instrumental in nature with much of the literature seen as a 'check-list' of management procedures, detailing the practical ways in which events are produced. Finally, the Classical discourse is concerned with research into anthropological and sociological themes, and centres on the meanings and roles that societies and cultures assign to festivals.

Event Tourism

With a focus on economic development (Dwyer & Jago, 2011) and place marketing (Tyrrell & Johnston, 2011), research in Event Tourism is mostly concerned with destination branding and the image formation of the spaces

and places where events take place (Getz & Page, 2016). It is therefore based around the competition for tourists in a globalised society of consumers. This is a particular feature of the growing interest in 'eventful cities' (Richards & Palmer, 2010; Richards, 2017), where events are analysed for their utility in raising international profiles (Pernecky, 2015), attracting a creative class (Florida, 2002, 2005), or as agents of urban regeneration (Pacione, 2011). However, Getz (2017) argues that it is now necessary to take a critical view of events as factors in tourism development, as 'strategists and policy makers struggle with an abundance of events and limited resources' (p.581) and to ensure that they remain a positive force for sustainability, both environmental and economic, in the areas where they take place.

In addition, the discourse of Event Tourism is useful in assessing music festivals in their given locations. Some of the early research in this area includes the Sheffield Hallam University (2008) report into the impact of the Isle of Wight festival, estimating economic activity at around £9-10m[5] and the *Economic Impact Assessment 2007* commissioned by Mendip District Council and Glastonbury Festivals Ltd, which calculated the economic impact of Glastonbury festival at around £73m (Baker Associates, 2007). As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, alongside these individual studies, UK Music now produces an annual report which aggregates the total economic impact of festivals in the UK. *Measuring Music 2018* (UK Music, 2018)

[5] Although the authors did note that: It is our view that the economic spin-offs that accrue for the Isle of Wight as a result of staging the Festival, although significant, are relatively unmanaged, with only one-quarter of the economic activity associated with the event sustained on the island (Sheffield Hallam University, 2008: 17).

estimates that out of the music industry's total contribution to the UK economy of £4.5 billion, live music concerts and festivals in 2017 generated around £1bn. However, it must be remembered that these reports are produced by an umbrella organisation which represents the interests of the UK music industry and questions remain over the methodology and ancillary items used in their accounting, as they include such disparate activities as travel and transportation. In addition, such aggregated figures obscure the economic realities of many festival promoters, where the margins between economic survival and failure are often very small indeed.

Event Management

Areas such as Health and Safety (Kemp & Hill, 2004), the role of the event manager (Conway, 2009) and, on a wider scale, operations and logistics (Tum, 2011), all form part of a move to professionalise and standardise the practice of Event Management. This move is further evidenced by the compilation of an Event Management Body of Knowledge (EMBOK) (Silvers et al., 2006), which offers 'a three dimensional description of the knowledge and skills essential to create, develop and deliver an event' and provides a customisable framework for those involved in event management (EMBOK, 2018). While a more holistic view of events sometimes sees them placed in a social, historical and developmental context (Shone & Parry, 2010; Bowdin et al., 2011), this is often a means to create a greater understanding of how the planning of events may be affected by their typology, their place in the supply chain, or by their position in the marketplace (Masterman & Wood, 2011).

Although research has been dominated by generic management concepts (Getz, 2010), recent developments in event design have focused on a more theoretical conception of planning and management. The design of events is a purposeful activity that ranges from the initial concept through to the ultimate delivery of the experience (Berridge, 2011a) and has developed from the areas of marketing based on a service-dominant logic (Rihova, 2014) where the consumer is seen as a co-creator of the value of a given product or service. The concept of an 'experience economy', posited by Harvard economists Pine & Gilmore (2011), has been highly influential on theories of event design. Building on the idea of symbolic consumption (Baudrillard,1988; Lash & Urry,1994), Pine & Gilmore argue that value creation resides in the addition of experiences to the consumption of those largely undifferentiated goods and festivals are often seen as typifying this economy. However, while Getz (2010) considers that there are four main elements that an event designer can plan and manage – namely, setting, theme, service provision and consumables – the ability to exercise control over these elements is somewhat overlooked. The actual practices of festival promoters as event designers and producers within an experience economy requires far more exploration.

Classical

The experience of attendees is both individual, unpredictable, and determined by their personal needs and motivations. As events are socially constructed, these experiences also involve an identification and association with the event as well as emotive and cognitive responses to the event stimuli (Ryan, 2011). They can be classified as the roles, meanings and impacts of events in society and culture, including notions of: identity formation and production (DeNora, 2000; Frith, 2007a); liminality and authorised transgression (Bakhtin, 1984; Sharpley & Stone, 2011); authenticity (Benjamin, 1999); subculture (Hebdige, 1979; Thornton, 1995; Redhead, 1997); communities (Tonnies, 1955) and social capital (Wilks, 2011; Putnam, 2000). However, while these factors influence consumers' experience of an event, their conception and delivery rely on the skills and knowledge of those involved in their organisation and implementation. Knowledge creation in this area remains under-researched and in order to gain insight into event experiences, it is necessary to ask, 'Who produces events and why?' (Getz, 2010).

While Festival Studies can be simplistically defined as the study of festivals within the context of Event Studies (Getz, 2010), music festivals can be seen as occupying a particular space within that field and their continued economic growth and impacts of these events (Webster & McKay, 2016) place an increasing focus on the working practices of festival promoters. In turn, promotion is subject to a range of barriers and constraints that have been little researched or understood, including: financial, such as funding and sponsorship (Andersson et al., 2013); political, including community cohesion (Van Winkle, Woosnam & Mohammed, 2013); and developmental (Whitford &

Ruhanen, 2013). Calls for an increase in the professionalization of event management (Stadler, Fullagar & Reid, 2014) is an acknowledgement that this growth has also raised the pressure on festival and event managers, who are operating in a highly competitive environment. While the current focus of research remains largely on the motivations and needs of attendees, there is a clear need to examine the practices and motivations of festival promoters.

Production of Culture Perspective

Like Event Studies, the development of the field of Cultural Studies experienced a similar emphasis on the activities of audiences and consumers. Moving away from the Leavisite notion of the Great Tradition, namely that culture was a quality that could be obtained by the absorption of a suitable canon of approved works of art, the focus in Cultural Studies turned to the effects of culture as a more or less political force that advanced, or maintained, existing social structures. Following a post-war turn towards social democracy, Richard Hoggart (1957), in *The Uses of Literacy*, his study of the working class milk bar scene of the 1950s, alongside Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, began to view culture as far more nuanced and resistant. Williams (1998), using a 'social' definition of culture as 'a way of life' (p.48) provides a way of approaching a study of the promoters of music festivals. Viewing culture as integral to everyday actions and practices, including those undertaken within the workplace, provides a lens through which all social activity can be seen as cultural. This is taken up later by Paul Du Gay (1997), combining the 'soft' elements of culture with the 'hard' economic base into the concept of a cultural economy, both in terms of the

way that cultural goods are produced and consumed, and how economic practices are infused with cultural ideas and meanings.

The young consumers in Dick Hebdige's (1979) classic study *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* are seen to be making their own combined culture, moulding a bricolage of self-selected objects and products into new forms, such as the punks who added safety pins to pictures of royalty or other symbols of the dominant class. Producers reacted to such practices by offering a far greater choice of products, whilst young people became increasingly less identifiable by their taste in music or clothes, or by their geographical location. Similarly, studies such as David Morley's (1980) *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*, which looked at the different ways that viewers consumed the same television programme, formed part of a new strand of Audience Studies. The focus turned towards the effects of media and mass communication with a growing belief in the ability of individuals to develop their own readings of the culture produced. In relation to Festival Studies, this audience-centric view manifested itself in the concept of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), where the links between producers and consumers are blurred and overlap, leading Roxy Robinson (2016) and others to identify boutique festivals as exemplars of co-creation. However, while no festival can possibly survive without its audience, this approach has argued misleadingly for the actions of the promoter as almost a function of audience participation and thereby a by-product of consumption rather than production.

Other Cultural Studies' strands continued to concentrate on the place of individuals and their necessary interaction with the dominant power

structures, which Antonio Gramsci (1985) described as a process of hegemony. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) also examined social groupings acting within these social structures, describing these processes as the operations of distinct fields in which individuals adopt strategies that enable them to advance their position or allow them to be reconciled to their status. These hierarchies are based on inherited forms of capital, whether cultural, social, political or symbolic, which in turn may be exchanged and formed into new combinations, thus enabling groups or individuals to follow trajectories within their fields. Much of this work now appears very dated, with Bourdieu linking the lifetime occupations of participants to their ability to express their taste in all areas, from food to the arts, which appears to have little bearing on a digital world of work where portfolio careers of short duration and displaced work spaces militate against any such rigid notions. However, his identification of 'cultural intermediaries', although somewhat denigrated by Bourdieu as those who have not made the most of their inherited capital, does offer a very useful way of distinguishing those whose work is primarily in the creative and cultural industries.

The notion of creative and cultural industries also links to the ways in which Cultural Studies began to concentrate on governmental policy regarding the regulation of cultural production and distribution. The move to a more entrepreneurial and deregulated economy, which Harvey (2005) terms the 'neoliberal turn' under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, was more or less continued under Tony Blair's New Labour party, with creativity seen as a key driver in a new knowledge-based economy (Flew, 2008). Following on from such studies as Charles Leadbeater's (1999) influential *Living On Thin Air*, a

new Department of Culture, Media and Sport was formed to promote the economic benefits of a policy that promoted networks of relationships where social capital would be the driver for economic capital. Moving far away from a view of culture as something that should be supported in order to 'better' the masses, these policy initiatives argued that by grouping economic activity in closely networked areas, a powerful driver of economic growth could be supported and nurtured. While the 'Cool Britannia' brand that emerged was at best a little awkward, the bricolage of Union Jack flags, the alternative Britpop music of Blur and Oasis and the 'Girl Power' of the Spice Girls, did provide a means of exporting UK music and creativity to an increasingly globalised audience, while music industry figures such as Creation Records' founder Alan McGee (2013) were invited to contribute to creative and cultural policy as part of the Creative Industries Task Force. However, Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011) highlight the risks of such a positive view of creative labour, which ignores the dangers of self-exploitation for workers within the creative industries.

In his identification of a mass-produced Cultural Industry, Theodor Adorno (1991) depicted popular music as a negative mix of cultural and industrial practices. The ability to mass produce a single piece of music and allow it to be repeated constantly without variation would, he believed, lead to a subsequent dulling of the consumer's responses. Offered with only what has been mass-produced, the consumer becomes conditioned to purchasing these standardised products and becomes not only less discerning in terms of the selection of music, but also in the ability to view any dominant power structure critically. As Keith Negus (1997) points out, it is necessary to

understand the context in which Adorno was writing and the ways in which the political dictatorships of his time sought to shape the mind-set of the population through the repetition of sounds and symbols.

During the 1970s, Richard Peterson conducted a longitudinal study into the purported effects of mass culture, viewing the arts as market systems. Peterson was keen to examine the apparent link between the concentration of organisations within the marketplace and the ways in which products may indeed become homogenised over time. In *Cycles in symbol production: The case of popular music*, Peterson & Berger (1975) researched the processes of popular music production through their structural organisations, noting the clear tendency for only a limited number of products to reach the marketplace. Interestingly, they note that there are periods where brief bursts of competition and creativity take place before the concentration or re-concentration of producers through mergers or the purchase of smaller, independent record companies takes place. This is a useful tool in an analysis of independent UK music festival promoters, where the period of growth and innovation appears now to be ending and a new cycle of corporate investment and takeover is emerging.

In order to test the hypothesis of ‘massification’ and increasing homogeneity, Peterson & Di Maggio (1975) studied the genre of Country music, both for its longevity as an art form and for the fact that it clearly preceded the industrialisation of music production. Moreover, Country music, with its evident symbolism of agrarianism and rural values, could be seen as far removed from the urban industrial centres and therefore less vulnerable to

homogeneity in its production. However, Peterson & Di Maggio took the view that the production of cultural goods could not be attributed merely to the record companies that took the decisions over which artists they wished to sign and which products they supplied to distributors, rather there were a series of other intermediate decision makers involved in determining what music could be heard or released. The researchers' evident distaste with the realisation that media outlets in the form of Country radio were powerful factors whose focus was on pleasing the advertisers who provided their income and not the delectation of their consumers, led Peterson & Di Maggio (1975) to unfairly denigrate the work of these cultural intermediaries. However, the understanding of cultural production as a social and human activity imbued with personal motivations and multiple meanings has moved the focus away from Adorno's reductive notion of an all-powerful oligarchy exercising mass manipulation and control.

In addition, Howard Becker's (1982) identification of the operation of 'art worlds' offers a similarly useful way to consider the organisation of music festivals. Here Becker examines the ways in which works of art are created socially and how this affects their production and consumption. Rather than viewing an art product as entirely constructed and completed by one individual in a romantic conception of unalloyed genius, Becker carefully analyses all of the stages of production, from the access to materials through to the modes of distribution. From this he deduces that each art work necessitates the forming of, or belonging to, a specific art world, made up of a network of cooperative links between participants. These art worlds are

constructed around conventions that make possible the communication of knowledge and the mobilizing of suitable resources.

While Becker dislikes the term ‘suppliers’ to distinguish the wide range of participants, it is a term which is in common use in festival organisation. Where Becker's work is useful here is in its ability to depict the various functions undertaken by the teams of generally unpaid volunteers who actively and creatively contribute to the finished product. When investigating the phenomenon of music festivals, it is easy to overlook the contribution of individuals, from the wristband distributor through to the litter pickers and how their creative labour is exploited in the production of the festival experience and used to address the economic challenges that festival organisers often face. The theory also offers a means to view festivals themselves as art works, thereby moving away from a more simplistic view of art centred only in the performance of music. This perspective also points to the need to interrogate the motivations and dispositions of festival organisers while determining their place in these socially-prescribed relationship networks as well as their understanding of their underlying conventions.

When Negus (1992) studied the structures employed in the production of pop music, he recognised that the basis for the industry was the ‘ideology’ of intellectual property. This means that a musical idea can be owned and compensation must be paid every time the idea is used and on this basis the multiple roles of A&R, pluggers, producers and the myriad music industry figures involved in production can be rewarded. This rather uncritical study takes little account of the consumption of music, but was useful in forming the

basis for Negus' (1999) later and more insightful study of the music industry *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*. This longitudinal study involved Negus employing Peterson's 'production of culture' perspective, which engaged employees across the hierarchical and organisational structures in a series of interviews. Negus sought to deduce not just the way that the music industry produces culture but also tried to determine the way in which culture produces the music industry. However, while this represented a step forward in the attempt to underline the importance of human agency in the formation of organisational cultures, the reality of individual social interactions and the effects of undertaking those situated actions is absent from Negus' studies.

Following Du Gay (1997) and the identification of a cultural economy whereby the 'authenticity' and 'beauty' of culture join with the instrumentalist and rational forces of the economic need for profit, Negus (1999) sees that the meaning and values that music industry employees hold are also at play within the workplace. Like Peterson & Di Maggio (1975), Negus too argues that no musical idea emerges fully formed and reaches the consumer in its pure, idealised version. Each step of the production process sees individuals and groupings shaping the music according to an informal web of human relationships and cultural values. Drawing on Bourdieu (1984), these individuals are seen as 'cultural intermediaries', using their knowledge and forms of social capital to add their own contribution to the final product.

The blind spot for studies in this area – and indeed the one of the most problematical issues for the music industry economy – was an over-reliance on the copyright system. Just as copyright had enabled the mechanical and industrial growth of the music industry, the appearance of the file-sharing

protocol Napster in 1999, which enabled users to exchange music files for free, thereby bypassing the music industry's existing distribution models, threatened to destroy the established business model (Alderman, 2001). Despite this disruptive technology, both large-scale studies and policy continued to focus on the creation, retention and exploitation of intellectual property (Hargreaves, 2011) in a swiftly changing digital landscape. Consequently, there was little attention paid to the growing economic importance of live music to the music industry sector.

Presciently, Frith & Marshall (2004) anticipated the likely long term demise of the copyright system given its unsustainable nature in the modern era, a demise which was also a potential barrier to economic growth. Moreover, Frith identified the increasing need to address the imbalance in the study of popular music, with its bias towards the importance of the recorded music sector. In 2002, when the regional governmental organisation Scottish Enterprise commissioned a report into the Scottish music industry (Williamson, Cloonan & Frith, 2003), it was calculated that the industry generated an annual revenue of approx. £106 million. Significantly, they determined that much of this income was generated through live music, particularly through the actions of large venues, established promoters and music festivals. Frith's (2007a) article 'Live Music Matters' further highlighted that the UK's live music sector had arrested its perceived long-term decline while Williamson & Cloonan (2007) led calls for a rethinking of the music industry as the 'music industries' in order to acknowledge the shifting balance between the live and recorded sectors.

These theoretical and economic developments led to the formation of the Live Music Exchange, which sought to facilitate the transfer of knowledge between academia and industry. In this vein, the AHRC-funded initiative *The History of Live Music in Britain* (Frith et al., 2013), the first of a three volume study, demonstrated a growing academic interest in the sector although as the title indicated, the work adopts a largely historical perspective. More recently, Behr, Brennan & Cloonan (2014) have produced a report which, although it takes an esoteric view of the value of live music and its ability to add to socialisation and a sense of community, still seeks to influence policy in this area. By emphasising the cultural value of live music, their research is able to supplement the economic data of the UK Music reports (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018), thereby drawing attention to the wider importance of supporting music venues as part of a healthy live music ecology (Frith et al., 2010), an approach foregrounded in Brennan et al.'s (2016) emphasis on the centrality of physical space to live concert performance. Furthermore, the UK Live Music Census 2017 (Webster et al., 2018) offers a useful snapshot of the broader live music ecology at work and highlights, among other dangers, the perceived negative impacts that music festivals pose to the network of live music venues.

Festival Promoters

While there is no separate typology for the festival promoter, Cloonan's (2013) delineation of three types of live music promoter can be applied to the sector. Cloonan argues that promoters can be characterised as:

> …enthusiasts who just put on acts they like (whether for profit or not), professionals who put on acts in order to make a living, and governmental who put on acts in order to fulfil certain government policies (p.79).

Beginning with the enthusiast who just puts acts on that they like, they will probably find the costs of staging a festival difficult to justify. The 'producer sacrifice', that gap between the producer's input and the perceived output satisfaction, will increase in line with the extra economic pressures and organisational burdens. Cloonan's 'professional' is therefore a far closer match with the independent festival promoter's practices and motivations, as music festivals take a considerable amount of time to plan and organise while being difficult to stage on a part-time or voluntary basis. In addition, Webster's (2011) ethnographic study of live music promoters in Glasgow, Sheffield and Bristol, provides valuable insight and builds a picture of a live music ecology. However, while there is some discussion of the work of festival promoters, this is usually devoted to large-scale organisations such as DF Concerts who are responsible for T in the Park and the TRNSMT urban festival in Glasgow. Governmental promotion, like the Manchester International Festival, normally forms part of an event tourism strategy (Getz & Page, 2016), so there is still a need for a study dedicated to the work of independent festival promoters.

The Pop Festival (McKay, 2015) gathers together much of the recent scholarship around music festivals. Although factors such as the relationship between festival organisers and the audience (Robinson, 2015), the economic relations between festivals and sponsors (Anderton, 2015), and 'eventization' (Nye & Hitzler, 2015) touch on some of organisational and promotional issues, the focus is otherwise on physical sensations (Cummings & Herborn, 2015), cultural significance (Arnold, 2015; Gebhardt, 2015), and politics (McKay, 2015; St John, 2015). This only serves to highlight the lack of research into how festivals are organised and implemented through the words or actions of the promoters.

The AHRC-funded literature review by Webster & McKay (2016) *From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals* further illustrates the need for a long-form study of festival organisers' actions and practices. Recognising that festivals are now at the heart of the British music industry, the report charts several approaches to conducting research into festivals and makes a number of recommendations for future research. Building on Getz (2010), it considers economic impacts and business models, events' temporality, creativity, place-making and tourism, mediation, health and well-being alongside environmental issues. While this provides a comprehensive survey of the field, including an annotated bibliography of over one hundred and seventy entries, the review does not undertake any primary research and indeed recommends that one of the key areas for adding new knowledge is "Research into the creative role of the festival promoter/producer" (Webster & McKay, 2016: 21). This will necessarily involve allowing festival promoters to describe their activities and capturing

their lived experiences, thereby identifying both commonalities and differences.

In a similar vein, Peterson & Anand (2004) undertake a historical review of the key literature that has fed into the production of culture concept. Citing Becker (1982), they argue that new networks form around cultural developments, causing resources including labour and other supplies to be drawn towards these emerging areas of production. From this they conclude that culture is not something that is produced slowly across a breadth of social activities, rather it 'is situational and capable of rapid change' (Peterson & Anand, 2004: 312). This leads to the formulation of what they term the 'six-facet model of the production nexus'. Webster (2011) applied some of these functions to the activities of live music promoters, but the six facets have far greater applicability to the operations of the music festival sector, and the sector's growth in the UK from around 2003 with the advent of Truck, Green Man, Bestival and other boutique festivals (Robinson, 2015).

As shown below, the six facets are mapped unequally yet the combination of factors provides a strong correlation to the actions of festival organisers:

1. Technology

Technology offers tools for improving communications and facilitating the networks of cooperation to grow. However, whilst creating new opportunities, these tools also 'profoundly destabilize' (Peterson & Anand, 2004: 314) existing structures. The disruption that took place in the recorded music industry c.2000 and following the emergence of peer-to-peer file-sharing protocols appears to have contributed to the growth in the live music sector

and music festivals. However, the emergence of new technologies that allow for the streaming of almost unlimited recorded music threatens to disrupt the live music sector while placing a new emphasis on the recorded music sector;

2. Law and regulation

Peterson & Anand point to the regulation and censorship that was possible from the earliest days of printing, when the right to publish was controlled by the state. For festivals, a period of control had been implemented in response to the rave culture that was embodied in the actions of new age travellers, providing local authorities with the legislative power to close down live music events. With the passing of the *Live Music Act 2003* (UK Government, 2003) it became far easier to obtain licences to stage live music performances, which in turn contributed to a growth in the availability of venues suitable for staging music festivals;

3. Industry structures

Bourdieu (1984) argued that fields of production tend to coalesce around new technologies while the means of producing festivals have become more accessible as new professionals have entered the supply chains. The structure of the festival industry from 2003 onwards saw many niche market events develop, which is a feature of the creative industries' practices (Caves, 2000);

4. Organizational structure

Peterson & Anand (2004) stress how 'small and simple structures tend to foster entrepreneurial leadership' (p.316) and festival organisations, with their loose structures of individuals or small teams augmented by large numbers of

volunteers during periods of high activity, are highly representative of sites of innovative production;

5. Occupational Careers

As identified by Negus (1992), music festivals offered new entry points into the hierarchical structures of the music industry. Starting from the margins, careers in live music and festivals in particular have shown a marked growth as evidenced by the series of UK Music (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) reports;

6. Market

The recognition of the development of the UK music festival market has also seen the emergence of new tools of measurement. Corresponding to the music charts that enabled the recorded music sector to signal some measure of success, the music festival sector has developed a series of awards, centred on the UK Festival Awards (UK Festival Awards, 2018), launched as early as 2004 as an online poll by the VirtualFestivals website. These awards have grown to include a diverse selection of festivals and categories from ‘Best Major Festival’ through to ‘Best Toilets’.

Summary

This literature review has outlined what is known about the organisation of music festivals. It has identified that Festival Studies is a nascent field where research has concentrated around audience needs and motivations, with little focus on the activities of the organisers. Furthermore, the Event Studies' approach focuses on the impacts of events while Event Management treats the organisers' actions as largely instrumental in the enactment of event management guidelines. In addition, Event Design offers a wider perspective joining the work of event organisers with the needs of consumers, but again this is a largely customer-orientated perspective where the organiser is seen as responding rather than creating, while also tending to overlook the lived experience of independent festival organisers who may lack the resources to implement event design's main elements.

The production of culture perspective offers a way to study those who organise and promote music festivals as it allows one to see this as a human and social activity replete with personal needs and motivations. Although this has been applied by Negus (1999) to the recorded music sector, this study will apply these investigation techniques to the live music sector and in particular to those activities around the production of music festivals.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to gain a better understanding of the working practices and motivations of independent music festival promoters. To meet this aim, it is necessary to examine the music industry structures in which festivals take place and then determine individual promoters' social relationships and personal attributes. To achieve this, the research draws on insights from a range of disciplines including Cultural Studies, Political Economy and Social Anthropology. The thesis first focuses on the broader music industry through desk research and a series of interviews with key respondents in order to explore the differences and commonalities of the promoters' practices. It is important to note that the methodological choices have been made in reference to the previous chapter's findings.

The rest of this chapter will be divided into five sections that explore the choices made while contextualising the actions taken. The first section explores my own experiences and explains my personal interest in the topic. The second section identifies the study's research questions and the third section details why the methodological approach was adopted. The fourth section outlines the individual case studies and the fifth covers the study's limitations.

Why music festivals? Experience and interest

I have been involved in the music industries all of my professional working life. My first job was in Our Price Records in Camberley, where the wages of £95 per week provided enough money to buy a few records each week and supplement the losses of being in a band with my partner, Jo Bartlett. In 1984, the term 'independent' meant those releases which were distributed through Rough Trade or Pinnacle and I took on the role of ordering and displaying the independent stock, and boxing up the returns when they did not sell. As Fonarow (2006) observes in her uncanny depiction of this particular worldview, 'one of indie's motivating principles is its assessment of value in recordings and performers' (p.57), the role of gatekeeper was thereby easily adopted. The band recorded several demos before signing a deal with Dreamworld Records, the brainchild of Daniel Treacy of the Television Personalities. We played the indie circuit of pub gigs, before promoting our own club night, the Buzz Club, at the West End Centre, Aldershot.

The motivation was always to be in a band. The Buzz Club was intended as a vehicle for us to support our favourite bands, and subsequent work at the independent label Cherry Red Records always ran in parallel with recording and releasing records. In 1999, under the name 'It's Jo and Danny', we made an album called *Lank Haired Girl to Bearded Boy* that somehow captured the musical zeitgeist. Recorded in eight and a half days in Bark Studios, Walthamstow, this DIY release was played by Jo Whiley on daytime Radio 1 and we suddenly had offers to play live shows and festivals in the UK and abroad. Without the money to finance a tour – the record was kindly recorded on credit – we accepted an offer to sign a worldwide recording contract with

BMG in 2000, and crossed into the world of major labels for the first time, just as the effects of Napster and peer-to-peer file sharing were about to strike the recording industry (Alderman, 2001) and we were quickly dropped from the rapidly shrinking roster.

In 2003, we founded the Green Man festival in Brecon, Wales. We had played Glastonbury, T in the Park, Reading and Leeds and missed the excitement of festival performances. However, after our disillusioning experiences with the major labels, we wanted to ensure that that our event had the correct independent spirit, with music at the forefront. By necessity, the festival was DIY and the local community were encouraged to get involved. In that first year, we sold 345 tickets and lost a total of £9.10, but as Robinson (2015) was to note much later, these humble beginnings turned out to be the birth of the boutique festival. In 2011, having seen the festival grow to 15,000 attendees, we sold our remaining shares in the event and I moved into lecturing and researching the promotion of music festivals.

The practices and motivations of festival promoters lie, therefore, at the heart of my research. I know the risks and rewards that accrue from the production and promotion of events and I am fascinated by those who choose to take on these roles. Although the advances in live music research by Simon Frith, Martin Cloonan, Matt Brennan, Emma Webster and Adam Behr – highlighted by the launch of the Live Music Exchange in 2011 – have encouraged me to pursue my interest in this area, it is clear from the literature review that there is still a lack of research into what happens behind the scenes.

Research questions

The aim of this thesis is to provide insights into the practices and motivations of independent festival promoters. I want this thesis to contribute to the field of Festival Studies and to be read both by scholars of Popular Music Studies and industry practitioners. The thesis thereby sets out to answer three interconnected questions in order to explore independent UK music festivals and the practices of those who promote them:

1) What are the underlying structures of the music industries in which contemporary independent UK music festivals take place?

2) How are independent music festivals produced as cultural goods or services?

3) What are the motivations of those who choose to organise independent music festivals?

Through these questions, the thesis examines how music festivals are organised within the structures of the music industries and explores the individual skills and motivations of those who produce them. It also deals with the effects that these events have on the organisers.

Why the methodological approach was adopted

I was searching for a methodology that would allow me to explore the actions and motivations of the festival organisers within the context of their social, economic, cultural and political situations. The thesis is therefore structured in three parts: Part One contextualises music festivals' place within the contemporary music industries and investigates the relationship between the

concepts of major and independent as they relate to the music industries. This is based largely on gathering information from a variety of sources including industry data, policy documents and trade publications. Due to the dynamic flow of the festival market, newspaper articles form an important part of the ongoing narrative which allows current debates to be explored. Part Two then adopts an ethnographic approach as it positions the promoters within their social setting, the limits of which are discussed in this chapter, while Part Three further considers the motivations of the individual actors and the effects of promoting festivals in a dynamic and competitive environment.

Ethnography

In their exploration of knowledge transfer within festival organisations, Stadler, Reid & Fullager (2013) stress that the study of festivals has hitherto been based largely on quantitative methods of data collection, which they see as problematic for the event management literature. The need for a qualitative and interpretative approach leads them to use ethnographic research methods in their study of the Queensland Music Festival which 'prioritises the perspectives of those being studied' (p.92) and allows researchers to gain insights into the lived experiences of the participants. While ethnography lacks a clear definition, it has come to refer to an integration of observation and investigation alongside an interpretation of social organisation and culture (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), which is suitable for this thesis as its theoretical framework adopts the production of culture perspective (Peterson, 1976). Indeed, Stadler, Reid & Fullager (2013) argue that the ethnographic

approach ‘is uniquely placed to access the cultural world of…festival organisers and producers’ (p.92) as this perspective engages with the participants in their ‘natural’ setting, namely planning, organising and producing events.

Cohen (1993) argues for the advantages of implementing ethnographic methods in the study of music practices. In Cohen’s discussion of the methods employed in her long-term exploration of the culture of rock music in Liverpool, she details how ethnography’s roots in anthropology offer opportunities to explore local and popular cultures, thereby continuing the move away from the study of the exotic ‘other’. The dialogic engagement with the participants allows the researcher to ‘view familiar contexts from an alternative perspective’ (p.135), although the small-scale nature of the sample often raises issues of repeatability and validity. However, this is offset by the distinctiveness and authenticity provided by direct encounters and ‘a shift from strictly theoretical formulations to a domain that is concrete and material’ (p.132), an approach which is especially relevant for research into festival promoters whose *modus operandi* is the enactment of theoretical concepts into living, material events.

Furthermore, ethnography allows the researcher to develop theories from an analysis of the data collected. As Finnegan (1992) notes, coming from an anthropological background, this provides for a study of culture that is ‘increasingly informed by a comparative and interdisciplinary perspective’ (p.52) which is not narrowed by any single, monocular view, thereby supporting Getz’s (2010) recommendation that no epistemological paradigm

should predominate in the nascent field of festival studies. Moreover, within a post-structuralist framework, an ethnographic approach allows for knowledge constructed from multiple perspectives in an area where individual meanings, roles and responsibilities shape the cultural productions concerned. Finally, and as Brabazon (2011) asserts referencing the arguments put forward by Frith & Savage (1997), writing about any form of popular music in an academic context is difficult and controversial because 'music is contested and ambiguous' (Brabazon, 2011: 52), further highlighting the need for the researcher to draw on a wide palette of disciplines in order to contextualise the participants' multiple perspectives.

An ethnographic study is usually conducted in 'the field' over an extended period of time. In a traditional anthropological approach, a period of long immersion in the way of life or culture to be studied was advantageous as it allowed the researcher to increase their understanding and move from the *etic* outsider view to the insider's *emic* viewpoint, to see how people behave in practice rather than under artificial observation (Finnegan, 1992). Cohen (1993) adopted this approach, spending 'a year living in Liverpool getting to know musicians and their social networks, and participating in, and observing, their social activities' (p.129). In this, Cohen is following Finnegan's (2007) exploration of amateur musicians in Milton Keynes in the 1980s, *The Hidden Musicians: Music-Making in an English Town,* which sought to uncover the musical practices and experiences of ordinary people in their locality. However, as Cohen (2007) notes, it is not 'always possible to engage in long-term, in-depth anthropological fieldwork' (p.232) due to the constraints around individual projects.

However, the working practices of independent festival promoters made an immersive approach problematic. Where Stadler, Reid & Fullager (2013) spent time in the office of the Queensland Music Festival which 'is managed by a permanent staff of seven people and supported by another 35 production, administrative and marketing professionals' (p. 95), the organisational setting of many independent festival organisers is in individual home or home office spaces. Moreover, it became increasingly evident from my attempts to gather a research sample – discussed in more detail later in this chapter – that my status as an industry practitioner also rendered the participant observer role adopted by Webster (2011) unsuitable, with little possibility of the gradual transformation from the outsider *etic* status to an insider *emic* position developing over time as relationships strengthen. I thereby took the decision that my study would be at its most 'natural' as a series of interviews with festival organisers via distant communication or face-to-face interviews.

The most challenging aspect of my study, however, was moving from the industry practitioner role to that of an academic.[6] The brief discussion of my experience and interest needs far more expansion in order to contextualise this study and justify its value, notwithstanding any defects. As a live music performer, I have played hundreds of gigs in multiple venues across the UK and Europe and experienced the highs and lows of packed houses and no-

[6] I made my first conference presentation at the launch of the Live Music Exchange in Edinburgh in 2011. At that time, I was still organising the Green Man festival, although close to ending what had largely dominated my life for the previous nine years. Over dinner later, and with the most positive intentions, Simon Frith did question why I would not far rather be promoting events than talking about them.

shows.[7] Taking money from a promoter who has evidently lost money on an event is one of the most difficult and even shaming things an artist has to do. In addition, my work as an 'enthusiast' promoter far outweighs my professional success as an artist. Jo Bartlett and I started the Buzz Club in Aldershot in 1985 and over the next seven years we promoted artists including The Stone Roses, the Happy Mondays, Suede, Elastica, the Manic Street Preachers, Primal Scream and Blur. We would book the artists, order their records for the Our Price shops (Jo was working in a different branch) and then put our DIY, letraset-designed flyers into the bags of anyone purchasing a suitable record. One of the pleasures of entering the academic world was to find how Frith et al.'s (2010) concept of a live music ecology exactly matched our self-directed practices.

A quick glance at the artists who played the Buzz Club makes obvious our grounding in the 'indie' scene and underlines my particular interest in the practices and motivations of independent festival promoters. It is my contention that much of the growth in the festival sector came about as a result of the independent scene needing new spaces and places to inhabit, as retail outlets and local venues began to disappear from UK towns. As Fonarow (2006) argues,

> Although indie has no exact definition, the discourse and practices around the multiple descriptions and definitions of indie detail a set of

[7] A personal low was the one person who had come to see the support band at our gig at the Hull Adelphi in 2002 and only stayed to watch us because we gave him our rider.

> principles that reveal the values and issues at stake for the community (p.25).

These values and issues moved away from the weekly browsing of racks of polythene-protected record sleeves and the pleasures of making regular judgements about the quality of bands performing on stage from the safety of the venue bar, to the discovery process taking place on the festival site. Being in the tent as the opening artist completes their line-check at 11.00am Saturday morning on the festival's out-of-the-way and hard-to-find second stage, carries all of the 'nostalgic element' that Fonarow (2006) detects in her delineation of the indie ethos.

Re-reading Fonarow recently, I was struck by how much of the independent music industry's structure has been dismantled. I was aware of the tragic loss of iconic venues and the fact that the major labels were no longer buying indie labels or even bothering to construct their own, but the real surprise was the loss of any meaningful printed press. I had forgotten the importance of *NME*, *Melody Maker* and *Sounds* in capturing and promoting the latest scenes and, as Hearsum (2013) notes in response to the question 'Is music journalism dead?', it is a struggle to communicate to today's students how the 'monogamous bond' (p.116) of waiting a week to read an article somehow added to the pleasure and the experience's weight. I am sure that the slow unfolding of a music festival is the closest way to rebuild those lost associations and the 'understanding of collective identities' (Frith, 2007a: 14) that emerged from discussions about who was on the front cover and who this-or-that journalist was championing as 'the next big thing'.

The Green Man festival was the archetypal, independent music festival. Started by just myself and Jo Bartlett in 2003, it was entirely DIY and focused on the indie priority of 'how an audience can have the purest possible experience of music' (Fonarow, 2006: 30). Just as with the Buzz Club, the artists were all drawn from the independent scene, which at that time was centred around a re-visiting of the word 'folk' and its contemporary form of 'folktronica', the mixing of traditional folk instruments with basic electronic elements of drum machines and vintage synthesisers. Green Man gave the scene its physical ecological base and brought together performers including James Yorkston and the Fence Collective from Fife, labels such as Domino and Drag City, and journalists such as Bob Stanley and Peter Paphides. In my earliest attempts to investigate this research question, therefore, I could not understand how Green Man could not simply serve as my case study.

Other Approaches

There has been an emerging trend to acknowledge the complex role of the researcher in ethnographic studies, leading to a call for a more auto-ethnographic approach. In this approach, the research is 'aimed at describing and systematically analyzing the researchers' personal experiences in order to understand social or cultural experiences' (Flick, 2014: 534). In addition, such an approach appears to allow for a greater use of my own experience in conducting research, providing access to 'personal data that may be off limits to other researchers' (Chang, 2016: 108) while offering the opportunity to show 'how the aspects of experience illuminate more general cultural

phenomena' (Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2016: 23). However, the term auto-ethnography is a contested one and whilst my study may be aligned with a definition of auto-ethnography that simply 'places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 9), it cannot be easily matched to more recent formulations that make far stronger claims for this approach. Indeed, Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2010) argue that 'autoethnographers take a different point of view toward the subject matter of social science' (para 40) while Short, Turner, & Grant (2013) stress that 'in spite of its benefits and many advantages, autoethnography is not for the fainthearted' (p.11). Clearly this was not a suitable methodology for an inexperienced researcher to adopt.

Another approach, therefore, was to try and stage a festival as practice-as-research.[8] This was to take place in 2014 and was intended to produce new knowledge about planning, organising and managing an independent music festival. Although there was clearly a strong element of risk, the event was titled 'Third Rail' and a location in Reading adjacent to the Reading Festival site was secured. Agents were approached and all of the artists contracted in addition to all the other means of production including staging, P.A. and lighting. The marketing materials were also finalised, including a fully-functioning website and a 60 second promotional film and the tickets were placed on sale through See Tickets and Billetto. However, despite every attempt to limit costs and maximise income, the event lacked sufficient commercial viability and was cancelled a month before it was due to be staged. While this did not fulfil the aim of organising a festival, the data

[8] Again, Simon Frith expressed prescient concerns regarding the ways in which I was attempting to blur the lines between academia and industry practice.

concerning the costs involved and the processes undertaken still produced some valuable background information on the structural challenges facing a new, independent entrant into the festival market ten years after Green Man's first year.

My memories and status as the co-founder of the Green Man festival clearly influence my methodological approach. Gray (2014) describes ethnography as seeking 'to understand cultural phenomena that reflect the knowledge and meanings that guide the life of cultural groups within their own environment' (p.438) and this is the aim of the research questions. However, it is worth adding that two more elements have had a considerable impact on shaping this study's narrative. The first was the input of Chris Anderton, who saw me present my initial findings at the CHIME conference in Siena, 2017.[9] It was Anderton who recognised that this study was situated firmly within the theoretical framework of the production of culture perspective which enabled me to shape Part Two of the thesis. The second element was a conversation I had with Dave Laing while queueing for coffee at a symposium in Oxford in 2016. He was interested in my research and told me that he had recently become particularly interested in the notion of curation and later sent me Fredric Jameson's (2015) *The Aesthetics of Singularity*. Part Three of the thesis was inspired by this meeting. The third element that provided a new focus was the opportunity to act as a volunteer at a one-day, urban music festival.

[9] I also need to thank George McKay who was kind enough to tell me there was some good research there, it just needed to be teased out.

As Flick (2014) notes: ‘Ethnography has taken over in recent years what was previously participant observation’ (p.307). Whilst the field work involved in volunteering was somewhat limited, the chance to be a participant-as-observer did add to the ability to collect ‘whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.3). Furthermore, while I had engaged and overseen the work of volunteers with the Green Man festival on many occasions, I had never undertaken this role myself. I was conscious to note my impressions and undertook to write these up as soon as possible after the event and the main impressions are worth discussing here. The artists on the stage where I had been assigned the role of artist liaison had arrived after a difficult journey and were late for their performance. This anxiety manifested itself as a dissatisfaction with the technical support and, as I had no nominated authority role, the artists were quick to demand that someone higher up respond to their demands. I saw how the festival promoter was able to ameliorate the situation almost entirely by her presence, as this signalled that the artists’ issues were now being taken seriously. This experience allowed me to observe not only how festival organisers are required to absorb the stresses and concerns of other participants, but also meant that I could gain a perspective regarding some of the challenges facing volunteers who remain largely powerless within these hierarchical structures.

Qualitative research

Debates continue as to the relative value of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Evidence-based positivism questions the scientific rigour of the interpretivist paradigm, so in settling on a qualitative approach, I am adopting a given ontological position, namely that reality is socially constructed. The qualitative data gathered from the participants through semi-structured interviews draws on the subjective meanings of their social actions undertaken in their professional practice. My role will be one described by Denzin & Lincoln (2011) as the 'interpretive bricoleur [who] understands that research is an interactive process shaped by one's personal history' (p.5), a role determined by my extensive experience in this field. From the data collected, an inductive approach will piece together the epistemological claims generated from these specific observations which are then used in the formulation of broader generalisations and theories. However, while researching into a given culture, one must always remain mindful of Pertti Alasuutari's (1995) warning that 'the researcher should not try to offer the ultimate interpretation as to what things "really" mean' (p.36) and that the process of analysis relies on an understanding of the texts' situated and relational structures.

The position of the researcher is one that clearly has a potential bearing on the data collection. However, the guiding principle is to develop a design aligned with Denzin & Lincoln's (2011) recommendation concerning 'what information most appropriately will answer specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it' (p.13). In order to identify the information about 'who organises festivals and why,' it is necessary to

engage in personal interviews with the festival organisers. While some material is found in a textual review, such as interviews with Michael Eavis, the organiser of Glastonbury festival (Turner, 2015), it needs to be remembered that these are mediated constructions often tied to the promotional necessity to sell tickets. Moreover, many of these interviews are conducted through organisations that operate as media partners with the festivals concerned. In this arrangement, the media partner acquires greater access to the promoter and receives certain privileges during the event, such as the right to distribute their publication at the festival or to have the naming rights to a prescribed area. In return, the festival receives an agreed amount of media coverage, which is more or less guaranteed to be positive.

Research Design

The research design provides ‘a framework for the collection and analysis of data’ and reflects decisions concerning ‘a range of dimensions of the research process’ (Bryman, 2012: 46). Although there are many research design variants, Leung (2015) identifies the fundamental concepts for assessing quality in qualitative research as ‘validity, reliability and generalizability’ (p.325). Validity in relation to qualitative research can mean the ‘“appropriateness” of the tools, processes, and data’ used (p.326), while reliability is concerned ‘with issues of consistency of measures’ (Bryman, 2012: 168). The generalizability of qualitative research findings is often disputed. As Leung (2015) observes, there is ‘no consensus for assessing any piece of qualitative research work’ (p.324) while generalizability is not

always ‘an expected attribute’ (p.327). However, Bryman (2012) argues that much of the criticism is due to a misunderstanding around the application of the findings of qualitative research, stating that ‘it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization’ (p.406) rather than an attempt to apply the findings to other settings.

The design chosen for this study is a case study design. This entails the detailed exploration of a specific community (Bryman, 2012), which is here defined as the promoters of independent UK music festivals. Yin (2014) proposes five rationales for selecting case studies: *critical, unusual, common, revelatory,* or *longitudinal* (p.51), of which *common* is the most appropriate as it captures ‘the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation’ (p.52) and provides insights into social processes and structures. This rationale, which is otherwise referred to as the *representative* or *typical* case – although Bryman (2012) prefers the term *exemplifying* due to confusion around ‘notions of representativeness’ (p.70) – sees a case chosen because ‘either they epitomise a broader category of cases or they will provide a suitable context for certain research questions to be identified’ (p.70). For this reason, the case study identified for this research was the membership of the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF).

Sampling Strategy

The AIF is a non-profit trade association founded in 2008 by Rob Da Bank, the organiser of Bestival, and Ben Turner, his manager. Their association currently has around 55 member organisations and was operated as an autonomous division of the Association of Independent Music (AIM), before becoming a separate company in April 2018. The AIF act as representatives for their members in three key areas:

1. Creating a network of leading independent festival promoters;
2. Business support and development;
3. Campaigns and initiatives (AIF, 2016).

Membership is restricted to those organisations deemed independent according to the association's own criteria. This states that a member company must not control more than '5% of the global market share of the live music industry' (AIF, 2016). This is reckoned to be around £15.1bn, so no festival company can have a market share of more than £755m.[10]

The size of the potential sample was assessed by the number of members of AIF. In the *Association of Independent Festivals Six-Year Report* (Webster, 2014) it was noted that there were seventeen members in 2008 and forty-four in 2014 and I hoped to interview around 25% of the membership, using a sampling strategy that was 'purposive' rather than 'random'. As Bryman (2012) states, 'in purposive sampling the researcher samples with his or her research goals in mind' (p.418), therefore key informants were to be drawn from the community of independent UK festival promoters and 'selected for

[10] This seems an extraordinarily broad definition of independence and raises questions about the ultimate ownership of some of the AIF member companies.

their hope that they would possess ‘the necessary knowledge and experience of the issue or object at their disposal for answering the questions in the interview’ (Flick, 2014: 176). With this strategy in mind, I identified an initial list of ten prospective interviewees and made distinctions according to the following criteria:

- Who they are
- Which festival was involved
- What type of event was involved
- How long the event had been running
- How many events they organise

This was intended to ensure a demographic and geographic spread of respondents and a diverse range of festivals, whilst also seeking to distinguish between new and established events.

I sent out introductory emails and social media messages outlining the aim of the study and also used third-party contacts to make approaches on my behalf. The initial response was disappointing. The first promoter to respond offered to answer a few questions but had now relocated to the USA and would not have much time. Other emails went completely unanswered. Third-party contacts were similarly unsuccessful. Interestingly, despite my conviction that the cultural capital I had acquired during my time as a festival organiser would encourage people to participate, this was not proving to be the case. A meeting was also arranged with the AIF’s General Manager at their offices in Chiswick Reach, during which he expressed a great deal of interest in the study and offered to assist in contacting any members who might be willing to participate. Despite follow-up emails and phone calls, in the

end this did not ever happen. However, as Bryman (2012) advises, researchers often 'face opposition or at least indifference to their research and are relieved to glean information or views from whoever is prepared to divulge such details' (p.424) and at a separate meeting with the managing director of an independent record company, a respondent was suggested by them and the first interview date agreed.

Once the initial list of potential respondents proved to be of limited value, a further fifteen possible interviewees were identified. The strategy then continued using a mix of purposive and 'snowballing' sampling, where 'sampled participants propose other participants who have had the experience or characteristics relevant to the research' (Bryman, 2012: 424). Following the first interview on 31 May 2016, there was a long gap before the second was held on 31 October 2016, which followed a chance meeting at the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) event in Brighton in September 2016. The subsequent respondents then arrived more quickly through the following channels: a social media discussion thread; a meeting with a graduate from the course that I lead at the University of West London; a fellow PhD student; a long-time associate who finally found the time to meet; a third-party contact; and a personal music industry contact.

Although no longer drawn exclusively from the members of the AIF, the criteria still excluded those involved in corporate events – or without a close identification as festival organisers – and the final list of respondents do represent a cross-section of independent UK music festival promoters.[11] They

[11] Some of the proposed respondents were outside the UK, but it was decided to limit the study to the UK itself. A future comparative study with other territories would be of great interest.

include a diversity in age and gender demographics as well as a broad, UK-wide geographical spread. Moreover, they are not limited by genre and cover the three main types of festival as defined by Webster & McKay (2016):

- greenfield events which predominantly programme music, often involving camping, open-air consumption and amplification;
- venue-based series of live music events linked by theme or genre, usually urban; and
- street-based urban carnival (p.4).

At the time when the interviews took place, none of the final respondents or their companies controlled more than 5% of the global live music industry. However, as the market for festival acquisitions is currently very volatile this may change over time (Hanley, 2017).

Deciding whether the data collection from respondents is complete is a choice that all researchers need to make. As Flick (2014) states, ‘Sampling decisions always fluctuate between the aims of covering as wide a field as possible and of doing analyses which are as deep as possible’ (p.177) and I was satisfied that the verbal data was sufficient to provide answers to the research questions. Moreover, my initial aim had always been to interview around ten respondents and once the difficulties of gaining access to key informants became apparent, I began to appreciate the amount of data collected. This decision was supported by Flick’s (2014) observation that the ‘appropriateness of the selected sample can be assessed in terms of the degree of possible generalization that is striven for’ (p.178) and the demographic and geographic spread, along with the variety of festivals that

the respondents represented, gave me confidence that this would answer any questions in relation to the validity of the research design in the data collection phase of the study.

Respondents

The following descriptions outline the respondents and indicates how representative they are of the body of independent UK music festival organisers from which they were drawn:

R1 is female and between 18-30 years old. She is a London-based music industry professional whose full-time role is with an artist management company responsible for a range of clients including recording artists, producers, DJs and remixers. Although she has experience of a number of festivals both in the UK and Europe, her main organisational work is with a 2000-capacity greenfield event which takes place over three days in the summer in the west of England. The festival has been running for over seven years and has won awards at one of the festival umbrella organisation's annual prize-giving events. Many artists who perform at the event progress to greater industry recognition and commercial success. Although many of the artists could be broadly categorized as singer-songwriters, the line-up also features electronic artists. Music programming predominates at the festival with little mention of other activities in any of the marketing materials while performers are able to apply through the event website. Similarly, volunteers are encouraged to apply to work at the festival and this is also organised through the festival website. The event is promoted as family-friendly and

children under ten years of age are admitted free. The interview took place face-to-face after business hours in her employer's office.

R2 is male and between 30-45 years old. He is a music industry professional based in Wales and is the director of a live music and events company that covers the broader entertainment industry. He has worked on a wide range of festivals across the region, including classical events in north Wales and rock festivals in south Wales and the Valleys. Although involved on a number of events concurrently, the interview took place via Facetime at a time when he was about to announce a new, city-based event aimed at a broad festival audience, so this formed much of the early part of the discussion. The event is intended to take place within the grounds of a national history museum on a single day in mid-summer and, while the music programming is prominent in the marketing materials, other activities are strongly featured. These include a vintage funfair, pony rides and a separate area for children's entertainment. Children under five years of age are admitted free. Volunteers can apply to work at the festival through the event website, although it is unclear how artists can apply to perform. As this is the first year of the event, there are no images or films of previous events, a common feature of festival marketing.

R3 is male aged between 45-60 years old. He is a full-time music industry professional with what can best be described as a portfolio career. His work spans a range of music and media functions from writing reviews of recorded album and single releases through to compiling albums of various artists under commission from record labels and magazines. As an event organiser he produces award ceremonies and provides bespoke live music

entertainment events for corporate clients. His festival work has covered start-up enterprises and consulting on events, but his main event role currently forms part of a significant greenfield festival that takes place over three days at the beginning of the summer. The main festival is a mixture of music and the arts which has been established for over four decades and is characterised by the number of self-contained areas which are individually named and run more or less autonomously while the main festival events take place. The area that he organises has a capacity of 2000 and features a wide range of programming including live music performance and large screen showings of music-based films. The area also has a number of separate club nights and other non-music entertainment.

R4 is female and aged between 45-60 years old. She is a full-time local government employee responsible for the marketing and staging of events in the south of England. As a previous full-time music industry professional, she has extensive experience of organising festivals having founded and developed one of the largest independent festivals in Wales. That event took place on a greenfield site and had a capacity of 15,000 people. The festival that she currently organises is a street-based urban carnival that, at the time of the interview which was conducted face-to-face in her home, had just completed its second year. As the event organiser she is responsible for an approved budget and allocating resources, including both technical equipment and other local government employees. The festival takes place in early summer across a number of existing venues in a town characterised as forming part of the commuter belt of the counties that lie outside London's urban and suburban areas. The festival consists of a series of events that are

specially programmed, including music, literature, children's entertainment and a street parade and carnival. This is complemented by placing other events under the festival's umbrella branding such as comedy and classical music. The volunteer staff were all previously known to her before the event was staged.

R5 is male and aged between 30-45 years old. He is a full-time music industry professional based in the Midlands, while his work is focused on a number of music festivals with an average capacity of around 3,000 attendees. The events are characterised by a strong emphasis on programming and curation and are distinguished from each other by musical genre. The events are all long-established and take place in the same urban, greenfield site towards the centre of a major city. The main festivals take place over three days at both the beginning of summer and in late summer, thereby bookending the recognised festival season. Due to the venue's size, the capacity is necessarily restricted and no camping is permitted. Licensing regulations require that the entertainment ends at 10.30pm each night on-site, so special after-show events are held on the Friday and Saturday nights in local venues around one mile from the festival site. Volunteering is organised through the festival website and is divided into half-day shift patterns from 10.00am-4.30pm and from 4.00pm-10.30pm on each of these days. A deposit is paid by the volunteers which is returned on successful completion of their allotted duties. The entertainment is predominantly programmed music, but children under 12 years of age are admitted free. The interview was conducted via Skype as an audio-only discussion.

R6 is female and aged between 45-60 years old. She was a full-time music industry professional based in London specialising in music publishing. Her work now is focused on higher education in the Home Counties and she is also undertaking doctoral research on a music-related subject. Her festival work is concentrated on a single event that she founded seven years before the interview took place and is voluntary in nature. The festival is a venue-based series of live music events that take place over two days in spring, but the wider programme of talks and displays runs over fourteen days. The event's theme draws on historical events which took place in the town and involves the local museum's co-operation. These events are foregrounded in the event's marketing on the festival website. Entry into many of the events is free, although the talks and music events are ticketed. A festival ticket allowing entry to all events can be purchased for £12. The festival website features the name of the event partners and patrons and also asks attendees to donate non-perishable items to the local food bank. The interview was conducted via Skype as an audio-only discussion.

R7 is female and aged between 30-45 years old. She is employed part-time within the higher education sector and is also undertaking doctoral research. Her festival work is entirely voluntary and is a venue-based series of live music events linked by theme and genre which takes place over four days in spring. Music programming predominates and the event features the performance of chamber music linked by an overarching theme. The festival utilises a number of unique venues over a broad geographical area, including churches, community halls and a railway station. There is no on-site camping and attendees are directed to local accommodation. Each event is separately

ticketed at around £10-£12 with a free music event for children. The festival also engages in outreach activities involving local schools and music institutions and provides a guided walk around the local area aimed at families. Images on the website draw on the festival's history going back over twenty years and highlights the work of dedicated artistic directors. The programming centres on blending the unique annual performances with the local landscape. The interview was conducted via Skype as an audio-only discussion and was repeated after the original recording was accidentally deleted.

R8 is female and aged between 30-45 years old. She is a part-time music industry professional based in the north of England with a website dedicated to her non-musical activities. Her festival work is based on one festival that takes place in late summer in the grounds of an estate in the Home Counties and has a capacity of c.15,000 attendees. Although she co-founded the festival, she is no longer a company director, but remains one of the event's main organisers. The festival is a greenfield event which takes place over four days with camping. Music programming predominates and covers four stages but other areas include cinema and literature. The food and drink offering also features on the festival website. The line-up can be categorized as mostly Indie performers with a mixture of established and up and coming performers. The festival website and marketing materials make strong use of images compiled over a period of more than ten years with the videos being a significant feature. These are made when artists are announced and on the completion of each year's activities. The interview was conducted via Skype as an audio-only discussion.

Interview questions

Flick (2014) advises that the interview process begins with the construction of an interview guide, normally in the form of a set of pre-determined questions. This interview guide should 'leave room for the interviewee's perspective and topics in addition to the questions' (p. 197), so I first began by drawing on my own experience as a festival organiser. From this reflection, I drew up an initial list of questions:

- Do you have any event training?
- How did you gain experience?
- Do you have a partner or partners?
- How would you define success?

Following this, I undertook a scoping literature review to assess the issues that were currently affecting the members of the AIF, focusing in particular on the *Association of Independent Festivals Six-Year Report* (Webster, 2014). The concerns raised in the report centred around the number of member-controlled events that had ceased trading,[12] the effects of secondary ticketing and issues around policing and crime. The blending of my experience and the results of an ongoing literature review was then distilled into a set of thirteen questions (Appendix A) to form the basis of a semi-structured interview.

[12] Headline figures estimated that festival-goers at the association's events spent a total £1.01bn attending festivals between 2010 and 2014 with the yearly amount broadly steady over that time. Despite this, a number of member organisations had ceased trading during that period, including The Big Chill, Glade and Evolution, the latter promoted by the current AIF Chair, Jim Mawdsley. This demonstrated the ongoing difficulty of matching the positivity of the industry's headline data with the economic realities of the individual festival promoters.

How the interviews were conducted

The semi-structured interview may often be the sole data source for a qualitative research project. A set of predetermined open-ended questions are posed as the researcher and interviewee develop a rapport based on trust and respect. As DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) state, 'the goal is to encourage the interviewee to share as much information as possible, unselfconsciously and in his or her own words' (p.316) following an interview structure that moves from apprehension to exploration, on to co-operation and participation, whilst remaining as non-directive as possible. For this reason, the questions began with a general discussion around the music industry to reduce apprehension and establish a common ground. However, Bryman (2012) cautions that early questions should be directly related to the topic of the research (p.221), so the first question put to the respondents was:

Q1. *The Music festival sector has gone through a period of continued growth. What would you put this growth down to?*

More particular questions were then asked about the participant's experiences and their current practices while co-operation was fostered. As participation levels increased, the final question was designed to elicit the most personal and reflective response:

Q13. *What do you think is the most creative aspect of your work?*

The interviews took place over a period from 31 May 2016 through to 27 June 2017. The interviews were conducted via either Skype, Facetime or face-to-face, depending on the respondents' preference and in preparation for the first interview I purchased the Camtasia software package that enables Skype and

other on-screen interviews to be captured. I also used the voice memo function on my iPhone as a secondary recording device as I was unsure of the software's effectiveness. All the interviews were subsequently recorded as audio-only files on iPhone and Camtasia, with only one of the interviews also recorded via an audio/visual file. As Flick (2014) argues, the recording of verbal data allows for 'a more or less detailed transcription' (p.196) to be undertaken at a later date, but recommends restricting 'the use of recording technology to the collection of data necessary to the research question' (p.386); in discussions with the respondents, it was agreed that there was no need to capture visual data and that this function should not be enabled on Camtasia.

The initial respondent (R3) is based outside London and, although regularly attending meetings in the capital, decided that they would prefer to undertake the interview via Skype. During the interview I also made written notes in a notebook. As Negus (1999) remarks, 'an interview is an active social encounter, through which knowledge of the world is produced via a process of exchange. This involves communication, interpretation, understanding, and, occasionally perhaps, misunderstanding' (p.11). The written notes were a means of both checking understanding while also acting as *aide memoires* in the formulation of any additional questions that might illuminate or elucidate an earlier point. As Flick (2014) asserts, these follow-up questions, or *probes* – whether spontaneous or pre-prepared in the interview guide – often 'lead them to more depth, detail and illustration' (p.208) and can inform the later process of data analysis. However, for the purposes of repeatability, Bryman (2012) recommends that 'probing should be kept to a minimum' (p.224). This

process was then repeated for each of the interviews, but was more problematic for the two interviews (R1, R4) that were conducted face-to-face, where the need to maintain rapport required the maintenance of suitable eye contact.

The interviewing process was far more demanding on me as a researcher than I had anticipated. My confidence had been adversely affected by the inability to gain a positive response to my initial contact communications and I was also concerned that time was passing. I had begun to become embarrassed in discussing my research with friends and colleagues and felt that I was doing something wrong in terms of how I was approaching people. I was acutely aware, therefore, that the first interview must go well and I, as previously noted, ensured that I would be able to record the data. However, although the respondent was online at the agreed time, I was anxious to make sure that I asked all of my set questions and I spoke very quickly at the beginning. It was only after the respondent was interrupted and the interview re-started after a short break that I was able to accept that it was going as well as I had hoped and I had indeed commenced the data collection process.

Due to my position as an industry figure, I was extremely conscious of the risk of bias. For this reason, I had determined to ask only the set questions and to try and avoid engaging in an exchange wherever possible. I was concerned that my previous status as a festival promoter might place me in a position of power that would be detrimental to the elicitation of data and cause respondents to assume that I would already have knowledge of their experiences. However, the decision to try and remain silent felt too artificial at times, and so I took the decision to treat each interview on an individual basis.

As anticipated, it is noticeable how many times respondents would use phrases such as ‘You know what I mean’ or ‘You know what I’m saying’. Indeed, during one interview, I had to intervene with humour and say ‘Yes, I know what you mean but I want you to say it!’

As the first interview was conducted in agreement with the respondent as an audio-only interview, there were no non-verbal communication signs noted. This decision was then followed throughout all subsequent interviews when the video function was not enabled or when the interview took place face-to-face. Similarly, although strong emotional responses such as laughing or crying are sometimes indicated in the transcripts, no attempt at paralinguistic analysis was made as it is not part of the researcher’s skill set. As the series of interviews progressed, less use was also made of notes as prompts for further questions as I was conscious not to try and affect the respondent with my own interpretation of their words and in order to try and achieve as much objectivity as possible. I believe that this demonstrated my growing ability as a researcher to manage the interview process more skilfully as my confidence in my abilities developed. Thereby, I found myself becoming far more comfortable as a doctoral student who did not need to rely on their previous industry experience in order to engage successfully in this social encounter, a technique which developed over the course of the interviews.

Ethnographic approaches often use case studies as a means of making conclusions more relatable. In this vein, Yin (2014) argues that ‘a case study allows investigators to focus on a “case” and retain a holistic and real-world perspective’ (p.4) and I wanted to follow this approach, especially as the

thesis is intended to be suitable for an industry readership. However, this study was conducted in line with an ethics policy that states that the contributions of all respondents in any research project must be anonymised. This policy was communicated to the respondents in advance and forms part of the participation consent agreement. While this necessarily constrained the ability to provide much of the immediate context around the respondents' social groupings, it did allow for a more open exchange to take place during the interview process. However, as Possick (2009) advises in her study of the settler experience in the West Bank, this type of exchange does raise an extra dilemma for the researcher: 'Should I represent the participants as they revealed themselves to me, an insider, or should I bring their voices as they would wish to be presented to an audience of outsiders?' (p.867).

As Rowan, Moffatt & Olden (2015) argue, interviews on sensitive subjects can be challenging for the researcher and while this did not suggest itself as an issue at the beginning of the research cycle, it became apparent during several interviews that the respondents were indeed finding it therapeutic to talk about their experiences with a sympathetic listener and that this did put a certain strain on the researcher. It was clear that the researcher's position as an experienced professional in this area gave the respondents the confidence to share experiences that they would not have felt comfortable discussing with a less experienced researcher. However, and in agreement with the respondents' wishes, some of this material was redacted from the final transcripts, especially where it would have potentially compromised their anonymity. Like Possick (2009), I made the decision that when asked to stop the recording I would not include the material in the study but I also

acknowledge that ‘the informal information for insider ears only’ (p.867) does influence the analysis of the transcripts and brings forward important themes.

Data Analysis

The gap between the first interview and the second interview allowed for the initial data analysis to take place. Following Flick’s (2014) recommendation ‘to do the first interview, to do a first transcription of this interview, and to start with the analysis, and also to reflect on the kind of analysis you plan’ (p.389), I completed the transcription of the audio file for R3. The recording is just less than 35 minutes – which turned out to be around the average length of the interviews – and this was transcribed into a Word document. As Flick (2014) suggests, this process then informed the subsequent transcriptions and the advice ‘to transcribe only as much as required by the research question’ (p.389) meant that, as discussed earlier in this Chapter, no paralinguistic cues were written down. After the second interview, the data was collected in batches of two or three and this allowed me to reflect on the responses as the research continued.

The first stage of the analysis was to begin coding the transcripts. For Bryman (2012), coding is the process of ‘generating an index of terms that will help you to interpret and theorize in relation to your data’ (p.577), but Saldana (2009) highlights that ‘coding is not just labelling, it is *linking*’ (p.8), the search for the ‘repetitive patterns of action and consistencies in human affairs as documented in the data’ (p.5), even in this first cycle. I was also conscious not to look too closely at first for any specific answers to the research questions,

remembering Flick's (2014) caution that the act of transcription is itself a contested area and that the 'researcher's personal style of noting things makes the field a presented field' (p.392). By taking this detached view and just waiting to see 'what stands out', two overriding impressions occurred that allowed me a wider view of the study. The first was the realisation, as noted above, of the high incidence of the respondents referring to my perceived knowledge and my place in the study, while the second was the way that the respondents raised concerns around the potential negative effects of organising festivals.

In the next phase of first cycle coding, I divided each of the questions and noted the words that each of the respondents used in answering, calling these 'keywords'. This can be seen in the following example:

Q5. How would you characterise the audience for your event?

Keywords:

chimney pots – 20 mile radius R2

I'll travel because it's a castle R2

local R6

community R6

holiday homes R7

local R7

young musicians R7

people do travel, much further now R3

and it's part of your identity, I suppose R3

willing to go and get an experience R3

family R1

music finding R1

having fun R1

national R8

25-45 R8

cap on kids R8

world R5

part of UK holiday R5

push the family angle R5

broad – longer to take root R4

Organising the codes into lists allowed me to move away from the fixed idea of the transcribed interview. This process facilitated the clustering together of the data 'according to similarity and regularity' (Saldana, 2009: 8), but also began the process of creating 'a reconstruction of the reality, which has been transformed into texts' (Flick, 2014: 392), thereby bringing me closer to the research question and removing some of the personal experience that paradoxically distanced me from the subject.

As coding is a 'cyclical act' (Saldana, 2009: 8), I then went back and recoded and combined the first cycle codes. Flick (2014) explains that 'coding is the work with materials for generating concepts and for allocating excerpts of the material to categories' (p.373) and eventually a range of broad categories began to emerge. This was aided in May 2017 when I obtained a licence to use the NVivo software and enrolled on a training course. Although it transpired that the software was not yet fully developed for Mac users, the

limited ability to move text around enabled me to visualise more easily the 'emergent patterns and meanings of human experience' (Saldana, 2009: 10) that were combined into categories such as those outlined below:

Trust

Experience

Mediation

Identity

Authenticity

In this second cycle, the first cycle codes are thereby 'reorganized and reconfigured to eventually develop a smaller and more select list' (p.149). From this list, it was now possible to undertake a thematic analysis.

The identification of themes is the outcome of the coding process. According to Flick (2014), the identification of themes involves the discovering of 'patterns in the data as well as the conditions under which these apply' (p.409), while Saldana (2009) characterises theming as the process of beginning 'to transcend the "reality" of your data' (p.11) and capturing and unifying 'the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole' (p.139). While there is no limit to the number of themes that can be produced, three significant themes came to be identified, which I then placed into a grid under the headings: *Themes*; *Meaning*; *Evidence*. This produced the following result:

Theme: Macro

Meaning: Organisational Structures

Evidence: Reference to industry; professional practices

Theme: Meso

Meaning: Mediation

Evidence: Communal working; identity

Theme: Macro

Meaning: Individual

Evidence: Creativity; mental health

Geertz (1973) sees the process of analysis as arriving at a “thick description”, ‘sorting out the structures of signification…and determining their social ground and import’ (p.9). These themes then served as the means to capture the experiences of the festival promoters and formed the structural basis for the writing up of the research.

Although my initial aim had been to see how the music festival sector was acting or reacting to the new technologies of streaming music, it became more and more evident from the analysis that the study was about individual promoters, rather than a ‘handbook’ of successful event management. The broad ethnographic approach of Negus (1992) was the best path to follow as we both shared a vision of trying to ‘impart some knowledge and wisdom to anyone brave and stupid enough’ (p.2) wanting to enter the music industry and that I also ‘wished to contribute to academic debates and scholarships

within popular music studies' (Negus, 1992: 3). Like Negus, I am interested in the interplay of economics and culture, especially in a sector where, unlike the major recording company of his study, the consequences of decisions may have a far greater impact on individuals. Furthermore, I am also aware of how my own experiences have informed this study – Negus was also signed and dropped by his record label – and that another researcher might return a different set of results.

The roles that Negus identifies in the work of record companies all have their equivalents in festival promotion. He distinguishes the key roles as artist and repertoire (A&R) and marketing, or in his terms, those who focus on production and those who focus on consumption. A&R primarily involves the identification and development of new artists while in the festival sector this means the booking and programming of the event, which may be separate functions but are generally combined. Issues around the lack of headline artists (Behr, 2017) and the gender imbalance in festival line-ups (Harris, 2015) demonstrate the importance of this role, which equates to the record companies' search for the 'next big thing'. Marketing is, of course, common to almost all industries and, in the age of digital abundance, a common difficulty for both music industry's recorded and live sectors. Just as digital media allows everyone to upload examples of their work, the sheer volume of material makes it problematic to distinguish a given recording or an event in the marketplace. This is one of the key challenges identified by the respondents.

In order to provide a context for his study, Negus (1999) first outlined a macro view of the recording industry, then he conducted a series of interviews with

those engaged in the production process. The similarity of my research into the culture of popular music production – albeit from the perspective of the live music industry – led me to follow this approach when setting out my thesis, especially as the requirement for the respondents to be anonymised increased the need for greater contextualisation. The thesis, therefore, begins in Part One with a macro view of the music industry structures. Parts Two and Three equate to Negus' (1997) micro view of individual agency and asks how the organisers construct the knowledge and meanings that guide their activities in the individual promotion and production of independent music festivals. For the purposes of this thesis – and following the thematic analysis – Part Two has been depicted as a meso view of the social interactions in which the culture of production takes place with Part Three adopting a more individual micro level representation of human action, whilst recognising that these distinctions are somewhat arbitrary and artificial.

Limitations

As discussed earlier, one of the key limitations to the study was the identification and securing of the respondents. I drew up an initial list of potential participants based on location, capacity and type of event, their known or stated involvement in the event, and the ease of access to them via direct or third-party communication. Following this, I consulted the AIF's list of members, cross-referencing those who might also be contacted through the association and those members who I had not originally considered. From the outset, I had foreseen that the sample size would be restricted due to the

relatively small number of independent festival organisers, but that with a 20% response rate I would be able to secure around ten or twelve interviews.

However, the snowballing technique proved effective in the process of sample selection and had the added benefit of removing many of my own preconceptions. For my initial list of participants, I was acting on two assumptions: firstly, that the person would respond positively to my request for an interview and, secondly, that the roles they had undertaken would be compatible with the purpose of the study as organisers and implementers of events. Moreover, as my industry experience had been largely concentrated within a specific genre, the majority of my contacts also operated in the same or closely-related areas. As Negus (1999) affirms, the operations of genre classifications play an important part in the organisation of music industry practices, so I am thankful for the more random way in which the sample was eventually identified as it allowed for a broader definition of the term 'independent' than I had originally intended. This benefit was compounded by the fact that those who did take part were self-acknowledged and willing participants who were interested in the research aims.

Semi-structured interviews formed the main basis for gathering data as these allow for the interviewee to develop themes. Interviews with the participants could have been conducted as structured interviews but these techniques generate quantitative data which would have been of limited use in such a restricted sample. Furthermore, using unstructured interviews may have meant that the limited time available would have been used without generating much useful data. As has been seen, all of the participants are

either full-time music industry professionals or employed full-time in other activities. The time allotted to taking part in the research was unlikely to be repeated and there were few alternative candidates at the time of the data collection. A survey was considered and discussed with the AIF General Manager, but my subsequent communications were not followed up.

Issues around researcher bias also informed the data collection process. With my previous industry experience I was conscious not to affect the data, therefore I decided to pose the same set of questions to each respondent. This added a certain artificiality but did allow the respondents the time and space to share their own views and narratives. A little more interaction might have proved useful at times in prompting the respondents to open up more at different moments in the interview, but clearly this would have potential issues around repeatability if future researchers attempted to use the same set of questions without having the same industry experience. Against this, it was notable how much information was shared by the respondents – often on sensitive issues – as they responded positively to my understanding of their role. The decision to make all of the contributions anonymous clearly helped here and making the same questions attributable to each participant would almost certainly have produced a more limited set of responses.

Alternative approaches such as Practice-based-Research had been considered but the previous attempt to stage a limited one-day festival demonstrated the amount of resources that would be required. Moreover, as the research questions set out to investigate multiple perspectives, the research's possible outcomes were likely to be too limited in scope. With an

emphasis on event design, the new knowledge generated would have been in the area of practice and how to improve it, which takes little account of the social, economic, cultural and political environments in which festivals operate, which is at the heart of this study. As Scrivener (2002) argues, artefacts in themselves do not convey knowledge while the researcher must be distinguished from the practitioner in terms of their intention to generate new knowledge. As an experienced practitioner in this field, the line between researcher and practitioner might be harder to maintain, especially when faced with the very real economic tensions involved in staging festivals.

The participant observer role was also considered, but the temporal nature of festival promotion and the need to be wary of researcher bias made this a contested option. From the lack of response to my request for participants to take part in a short interview, it can be reasonably inferred that very few organisations would have welcomed me into their day-to-day commercial activities. My past clearly marked me as being likely to be non-neutral or, worse, still in a position to report on their actual business activities. Moreover, while Hebdige (1979) in his study of subcultures sees that the practice allows for interesting and evocative accounts of subcultures, 'the method also suffers from a number of significant flaws' (pp.76-77). By engaging too closely with the subject, the real events and phenomena the researcher is seeking to capture may suffer from unintended interference. The respondents' repeated comments of 'You know what I mean' indicate there may have been many occasions where they might have deferred to my knowledge or understanding, to the detriment of the study.

Ethical considerations

Transparency was maintained at all times to ensure the integrity and authenticity of the data generated and the knowledge produced. The study's aims and scope were set forth and followed the guidance of the University's Ethics Committee, while all contributions were anonymised and securely stored. The recording of all the interviews in digital formats means that the interpretations' accuracy, relevance and authenticity will be ensured. All research participants were provided with a consent form before the recording of their data and asked to read, sign and return a copy consenting to the terms contained therein regarding the uses that would be made of their data. It also detailed their rights as participants including the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Where participants felt that the information shared was too personal or too sensitive for reasons of competitive business practice, these sections were removed from the written transcripts.

Summary

This chapter has set forth the methodological underpinnings which have guided the research design of the study. It explains the rationale for the decisions taken in the methods used for the collection of data and the identification of the research sample. It further details the ways in which the research was conducted and demonstrated both the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations. The following chapters provide an account of the workings of the recorded and live music industries and present the empirical findings concerning the promoters of independent UK music festivals and the organisation and implementation of events.

Part One: Music Industry Structures

Chapter Four: Recorded Music Industry

Introduction

Chapter Two defined the activities of the promoters of independent UK music festivals. Music festivals form part of a wider music industry and in order to provide the context for the work of the promoters, it is first necessary to situate music festivals within the context of the music industries. Part One does so by providing a historical and contemporary account of the recorded and live sectors of the industry and the position of the music festival sector within this structural ecology. Chapter Four is concerned with the recorded music industry, while Chapter Five looks at the live music industry. Chapter Six considers the music festival industry and outlines the phenomenological responses of the festival organisers according to Getz's (2010) identification of three discourses within festival studies. Part One, therefore, builds on the justification of the research methods set out in Chapter Three, using desk research as the foundation for this section of the thesis.

The structure of this thesis is modelled on Negus' (1999) study of the recorded music sector, *Music Genres and Corporate Cultures*. Negus (1997) initially looked at the 'the macro perspective which stresses social and organizational structures and economic relationships' (p.69), before focusing on a more 'micro' approach that concentrated on the everyday human agency that helps shape the production of popular music. Like Du Gay (1997) who described this view as moving 'from "macro" level processes of "economic

globalization" to "micro" level processes of individual work-based identity formation' (p.6), this approach allows for an understanding of the workings of a cultural economy, one where meaning is produced by individuals within organizational structures that are themselves the sites of practices carrying their own particular meanings.

However, this study differs in one important way as the thesis argues for a division into three levels of analysis, namely macro, meso and micro. The macro level considers the organizational, historical, social and geographic contexts in which music festivals are produced and is covered in Part One. Parts Two and Three argue for a meso study of festival organisation and a micro level consideration of the practices and motivations of the organisers, which are thereby intended to equate with the Negus micro level. However, the separation of the micro into two layers allows for an analysis of the effects of producing events on the individuals who undertake these roles, something which, as noted in Chapter Two, is absent from Negus' study.

Chapter Four now continues and is further divided into three sections. The first is concerned with music as a cultural industry while the second details the structure of the recorded music industry. The third section analyses the control of circulation.

Cultural Economy

The notion of music as a cultural industry can be traced back to the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in the 1940s. As members of the Frankfurt School who had fled from Nazi Germany, they took a pessimistic

view of popular music and the effects of standardizing music as a product. Indeed, they believed that the use of industrial techniques of mass-production, when applied to a cultural form such as music, resulted in the production of undemanding cultural commodities. Moreover, Adorno (1991) argued that the consumption of these undifferentiated products of 'interchangeable sameness' (p.89) led to conformity replacing consciousness while impeding 'the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves' (p.92). The prioritising of the profit motive that was central to all industrial practice was, he believed, the sole driving force behind the ideology of a 'culture industry', and one that thereby removed culture's ability to offer the hope of human well-being and the promise of a good life.

Negus (1997) defended this elitist outlook as a reaction to the instrumentalist view of culture that had been propagated for political purposes in Nazi Germany. The view of a domination of the masses through homogeneous culture was understandable given its historical context, but the acceptance of indiscriminate consumption assumed that the activities of both consumers and producers were pre-made and determined. As noted in Chapter Two, the actions of consumers in negotiating these structures of power and domination became the focus of much of the cultural studies literature, but Negus (1997) was drawn to a more porous view of production within the recorded music industry. He argued for a need to 'understand how *structures* are produced through particular human actions and how *economic* relationships simultaneously involve the production of *cultural* meanings' (p.84) (italics in the original). While the techniques of production appeared ever more

industrial, with the analogue qualities of vinyl and cassettes now largely replaced by the homogeneity of the compact disc format at the time of this study, Negus believed that this economic activity still involved the application of cultural assumptions and behaviours, both individual and organisational.

The joining of the instrumental economic drive for profit with the aesthetic view of culture saw Paul Du Gay (1997) call for the recognition of a 'cultural economy'. While this term is contested in relation to its theoretical and political import, Du Gay posited three arguments for its adoption. Firstly, he proposed that all 'forms of economic life depend on meaning for their effects' (p.6), arguing that individuals produce meanings at economic sites and circulate these through economic processes and practices, such as in the production of marketing materials or in product design. Complaints about gender stereotyping involving campaigns promoting products from protein supplements through to perfumery and fashion clothing, provides some contemporary support for this argument, with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA, 2017) moving to tighten its rules on advertisements adjudged as perpetuating sexist stereotypes. The fact that these advertisements had been commissioned, produced and approved for release by the marketing departments of the organisations involved, indicates the different meanings applied at varying economic sites of the production process.

This also relates to Du Gay's (1997) second point that the 'production of "cultural" artefacts cannot be divorced from economic processes and forms of organization' (p.6). While it is not possible to identify the cultures of production in action at these sites, some broad inferences can be drawn from the

approval of these creative campaigns. If the individuals employed in these organisations can sanction the usage of these advertisements, then it can be assumed that the culture in which they were produced must also be in agreement. Although individuals in these organizations may hold divergent views about the suitability of the advertisements – and the ASA's demand that one of the posters featuring the model and actor Cara Delevigne was not allowed to be displayed within 100 metres of any school (Sweney, 2017) suggests that various social groupings will hold differing views of appropriateness – the organisational level of cultural acceptance here is manifest.

Du Gay's (1997) third point is that an increasing number of 'goods are "cultural" [and] inscribed with meanings and associations' (p.6). While this may continue to be a growing trend in the production of an increasing range of goods and services, Peterson (1976) has argued that 'those milieux where symbol-system production is most self-consciously the center of activity' (p.673), could be found in the recorded music industry. Moreover, Peterson & Di Maggio (1975) selected country music as the cultural form most at risk from and hypothetical 'massification' (Adorno, 1991). They also expressed an associated fear that 'industrialization was set to destroy 'forms of cultural diversity, replacing these with the homogenized products of mass culture' (Peterson & Di Maggio**,** 1975: 497). As this industrialization was also linked with urbanization, the increasing movement from a rural environment to the city, they saw country music – 'literally the music of the countryside' (p.501) – as the musical genre most likely to be altered adversely by any move towards a greater cultural homogeneity. Music festivals, with their representations of

rurality and an ideal life, operate within a similar system of symbol production and as central activities in a cultural or creative economy.

Music and the Creative and Cultural Industries

After a period of stagnation in Britain in the 1970s, the Thatcher government undertook a series of reforms following the economic and political doctrine of what David Harvey (2005) terms the 'Neoliberalism turn' (p.9). This doctrinal shift in the practices of political economy sought to liberate individual entrepreneurial freedoms and remove or reduce the restrictions to the operations of the market including across borders, eventually leading or contributing to an extended period of economic globalization. In the UK, this economic transformation saw a reduction in the operations of the traditional industrial activities centred around energy production, such as mining, and the privatization of many previously state-owned businesses, including telecommunications and transport (Harvey, 2005). A new emphasis was therefore placed on individual wealth creation, freed from the regulation of state legislation that had been put in place to guarantee economic stability in post-war Britain, and the restructuring of employment in a period of deindustrialization. At the same time, the rapid increase in wealth – especially in the City of London and the south-east of England alongside a rise in the aspirational class associations of property ownership – saw the flourishing of a new consumer culture as neoliberal ideals took hold in the wider English-speaking world.

When this agenda was more or less inherited by a recently elected Labour government under Prime Minister Tony Blair, one of the latter's first moves was the formation of a new Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Following policy moves by the Greater London Council (GLC) to widen the definition of culture subsidies to embrace arts that were deemed as commercial (Hesmondhalgh, 2008), a greater recognition of culture as 'something whose economic assets were seen as valuable tools of public policy' (Cloonan, 2007: 34) emerged during the 1980s. The 1990s saw a continuation in the 'breakdown between the high and low arts' (p. 38), culminating in the creation of the new DCMS out of the existing Department of National Heritage (DNH), reflecting a new view of culture as both dynamic and contemporary.

Advances in the corporate world, aided by the neoliberal doctrine of freer trade across borders, saw Manuel Castells (2000) proclaim the rise of the 'network society' with the emergence of global nodes in a 'new industrial culture' (p.100) that would see international economies integrated 'on a planetary scale' (p.101). Charles Leadbeater's (1999) *Living On Thin Air* and Leadbeater and Oakley's (1999) *The Independents: Britain's New Cultural Entrepreneurs,* commissioned, amongst others, by the DCMS, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTi) and the BBC, identified a new, creative economy, where intellectual property (IP) would be created by individuals and exploited globally across the new industrial networks. This fed into the recognition of the creative industries, defined as those that 'have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual

property' (Higgs, Cunningham & Bakhshi, 2008: 3). For the music industries, this would mean a focus on exploiting copyrights, namely the way in which IP rights are acknowledged in the creation of sound recordings, which would later have an adverse effect on the development of live music initiatives.[13]

Alongside the possibilities of generating employment opportunities for individuals and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the latter employing fewer than 250 persons, it was also believed that creativity and culture could be used as a force for regeneration. Glasgow's successful bid to be awarded the title of European City of Culture in 1990 is seen as initiating a sustained period of growth in its creative sector and of far broader economic benefit to the city. As Myerscough (2011) reports in *Glasgow Cultural Statistics Digest*, a quantitative study commissioned to assess the long-term effects of the award, Glasgow's cultural sector is identified as a major asset for the city and for Scotland. Growth is observed in almost every area with jobs in the cultural sector showing a 44% increase since 1992/3 while the major tourism boost provided by the award was sustained in the development of both corporate and leisure events. Performance numbers had increased by 75% since 1996/7 and festivals such as Celtic Connections now have an international significance.

Myerscough's (2011) report also highlights Glasgow as a city hub for the creative industries, ranking alongside Greater Manchester and Birmingham in

[13] In 2004 the Welsh Assembly Government announced a strategy for the creative industries in Wales centred around a new £7 million creative IP fund. The Green Man festival was unable to access any direct governmental finance support at this time as live music events do not create IP rights. This imbalance was only addressed several years later when the festival was considered eligible for support from the separate Major Events Unit (Welsh Assembly Government, 2004).

terms of British cities outside London. Moreover, the report identifies ‘strong clusters in broadcasting, film, advertising, design, multi-media, publishing, software and music’ (p.7). In this, Glasgow demonstrates the results of policy initiatives based on Leadbeater & Oakley’s (1999) call for the formation of a ‘critical mass’ of practitioners who could support and nurture each other’s enterprises in local networks of interdependence and co-operation given that ‘policy towards the cultural industries is largely for and about cities’ (p.16). Charles Landry, through the work of the think tank Comedia, which he founded in 1978 to develop projects concerned with city life, culture and creativity, argued for a policy aimed at the development of ‘creative cities’. This was inspired by the successful regeneration of cities such as Manchester (Haslam, 1999) and urged urban planners ‘to get beyond the idea that creativity is the exclusive domain of artists...there is social and political creativity and innovation too’ (Landry, 2000: xv), an attractive option for new policies to regenerate run-down areas of urban decay and decline. This was facilitated by new working structures based around freelancing and an increasing access to technologies of information and communication.

While Glasgow lays claim to some twenty-two festivals and events across a broad arts spectrum, in a Scottish context it is largely overshadowed by Edinburgh, which brands itself as ‘The Festival City’. The consultative document *Edinburgh festivals: Thundering hooves 2.0: A ten year strategy to sustain the success of Edinburgh’s festivals* (BOP, 2015), highlights that ‘Edinburgh was born as a Festival City in 1947 to help rebuild the culture of post-war Europe’ (p.10), very much an ‘old liberal’ project, and currently receives an estimated 500,000 overnight visitors from outside Scotland each

year. However, in an era of increasing global competition, sustaining this level of success offers significant challenges. Interestingly, on the 70th anniversary of its 'Festival City' status in 2017, it was announced that one of its key attractions, the military tattoo, is due to be held in three cities in China in 2020, part of an expansion strategy that may eventually see other such events held in the Middle East and North and South America (MacAskill, 2017). In the move toward 'eventful cities' (Richards & Palmer, 2010) animated by festivals and events, this represents an ambitious attempt to raise the global profile of the city and offers opportunities for other festivals as they follow an increasing trend towards urban destinations, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Further impulse was given to the support of creative individuals in networked clusters by Richard Florida's influential works. Beginning with *The Rise of the Creative Class,* Florida (2002) advanced the theory that creativity is not the abstract domain of individual genius, rather it is 'essential to the way we live and work today' (p.21). Dividing the economy into three sectors – creative, manufacturing and service – Florida claims that the creative sector accounts for around thirty percent of U.S. employment and nearly half of total wages and salaries. Moreover, this class are subject to the global competition for talent (Florida, 2005) and can only flourish in regions where creative individuals and businesses cluster, fostered by attendance to the three Ts – Technology, Talent and Tolerance. For Florida, technology is the tool necessary for creative industries including buildings and communications, talent is the pool of available labour, and tolerance is the overriding ambience and policy implementations that allow creativity to flourish.

In a review of creative industries policy, Flew & Cunningham (2010) estimated that the 'postindustrial' creative industry in the UK 'accounted for 5 percent of total national income in 1998, employed 1.4 million people, and was growing at about double the rate of the British economy as a whole' (p.113). Meanwhile the framing of policy ranged internationally from a European strategy for social inclusion and 'common cultural benefit', through to a 'developing countries' model of 'cultural heritage maintenance' and basic infrastructure provision (Flew & Cunningham, 2010: 117). However, in the UK the approach was to add the tech and gaming digital industries to the established arts and heritage sector, namely advertising, architecture, arts and culture, craft, design, fashion, music, publishing, and TV & film. This has had the effect of increasing the size and power of the creative industries, but also led to a continued focus on a traditional business model based on the creation and retention of intellectual property rights. Moreover, and as Flew (2009) highlights, there are risks in promoting policies based on a neoliberal discourse of liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms alongside a view of creativity as a *sui generis* category that simply embraces corporate notions of return-on-investment culture.

The impact of these policies are now the focus of considerable critical debate. Whilst highlighting the success of projects such as the development of the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow in 1990 and Tate Modern in Southwark in 2000, bodies such as the London Assembly Regeneration Committee (2017) are questioning the longer-term benefits of this post-industrial approach to culture and an emphasis on the economic role in commercialising the creative industries. In their report they argue that this type of regeneration, 'reduced

culture to economics, [and] also created many threats and challenges' (p.14), one of which is a rise in property prices that displaces those who already live in the community. Ironically, they believe that this regeneration drives a process of gentrification that often prices out those productive artists and businesses that were the very entrepreneurs that the creative and cultural policies sought to support in the first place.

A move away from the fixed hierarchy of the cultural industries to an entrepreneurial, creative industries' agenda marks an attempt to reward creativity and individualism. However, these policies have resulted in new tensions as they often act as vehicles for different economic and social agendas. As Myerscough (2011) reports, the prime benefit of these cultural policies is to provide 'energy and stimulus' to the daily life of the city and the 'spiritual ease which can be delivered for all through engagement with the arts' (p.7). These benefits, however, are often uneven and require what Flew (2008) describes as the 'embeddedness of particular forms of knowledge in certain geographical places' (p.215). This naturally leads to questions regarding what forms of knowledge are unnecessary or unproductive and which geographical places are to be left out or left behind. As the Rural Coalition (2017) details in its 'Four policy priorities', modern businesses also depend on adequate broadband and mobile networks, 'yet a quarter of rural premises cannot access fast broadband,' thereby severely restricting the ability of those based in rural areas to benefit equally from the opportunities offered by creative entrepreneurship in the digital economy.

Moreover, as Karen Bradley (2016), appointed Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in July 2016, stated in her maiden speech as Culture Secretary at the Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool in August of that year, issues of diversity still affect large sections of Britain's creative sectors. The speech underlined a widening in the gap between those who are culturally engaged and those who are not, reporting that 'Arts engagement is nearly 82 per cent among adults from the upper socio-economic group compared to just over 65 per cent from the lower socio-economic group'. The Culture White Paper again points to how the 'cultural sectors make a crucial contribution to the regeneration, health and wellbeing of our regions, cities, towns and villages' but looks to the 'accumulated influence of creativity' (DCMS, 2016: 9) as the way in which culture can be of most utility, a move away from the economic to the social benefits of culture.

For the music industries, the tether to the exploitation of intellectual property leads to the pre-eminence of policies that favour the recorded music sector. Rather than acknowledging the importance of the live sector, or the long-term downturn in the recorded sector, the desire to promote the interests of the digital industries remains. While the Digital Economy Act 2017 includes the provision to assist the live music sector with new means to tackle the problems around secondary ticketing with the 'power to create offence of breaching limits on internet and other ticket sales' (UK Government, 2017: 117), this still constitutes punitive rather than nurturing action. Despite reports such as Hargreaves' (2011) *The Heart of Digital Wales* recognising that an IP focus was too narrow and that a more 'multi-faceted approach would enable the fund to support a wider range of projects across more sub-sectors in the

creative industries', IP creation and exploitation still lies at the heart of UK policy. Indeed, far from a move to a more multi-faceted approach, on 3 July 2017 it was announced that the DCMS would be renamed the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, thus embedding the digital industries in the fabric of governmental thinking.[14]

Music Industries

As identified, the music industry occupies one segment of the creative industries sector. However, as Williamson & Cloonan (2007) have argued, it is far more appropriate to refer to a pluralistic 'music industries' in order to recognise both the growing importance of the live music sector and the long-term downturn in the recorded sector. Moreover, despite a recent return to growth in recorded sector revenues, it is the live sector which has held the greater propensity for growth since the turn of the millennium, if not in volume of transactions then in the rate of return per transaction. However, in order to contextualise the shifting balance between the live and recorded sectors or 'industries' it is first necessary to consider why the two sectors continue to be considered as separate commercial entities and establish their differences and commonalities.

When discussing the music industry, it is common for the term simply to be equated to the recorded music industry. In both of Negus' (1992, 1999) studies his focus is almost entirely on the recorded sector, with live music

[14] *The Telegraph* registered its displeasure at the DCMS spending more than £3,000 reprinting stationery and pull-out banners displaying the new name, at a time when funding for Olympic and Paralympic sports was being cut (Hope, 2017).

seen very much as an adjunct of marketing, a part of the industry to be engaged with when necessary. Identifying the overwhelming bias towards recorded music in academic studies, Simon Frith, Martin Cloonan, Matt Brennan & Emma Webster sought to redress the balance with a comprehensive three-year study of the live music sector in the UK funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. In the first publication to be produced by this research, *The History of Live Music in Britain Volume 1: 1950-1967* (Frith et al., 2013), they argue that 'most present accounts of the "music 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' (p.ix). Moreover, they point out that live music was originally the only way in which music could be experienced until the advent of the far more recent technologies of capturing and recording sound, beginning with Edison's invention of the phonograph (write *graph,* sound *phono*) in 1877.

Control of Circulation

During the period bracketed by Negus' research into the corporate structures (1992) and corporate culture of Sony (1999) respectively, the music industry was still following a pattern of production and consumption that would have been entirely recognisable by the founder of Victor records in 1906.[15] Artists were spotted, their performances recorded, then the physical product was manufactured and distributed.[16] This pattern of product development is

[15] Evan Eisenberg (2005) pinpoints 1906 and the introduction by the Victor Company of the Victrola, 'the first phonograph designed as furniture' (p.13), as the moment that recorded music became reified as an object of conspicuous consumption.

[16] Adelina Patti, one of the early artists signed to Victor, commissioned Craig-y-Nos 'castle' in the Tawe Valley in Wales as a place to entertain her friends. It boasted a West End-style

characteristic of all the cultural industries where, as David Hesmondhalgh (2008) identifies, the initial production costs for a film or an album are high but, once completed, they are then easy to reproduce. The business plan, therefore, is to build up the repertoire of artists or artefacts, add scarcity to increase the value by the imposition of copyright, and then control the circulation through the means of manufacturing and distribution. Despite all the changes in organizational structures and ownership, this plan remained the basis for the functioning of the industry throughout the twentieth century.

Around the turn of the millennium, though, the music industry lost control of this circulation almost overnight. Shawn Fanning, a young college student, developed software that enabled individuals to share music files between personal computers, without passing through the manufacturing and distribution which had always been the main mode in which control of the industry was exerted. Whereas previous advances in technology such as the seven-inch vinyl single and the compact disc (CD) had enhanced revenues and grown the customer base, the introduction of the compressed MP3 format was to prove negatively disruptive. As Andrew Leyshon (2001) has detailed, it was estimated that Fanning's peer-to-peer file sharing software Napster was being downloaded in US universities around twenty million times a day by June 2000.

While these downloads, considered illegal by the music industry, could not be equated directly to lost sales, the amount that consumers were willing to pay for recorded music would increasingly come into question as this process of

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theatre with a floor that could be lowered by electric motors for her performances. The first Green Man festival took place on the site in 2003 and the floor still operates.

disintermediation continued. As the industry struggled to adapt to the digital age, measures such as taking legal action were attempted as early as 1999 (Tschmuck, 2012), however the bad publicity generated seemed only to accelerate the appetite for file-sharing, as new protocols such as Limewire and Gnutella quickly appeared. John Alderman (2001) and others confidently predicted that 'If the entertainment industry is not able to deal with the ubiquity and free flow of information in the information age then it will suffer' (p.187) as a pattern of legal actions against organisations and individuals failed to prevent an increasing loss of control. It was not helpful that these actions were taking place against the backdrop of an anti-trust lawsuit filed in August 2000 against the major record companies and retailers, accusing them of inflating the price of CDs between 1995-2000, a lawsuit that eventually ended in 2002 when the music companies agreed to pay a settlement of US$143m without admitting any wrongdoing (Billboard, 2002).

Four Networks

Attali (1985) argues for the identification of four networks in the distribution of music that marked changes in social organisation and the modes of economic production. The first era he termed the 'sacrificial ritual' where music is distributed within a social grouping as a means of cohesion and bonding. This is followed by a network of 'representation' in which music is performed for a fee in specific places. 'Repetition' appears with the advent of recording and is 'the herald of a new stage in the organization of capitalism, that of the repetitive mass production of all social relations' (p.32). This era can be viewed as culminating in the social sharing of MP3 music files. which

Tschmuck (2012) argues was not a cause but ‘a symptom of the digital revolution in the music industry’ (p.190), although this is not a view that would have gained much traction with record companies at the time. The last network Attali posits is one of ‘composition’, where music is concerned with self-communication – in other words solitary and non-commercial – and which bears a close resemblance to the multi-faceted user-generated content uploaded to social media platforms.

In 2000, the notion of four networks could still be mapped on to the recorded music industry’s structures. Leyshon (2001), who viewed the process through the lens of economic geography, argued for the following network categorisations: ‘creativity’, incorporating composition and repetition, or rather performance and recording; ‘reproduction’, including vinyl, cassettes and compact discs; ‘distribution’, where the manufacturer delivers the finished goods to the point of sale; and finally ‘consumption’, which he broadly equated at that time with the network of retail outlets dealing directly with consumers. While he reports the growing concerns of retailers, including a senior executive at Virgin Megastore who was anxious that a move to digital distribution might undermine margins and cause some firms to leave the industry, what is striking is how consumption is still located as the linear end-point of the four networks. As the digital era has progressed, these networks have been successively collapsed to the point where the network of creativity – a music maker with a computer – can reach the network of consumption, a listener with a mobile phone, without passing through the other links in the supply chain.

In many ways the technology of streaming music can be seen as having restored and returned much of the locus of control back to the recorded music industry. Artists are still discovered and recorded, manufactured into a digital format suitable for streaming, and delivered through a recognised channel of distribution, such as Spotify or Tidal. The high costs of initial production are still followed by low costs of reproduction and there are even economies of vertical integration in that the major record companies have a stake-holding in Spotify, although the amounts involved are somewhat controversially covered by non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). Moreover, following a long period of volatility, including the demise of EMI after its purchase by the venture capitalist Guy Hands and the Terra Nova group, the major record companies have settled into three corporations, the Universal Music Group (UMG), the Warner Music Group (WMG) and Sony Music Entertainment (SME), who, according to the Worldwide Independent Network, between them control around two-thirds of the global recorded music sector (WINTEL, 2016).

Furthermore, recent data supports the signs of an industry in recovery. After a period of continuing decline, with the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) reporting global recorded industry revenues down around thirty per cent from 2004 to 2009 (IFPI, 2010), the *Global Music Report* (2017) states that the global recorded music market grew by 5.9% in 2016, the highest rate since the IFPI began tracking the market in 1997. Alongside total revenues of US$15.7 billion for 2016, there were 112 million users of paid music streaming subscriptions, leading to a year-on-year growth of 60.4% as the industry moves towards a return to sustainable growth after 15 years of contraction. Even more encouragingly, emerging music markets

including China, India and Mexico all saw strong revenue growth of over 20%, largely due to the increase in paid music streaming services (IFPI, 2017).

The position in the UK had been less positive, where the three major record companies account for around 73% of the album sales market. The British Phonographic Industry (BPI), the trade association for the recorded sector, reported that 2015 trade income, although totalling £688m, actually declined from 2014, although this was a fall of less than 1%. However, the 2017 BPI Report indicates that the recorded sector is beginning to show signs of a sustained recovery. Revenues rose by 10.6% in 2017 to £839.4 million, the fastest growth in trade income since 1995 as revenue from streaming platforms grew by 41 per cent (BPI, 2018). However, there are areas of concern in relation to the uneven ways in which music is being consumed: 'More than 375,000 different album titles sold at least one copy in 2015, but only just over 2% of them sold more than a thousand copies and the vast majority (almost 90%) sold 100 or less' (BPI, 2016: 32). Whilst this, in some ways, supports the positive theory of the 'long-tail', whereby digital consumption will allow for income to be generated by a large number of small payments, Anderson's (2007) over-positive outlook failed to anticipate how unbalanced a market of 'unlimited demand' would actually be in practice.

One growth area which defies the ongoing move away from physical CD sales and even the rapid decline in digital downloads, once seen in the era of the iPod and iTunes as the saviour of the music industry, is the emergence or re-emergence of the market for music released on vinyl. In the UK in 2015, vinyl sales broke through the two million barrier and in 2017 rose again by 24%

compared to the previous year. As pressing plants are reported to be unable to meet the rapid increase in demand, Sony Music are re-opening a pressing plant in Japan having closed their in-house operation in 1989 after CDs came to dominate the market (Ellis-Petersen, 2017b). Geoff Taylor, BPI chairman, believes that a 'multi-channel' dynamic has now emerged, with 'many consumers using streaming services to discover whilst still purchasing music they love in physical form' (BPI, 2016: 7), as the industry enjoys the return of control of production and the enforced scarcity of a genuinely limited supply.

While the headline figures point to a bright future, doubts remain about the ability for the recorded sector to achieve long-term sustainable growth. Mark Mulligan, who specialises in music research for the media and technology analysis company MIDiA Research, is concerned about the effects of Spotify's growth and what this might mean for the future of the company and music industry revenues. In particular, while revenues of EUR2.9bn were reported in 2016, the company's pre-tax losses were EUR539m, or 18% of revenue. This was up from 12% in 2015. Moreover, 'while the market establishes itself, streaming services have to overspend on product innovation and marketing' (Mulligan, 2017). The issue here, apart from the need to continue to absorb such significant losses, is that the costs of paying for the rights to the music that is being streamed will always rise with revenues, unless the music industry is prepared to accept less for the use of its copyrights. Spotify's listing as a public company in April 2018 initially valued the streaming platform at £18.8bn (Music Week, 2018), but with Warner Music Group (WMG) and Sony Music Entertainment (SME) quickly divesting some of their shares, it remains

to be seen how sustainable the Spotify business model will prove to be (Homewood, 2018).

The Value Gap

It is the value of the rights that record companies and publishers hold that still remains the most vital issue for the recorded music industry. This is now commonly referred to as ‘value gap’, the gap between the amount that the music industry believes is a fair remuneration for developing their cultural commodities and the amount that those using these commodities are prepared to pay. This remains centred on the value of IP rights, the basis of the creative industries’ policy and one of the key pillars of the cultural industries’ economic strategy. Ensuring that copyright can continue to be enforced within and across national and international boundaries – even when those physical demarcations are no longer visible or even especially meaningful – is the key challenge for a digital age. Against a long history of competitive practices and individual actions, Taylor insists that all sectors of the music industry ‘now need to work together to persuade legislators to unlock the true potential of music’ (BPI, 2016: 7), which means addressing issues around access to music on internet platforms including YouTube, which carries echoes of the forcing of internet service providers (ISPs) to provide information about their customers’ use of data that proved so contentious in the industry’s attempts to combat music piracy since 1999.

The amount that a record company receives for every stream through a subscription platform such as Spotify or Apple Music is not fixed. Variables

include the country in which the stream was delivered, the level of free and paid-for subscriptions and the amount agreed between the platform and the distributor, whether artist or label. This is further complicated by the removal of the average per-stream pay out from Spotify's own website in November 2016. However, calculations based on statements supplied by an independent label with around 150 albums available on various streaming sites, estimate that the number of streams needed on the various services to equal a physical sale are: 139 streams on Spotify, 83 on Apple Music, 90 on Google Play, 95 on Deezer and 876 on YouTube (Musically, 2017). While the actual values may be open to question, the relative positions of the streaming services offer a clear indication of where the music industry has most concern over the 'value gap'.

Copyright Directive

At a PRS for Music event in London on 30 June 2017, the issue of copyright reform was debated. Panel members included the PRS chief executive Robert Ashcroft, Ros Lynch, Director of Copyright at the Intellectual Property Office (IPO), the UK Music chairman Andrew Heath and Agata Gerba, Acting Deputy Head of the Copyright Unit at the European Commission, with the UK MEP Mary Honeyball describing the topic as 'the most divisive issue the European Parliament has faced in 17 years' (PRS for Music, 2017). Draft reforms to the Copyright Directive, which governs how copyright content is managed online, include potential revisions to the 'safe harbour' law, which currently allow any platform hosting user-uploaded content such as YouTube to be exempt from

copyright liability. It is hoped by the music industry that in future amendments this exemption will be entirely removed.

As John Woodhouse (2015) describes in his briefing paper for fellow MPs, 'Music in public: Copyright licensing', PRS for Music collects royalties on behalf of its members 'either live or recorded, on television or radio, or in premises ranging from concert halls to corner shops'. This represents an extension on its 1914 aims, allowing for the introduction of new technologies and places of performance. It can be seen that, as the viewing and listening of music increasingly moves away from the traditional channels of television or radio, rights-holders are anxious to ensure that any new platforms are brought within copyright jurisdiction. However, the multinational corporations known colloquially as GAFA (Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon) continue to resist any changes to the Copyright Directive while the decision by the European Union to reject the legislation in July 2018 (BBC, 2018) was seen as a setback for the music industries.

Many commentators (Silver, 2013; Knopper, 2009) see that the music industry missed multiple opportunities to benefit from the digital revolution. Whether allowing Apple the control of digital downloads or failing to utilise copy protection in the same way that the games industry has successfully safeguarded its IP, it is argued that too much time was spent debating the problems rather than seeking solutions. Moreover, the inability to be fully co-operative meant the independent sector needed to form its own rights organisation (titled 'Merlin') to protect its members' interests, thereby reducing the ability for more effective collective action. Questions remain about why the

recorded music industry had any need of a third-party organisation such as Spotify to distribute its cultural commodities when, as Jason Toynbee (2000) attests, ‘distribution is pivotal’ (p.17) as the disruption through file-sharing so clearly proved.

This is, however, more than an ongoing inability to spot the potential of innovation. As Peterson & Anand (2004) argue, culture is situational and the institutional differences between the music industry and other industries may be too great for successful integration, just as Sony struggled when trying to achieve synergy with CBS (Negus, 1997). Moreover, organisations such as the Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG), having bought into the music industry during the expansionary years of the 1980s and 1990s, withdrew from the recorded industry, whilst retaining a music publishing company, a closer cultural fit given its book publishing activities. However, as the recorded music industry – despite a cultural turn or return to the physical in the production of vinyl – develops further into a data industry (Negus, 2016), the cultural differences between the music industry and the technology industry will continue to be eroded, leading to less conflict and more congruency. As Nick Prior (2018) argues, the current phase in digital technologies is characterised ‘by a more sober examination of the Internet as an increasingly diffuse but normalized presence: neither novel, liberatory nor radically autonomous, but sunk into everyday routines of consumption’ (p.34) as networked relationships continue to become embedded in mundane activities. However, as Tschmuck (2012) warns, the gatekeepers are always liable to be replaced, either by changes in the patterns of consumption, or by the corporate technology organisations simply developing a parallel music industry.

Summary

This chapter has examined the development of the recorded music industry and the continuing interplay between technologies of production and consumption. It has viewed this development through a macro lens of industrial networks, highlighting the importance of the copyright system as a means of providing remuneration for music creators and the bodies who represent them. This chapter has shown how music is considered to be one of the creative and cultural industries and how the effects of the political and social doctrine of neoliberalism have both opened up new markets while contributing to the difficulties posed by an over-reliance on the creation and exploitation of intellectual property rights.

Finally, through an exploration of the production of music in a complex matrix of networks, the chapter illustrated how a disruption of the control of circulation led the recorded music industry to undergo an extended period of contraction, before some control of the locus of distribution was restored through streaming technologies and new subscription payments models. The following chapter will consider the historical development of the live music sector.

Chapter Five: Live Music Industry

Introduction

Where Chapter Four looked the development of the recorded music industry, this chapter will now consider the operation of the live music industry. First, it will consider the development of the live music industry and the effects of advances in mass media and technologies of production. Second, it will review the rise of the concert industry and the growth of the pre-eminent global corporations. Lastly, it examines the role of independent music venues and concerns around the issue of secondary ticketing.

How the Live Music Industry Works

The live music supply chain remains much the same as outlined in Webster (2011). A promoter will decide to put on a show and select a suitable venue. They will then contact the booking agent and negotiate an offer that is deemed sufficient for the agent to forward to the artist's manager. At this stage, as the artist is likely to be performing live for a whole tour, the agent will be looking for a range of possible dates and venues. Once they have secured a number of offers that are close to the fees that artist manager judges to be acceptable, the agent begins to plot a draft tour plan and another round of negotiations then takes place. The agent may ask for an increased fee for shows that they wish to confirm, or suggest an alternative date that makes the tour-routing more efficient in regards to the distance between each performance, as they seek to minimise the amount of time travelling between

each venue. This is both to reduce the costs incurred in terms of travel and accommodation and to ameliorate the effects of touring on both the artist and the road crew.

The live music model discussed above operates in much the same way for artists at all levels. Just as very few artists are able to generate large revenues from recorded music, few artists are able to command performance fees that are sufficient to meet the costs of touring. As Negus (1992) has discussed, these costs were historically met by the major record companies in the form of advance payments made against future royalties due from record sales, but these contractual arrangements are less common in current major company recording contracts and have rarely featured in those agreed between independent labels and their artists. Where a tour is used as promotional support for the release of recorded music, this shortfall may now be met by the artist management company or in an arrangement whereby the artist assigns further rights to the record company in exchange for a higher advance payment, the so-called ‘360 deal’ (Harrison, 2017). It is still imperative to keep touring costs down though, with the concomitant effect of reduced spending on accommodation and living expenses.

However, following the increase in live music revenues and continuing falls in the recorded sector, PRS for Music reported in 2009 that live music had now become the dominant sector (Page & Carey, 2009). This change in dynamics was matched by a growing confidence in the attitudes of live music promoters, who had long been considered to be operating in the less successful part of the music industries. As Cloonan (2013) observes, ‘if you want to understand

something about the state of the contemporary music industries, then understanding the worldviews of concert promoters is a pretty good place to start' (p.79). These worldviews are guided by a distinct 'ideology' based on a shared belief that seeing an artist live is somehow the correct way to consume music, especially in an era where the digital technology of the MP3 file has lessened the listening pleasure of recorded music, losing or compressing some of the frequencies of the original recordings.

As successive PRS For Music reports continued to show a shift in the balance between the live and recorded sectors, further attempts were made to calculate the value of the live music sector. Unlike the recorded sector, however, where the IFPI produces annual reports based on global music sales, live music revenues are difficult to assess, with Page & Carey (2009, 2010, 2011) somewhat controversially including a number of ancillary items that lie outside the main activity of selling tickets. In addition, Dave Laing (2012) argues in his assessment of the global live music industry that it is valid to include in these figures ancillary items such as car parking at venues as they are 'a vital part of the revenues of a company such as Live Nation, which both manages venues and promotes concert tours'. He acknowledges also other revenue streams as forming core elements of the live music sector such as sponsorship arrangements and the licensing of media rights.

Mass Media

These revenue calculations indicate that the live music sector has regained the position it last held before the mass industrialisation of the recorded sector

at the turn of the twentieth century. Although live music continued to be performed while producing sufficient revenues to prompt the forming of the PRS to oversee the licensable activities, it remained in the shadow of the recorded sector. Limitations on travel and the expense of moving musicians from one venue to another restricted live music at a time when recordings could be transmitted globally through radio and consumed in comfort at home. Although radio programmes had relied initially upon the performance of music, recorded sounds quickly became pre-eminent until television introduced (or reintroduced) a visual element to a mass audience and suggested other ways to enjoy an artist and their music.

The star performers of the rock and roll era gained much of their popularity through television and indeed film. Whilst national and international touring remained, at best, difficult to organise and both expensive and time-consuming, either appearances on broadcast television or the distribution of films in cinemas allowed audiences to see the artists and increase the desire to watch them perform live. After years of building a fan base through touring and recording, Elvis Presley's 1950s TV appearances, especially on the Ed Sullivan Show and the subsequent press and media debates, are largely credited with enabling the artist to enter the popular culture mainstream (Runtagh, 2016). Similarly, the film *Rock Around the Clock* and its rock and roll soundtrack was the subject of reported riots in the UK in 1956 as cinema audiences engaged in collective stamping and finger-snapping, while the police sought to eject those standing up and 'jiving' (Sampson, 2012). This presaged an increase in the demand for live music events.

Technical Advances

Satisfying this desire for live music performance had practical and technical limitations. After the Beatles had emerged from the pubs and clubs of Liverpool and Hamburg, their recorded music and accompanying TV and film performances ensured a mass audience for their live shows. As the recordings of the band live at the Hollywood Bowl in 1964 and 1965 attest, 'the dominant sound of the album wasn't the Beatles, but the screams of thousands and thousands of teenagers, screams that blanket the music in sheets of white noise' (Hann, 2016). It is little wonder that the band decided to stop touring shortly afterwards, as their 100 watt Vox amplifiers proved far too inadequate for the sporting stadiums where the concerts were held, especially at a time when on-stage monitors had yet to be invented (Runtagh, 2016b). The large-scale music festivals of the later 1960s would benefit from advances in PA technology which, although still in their infancy, had progressed to bespoke units that could provide around 10,000 watts to power directional speakers to carry sound effectively over long distances (Makower, 2009).

Live music was now ready to be produced and consumed in stadiums and large arenas. The 1970s were characterised by the advent of stadium rock, popularised by artists such as Led Zeppelin, Genesis, Pink Floyd and Emerson, Lake and Palmer, before Punk Rock took music back to the smaller, more visceral spaces of CBGB in New York and the 100 Club in London, in the shape of the Sex Pistols and the Patti Smith Group. This reflected both the simplicity of the music construction and the prevailing do-it-yourself ethic, as artists and audiences sought out more intimate experiences

than the increasingly grandiose performances of stadium rock artists (Bennett, 2001). This also reflected the way that the recorded music scene was developing, with the advent of new independent labels who, far from subsidising the full-scale productions of the archetypal progressive rock artists, were unable even to finance low-budget tours around smaller regional and national venues.

The highlight of the live music scene in the 1980s was the Live Aid 'global jukebox' event which took place on 13 July 1985. Its live counterpart, Band Aid, held in 1984, saw the popular music industry gather to raise money for anti-famine efforts in Ethiopia, when performances from Queen, in particular, ushered in a new era of stadium-rock events. Indeed, the trend continued courtesy of artists such as Simple Minds and U2, which meant that 'Wembley was being used almost as much for music as it was for sport' (Paphides, 2015). Encouraged by the accompanying upsurge in album sales, artists and record companies were also involved in subsequent events including Nelson Mandela's 70th birthday, Freddie Mercury's tribute concert and Live 8, reconfirming the live sector as a promotional tool for many of those individual artists who would otherwise not have had the opportunity to perform in front of such a large and diverse audience.

Live Music Legislation

Outside mainstream popular music performances, the countercultural events of 1985 led to the passing of new live music legislation. The 'Battle of the Beanfield' in Wiltshire on 1 June, saw the police attempt to prevent a convoy

of New Age Travellers from reaching Stonehenge to celebrate the summer solstice. The violent clashes that ensued gave rise to the Public Order Act 1986 and, after the Castlemorton Common Festival in 1992, to the Criminal Justice Act 1994. The latter was introduced under John Major's Conservative government and was intended to curb the rise of ant-social behaviour, making it illegal to play music based on 'sounds wholly or predominantly characterised by the emission of a succession of repetitive beats' (McKay, 1996). As Sarah Thornton (1995) observed in her classic study of youth and club cultures, the late 1980s and early 1990s had seen the rapid development of rave or dance culture, with 'superstar DJs' enjoying the status previously reserved for more traditional music performers. The 'pursuit of forbidden and unpredictable senses of place' (p.22) was one of the key drivers of the rave scene, frequently causing promoters and attendees to come into conflict with local authority regulations and the forces of law and order. However, whilst these challenges brought about an end to a large-scale free festival movement, this also came to represent an opportunity for the promoters of commercial festivals.

Concert Industry

Arguably though, the most important event for the development of the live music industry in the 1990s took place in February 1996, with President Bill Clinton signing the Telecommunications Act. This deregulation of media ownership, reduced 'red tape' interference, a central tenet of neoliberal ideology. The Act included removing the cap on the ownership of radio

stations. According to Dean Budnick and Josh Baron (2011), this paved the way for the SFX Broadcasting media company, formed in 1993 by Robert F.X. Sillerman, to enter new markets and ultimately own eighty-six radio stations in twenty-four cities. Identifying the opportunities in a synergetic relationship between concert promotion and media tie-ins, SFX began a period of acquisitions and mergers. From this base, the US experienced the first consolidation of concert promoters while the earlier business practice of promoters working within their respective regional boundaries was increasingly eroded.

As Peterson (1978) established in his study of contemporary country music, radio is a powerful force in the production of culture. He argued that a symbiotic relationship between the production of records and radio broadcasting had arisen, whereby record companies were making decisions on what music to release according to the programmers of popular country music radio shows. The results of this relationship meant that a number of those ‘troupers’ who had formed the existing basis of the industry were replaced by new artists more suited to both the radio audience and, even more pertinently, to the advertisers who provided the finance for commercial radio in a ‘search for cross-overs’ strategy. Peterson (1978) states that ‘while the record sales of some performers boomed, several sorts of performers were severely hurt due to the loss of air-play exposure’ (p.306) as the industry was shaped by these content programmers, who knew more about the operations of the media industry and advertisers’ priorities than the specific genre of country music they were promoting.

SFX Entertainment

SFX increased their portfolio of concert promoters and rebranded as SFX Entertainment. With little experience in concert promotion, many in the music industry saw this growth as an exercise in creating stock market value regardless of the product, especially as a number of the corporation's acquisitions appeared to be at the cost of inflated prices. However, alongside the concert and sports promotion activities, many of the companies acquired also had ownership of the venues and facilities in which the live events took place. As Allen Becker, the founder of theatrical, concert, touring and motorsport promoters PACE (purchased by SFX for US$130m in 1997), argued, the risks of promotion need to be offset by a wider stake in the audience experience while promoters 'need those other revenue streams, like food, beverages and parking' (cited in Budnick & Baron, 2011: 170), thereby establishing the business model later followed by Page & Carey (2009, 2010, 2011) in the calculation of the live music sector in the annual PRS for Music reports.

Within three years of entering the live music sector, SFX had made purchases totalling more than US$2bn. It now owned or operated one hundred and twenty venues in the USA and was generating annual revenues of US$1.5bn (Budnick & Baron, 2011). Moreover, SFX Entertainment was now expanding internationally and entered the UK market in 1999 in a significant way, purchasing three of the most important live music promoters and venue operators (Frith et al., 2010). These acquisitions included the Apollo Leisure Group, the largest owners of theatres and cinemas in the UK, comprising venues such as the Hammersmith Apollo and the Liverpool Empire. Following

this period of rapid expansion and increasing financial success, despite a rise in ticket prices of almost fifty percent since SFX had entered the UK market, few people in the music industry were surprised when in February 2000 it was announced that SFX Entertainment would be sold to Clear Channel Communications for US$4.4bn (Budnick & Baron, 2011).

According to the only corporate history authorised by the company, the story of Clear Channel is one of entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen (Bunzel, 2008). From its founding in 1972, Clear Channel has grown to be the largest radio and outdoor advertising company in the world. Following its purchase of SFX Entertainment and its stated ability to 'offer artists and entertainers a one-stop resource for touring, production, and promotion' (Bunzel, 2008: 73), there remains controversy over the consolidation of ownership and the potential effects on competition. Independent concert promoters Nobody in Particular Presents (NIPP) filed a lawsuit in Denver in 2001 against Clear Channel and its subsidiaries' business practices, alleging that the radio and concert promotion activities constituted a 'monopolistic, multimedia empire' that was 'severely harming NIPP's ability to compete ... resulting in higher prices and fewer offerings for consumers'. While an agreement was reached out of court in June 2004 with Clear Channel 'admitting no wrongdoing in connection with the lawsuit', other independent concert promoters regretted that the terms of the agreement were not made public (Waddell, 2004). While there is no direct correlation between this agreement and the corporation's subsequent activities, Clear Channel's live entertainment assets were spun off in 2005 and Live Nation Entertainment was formed.

Live Nation Entertainment

In the Annual Report for the fiscal year ending 31 December 2016, Live Nation Entertainment President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Rapino reported the sixth consecutive year of revenue growth. As the self-proclaimed leader in global live entertainment, in 2016 Live Nation staged more than 26,000 events a year in over 40 countries, engaging 71 million music fans and promoting more than 3,000 artists. Moreover, Live Nation owns, operates or retains the exclusive booking rights for 196 venues, including The Fillmore in San Francisco and the 3 Arena in Ireland. In addition, following the merger with the ticketing agency Ticketmaster in 2009 (which had acquired Front Line Management in 2007), Live Nation claims to be responsible for over 480 million ticket sales across a range of arts and commercial platforms including music, sports, museums and theatres, whilst its music management activities saw over 140 managers providing services to more than 500 artists (Live Nation, 2016). The corporate strategy is to protect and grow the leadership position in live entertainment and to continue to increase revenues, earnings and cash flow.

This strategy, which is largely based on a process of mergers and acquisitions and increasing revenue per show through ticket pricing and ‘fan monetization’ on sales of ancillary items, is in line with that followed by Robert Sillerman and SFX. In many ways, it also mirrors the historical practices of consolidation and integration of the recorded sector since 1948 (Peterson & Berger, 1975) and the synergies attempted by Sony (Negus, 1997). It is also another example of the ownership of live music operations becoming increasingly concentrated. However, this continues to be a contentious issue with persistent accusations

of monopolistic practices, as evidenced by a lawsuit filed in 2009 by Maryland-based promoter Seth Hurwitz, alleging that touring artists were being forced to play only at Live Nation venues, to the detriment of concertgoers, independent promoters and artists (CMU, 2009). In 2015, the court ruled in favour of Live Nation and concluded that, although artists were signed to exclusive contracts, there was no evidence that the company's conduct violated US antitrust laws (Ingham, 2015).

Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG)

It is not just the independent sector that has raised concerns with Live Nation's practices. Issues have also arisen with its main global live music competitor, the Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) based in Los Angeles, California, who are recognised as the world's second-largest promotions company. These disputes are often seen as a struggle for supremacy between the publicly-listed Live Nation and the privately-owned AEG, which was founded in 1958 by Fred Anschutz and which has been run since 1962 by Philip Anschutz, the founder's son. Like Live Nation, AEG is the owner of a number of media organisations and has interests in both live music and sports. In the UK, it is known for its ownership of the Millennium Dome in Greenwich (rebranded as the O2 Arena) and for the lawsuit regarding the death of Michael Jackson, filed against the live sector division, AEG Live, on behalf of the performer's family (Duke, 2013).

The consolidation of ownership and management of UK venues by Live Nation and AEG Live prompted an investigation by the Office of Fair Trading

into issues regarding the possible lessening of competition within the UK's live music industry (Sweney, 2013). This followed a bid by AEG Live to take over the management of Wembley Arena after Live Nation's six-year contract ended in 2013, a move that was cleared by the regulatory body despite concerns regarding the effects on ticket pricing and other promoters' access (Kemp, 2013). A previous investigation by the Competition Commission into the merger between Ticketmaster and Live Nation had also ruled that competition would not be affected (Wearden & Allen, 2009), although the initial ruling was reviewed following a challenge by the German ticketing agency CTS Eventim, who later became co-owners of the Hammersmith Apollo in London with AEG Live. This was also cleared by the Competition Commission. As will be discussed in more detail later, this pattern of consolidation within the live music sector is also reflected and repeated in a series of acquisitions within the music festival sector.

These concerns, although mostly evident at the corporate level given the concentration of the ownership of large-scale venues, can also be viewed as a significant factor in the operations of what Frith et al. (2010) term the 'live music ecology'. As the phrase suggests, this ecology is a balanced relationship involving a range of economic actors, in which players including venues, promoters, managers, artists, record companies and regulators, all interact in an exchange of commodities. In this dynamic, living and ever-changing environment, it is vital to understand that 'local, small-scale do-it-yourself promotion remains as necessary to the live music ecology as Live Nation' (Frith et al., 2010: 3). Clearly a disruption in one area – whether concerning the concentration of ownership of large-scale venues, a growth in

the provision of new or expanded music festivals or the development of a new technology for consuming recorded music – threatens a series of consequential adjustments across the ecological landscape.

Independent Music Venues

One area of recent particular concern has been the loss of a number of small, independent music venues across the UK. This process has been charted and highlighted through Mark Davyd's establishment of the Music Venue Trust (MVT) in 2014, a registered charity that seeks to protect the live music network by securing the long-term future of venues threatened with closure. This work is seen as a crucial element in the continuation of developing British music as it enables the nurturing of local talent by 'providing a platform for artists to build their careers and develop their music and their performance skills' (MVT, 2018). The definition of Grassroots Music Venues (GMV) according to their economic, cultural and social importance is one of the key elements in campaigns to protect venues under threat from property development and this widening of the discourse can be seen as instrumental in the House of Lords Select Committee recommending, in terms of the Licensing Act 2003, that the 'Agent of Change' principle be adopted in both planning and licensing guidance (Davyd, 2017). Under this principle, which was included in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that came into force on 24 July 2018, the existence of a current music venue will need to be considered when granting planning permission for new developments. Former minister John Spellar MP, who tabled the bill, underlined that: 'This is

great news for musicians and music lovers whose voice has been loud and has now been heard. Local authorities must now make use of these vital tools to support our world leading music creativity throughout our towns, cities and communities' (IQ, 2018).

Although the role of the state has been far more important to the activities of the recorded music industry (Cloonan, 2007), it is also a significant element of the live music ecology. Whether through the adoption of positive legislation as detailed above or the curtailing of activities through the Criminal Justice Bill, the actions of local, regional and national governments have played a key part in the economics of live music production over the last fifty years (Frith, 2012b). Long-term reviews of the negative effects of the Licensing Act in 2003, which saw the passing of the Live Music Act in 2012 that removed many of the restrictions in staging and supporting small-scale events (UK Government, 2012), in many ways illustrates the lack of government activity in the sector. The UK Live Music Census 2017 highlighted the situation that, despite these interventions, a number of concerns still remain. Indeed, while the adoption of the agent-of-change principle promises to protect the grassroots venues under threat from developers, it is not clear how this policy will help to address some of the other negative impacts, from the costs of paying artists through to diminishing audiences and an increasingly competitive environment (Webster et al., 2018). Protecting venues has no direct correlation to the diminution of audiences and – as discussed in Chapter One in relation to the observations of Chris Cusack, Events/Venue Manager of BLOC+, Glasgow (Webster et al., 2018: 87) – it is not necessarily the closing of venues but the concentration of ownership that is the real issue

for independent live music promotion. In such a delicate live music ecology, a positive change in one direction may even prove to exacerbate some of the underlying structural problems in another.

Despite the actions of UK Music, the Music Venue Trust and others, the call for financial support in England for the live areas music that they represent, have gone largely unheeded. In the 2017 round of Arts Council England (ACE) funding, MVT asked ACE to invest in overhauling the live music infrastructure at a cost of approx. £1m annually for five years. Founder Mark Davyd, in conversation with Will Gompertz on BBC Radio, reported that MVT had been turned down for the third year in succession (Music Venue Trust, 2017). According to Barton (2017), the lack of support for small music venues is due to a disproportionate support for opera and classical music, with 85% of the funding directed to this area, with the Royal Opera House alone being awarded £96m. This debate about ‘high’ and ‘low’ or popular culture has consistently shadowed the commercialisation of live and recorded music, an attitude, according to O’Connor (2010), that can be summarised as ‘the arts need protection; commercial and popular culture can look after itself’ (p.57). However, at a time when UK Music presents such striking headline figures for the revenues generated by live music, it is tempting to wonder if such overt promotion allows for certain underlying challenges to be obscured or overlooked.

Secondary Ticketing

In May 2016, at the invitation of the Secretaries of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and Culture, Media and Sport respectively, Professor Michael Waterson completed an independent review into online secondary ticketing facilities. The review concluded that there was no need for new legislation but called for further clarification and enforcement of the provision for regulating the secondary ticketing market under the existing Consumer Rights Act 2015.

Although the Digital Economy Act 2017 included a strengthening of these provisions with the addition of a requirement to provide information about the tickets such as a 'unique ticket number that may help the buyer to identify the seat or standing area or its location' (UK Government, 2017: 117), a number of concerns still remain. The FanFair Alliance (2017), an initiative aiming to unite members of music and the creative community, still detect issues around the misleading of ticket buyers by the search engine optimisation (SEO) practices of secondary ticketing platforms such as Viagogo, Stubhub and Get Me In, directing ticket buyers away from primary ticket sellers even before events have sold out.

It is also notable that one of Live Nation's corporate strategies is to continue to grow their secondary ticketing volume through their own 'trusted sites', Get Me In and Seatwave. This is despite continuing concerns that: 'Ticketmaster stands to gain from high prices on the secondary websites because its subsidiaries, such as Get Me In, take a percentage commission on each one' (Jones & Davies, 2016). Although Frith (2016) observes that for a rational

economist secondary ticketing is really just a market working to its optimum, the conflict of interest is of clear concern for the ecology's wellbeing, as fans' considerable financial investment in live music becomes revenue streams for companies operating outside the music industries' purview. The long-term results of the attempts by Kilimanjaro Live CEO Stuart Galbraith to raise awareness of this issue around the resale of tickets for Ed Sheeran's 2018 UK tour, with fans complaining of being 'left in the lurch' (Snapes, 2018), still remain to be seen. Similarly, the real effects of Ticketmaster's 'Verified Fan', which may 'beat the touts' by requiring 'real fans' to buy more merchandise or provide more data via social media sites (Jones, 2018), could yet prove to be too high a price to pay. Whatever the solutions, secondary ticketing can be viewed as the 'value gap' that the live music industry needs to close, corresponding to the recorded music sector's 'safe harbour' concerns.

Summary

This chapter examined the development of the live music industry, demonstrating how through a process of mergers and acquisitions the two largest live music corporations – Live Nation Entertainment and AEG – have increased their share of the live industry market. The chapter also considered issues around the loss of independent music venues and attempts to address concerns regarding the secondary ticketing market. Chapter Six now focuses on the music festival sector.

Chapter Six: Music Festival Sector

Introduction

Where Chapter Five looked at the operation of the wider live music industry, this chapter focuses on the music festival sector. While it is at best artificial to separate music festivals from the wider industry – especially when they have been shown to be the driver for growth within the live music sector – it is useful to distinguish them in two ways. Firstly, music festivals can be seen as operating tangentially in relation to the main live music sector. Many individuals and occupational groupings enter the industry through engaging in music festivals and have no experience and indeed little interest in the wider live music economy. Secondly, whilst many of the larger corporations and professionals operate within and across both elements, the concerns of the two segments are not always fully aligned and at times are in fact oppositional. This is particularly evident in the relations between music venues and music festivals, an often-contested arena of mutual support or direct competition.

Using desk research methods, the chapter first considers how the music festival sector works. Second, it questions Bennett, Taylor & Woodward's (2016) notion of the festivalization of culture. Lastly, it considers Getz's (2010) identification of three discourses and applies the phenomenological experiences of the festival organisers to the categories therein.

How the Music Festival sector works

While the history of the recorded and live music industries can be traced back with more or less accuracy and tied to their relevant technological developments, the field of Festival Studies remains somewhat in its infancy. As noted previously, even defining festivals presents difficulties as does any attempt to set clear, categorical boundaries. Anton Shone & Bryn Parry (2010) define special events as those arising from non-routine occasions characterised according to their degree of uncertainty and complexity. They divide them into four types: personal, such as birthdays and anniversaries; organisational, including corporate events and conferences; cultural, revolving around established rituals and ceremonies; and leisure events, which is where the music festival sector has developed. Graham Berridge (2011b) views festivals as 'cultural celebrations' that are intended for the involvement of the public to distinguish them from staged spectacles, thereby placing the experience of the consumer at the heart of this type of special event. For Donald Getz (2010), modern festivals are the products of dynamic processes that are 'created and managed with multiple goals, stakeholders and meanings attached to them' (p.7), while Stephen Page & Joanne Connell (2011) point to the range of themes embodied in festivals and their further embeddedness in social identities and local cultures. Many commercial events today still draw on established myths and folk-memories of festival sites and rituals in their imaginative re-workings of historical legend, from Glastonbury ley lines through to Wicker men and tribal gatherings.

Festivals can be deduced from their sites, from the stone circles of Stonehenge in Wiltshire to those of Callanish in the Outer Hebrides, from their rituals captured in the pagan folklore of James Frazer's (1963) *The Golden Bough* and in a Western philosophical strand of Orphism that Bertrand Russell (2004) traces in a line from Pythagoras through to Plato and beyond. Yet, while they cross barriers of geography, time and thought, their history remains tantalisingly out of reach, relying on assumption, inference and belief. Festivals are social and temporal units, requiring planning, agreement and assent. Moreover, as Gold & Gold (2011) attest, they are built on ideologies, a 'set of ideas, beliefs and images that a group employs to make the world more intelligible to itself' (p.120). From this complex nexus of ritual and celebration, spectacle and awe, worship and community, an industrial matrix has been formed into a festival industry and from there into a recognisable music festival industry, one that contributes to the £1bn estimated to be generated annually by the UK live music industry (UK Music, 2018).

Frith (2016) sees the live music industry as following a path from nature to culture to commerce. Here, naturally occurring rituals develop into expressions of cultural ideas and beliefs before, over time, becoming the subject of commercial transactions. While festivals offered the opportunity to broaden social ties, they have also been long-term sites of commerce and trade. Religious festivals provided a market for goods in the shape of holy relics and the provision of services, such as the receiving of blessings and the granting of indulgences. As Mikhail Bakhtin (1984) asserts, the time of carnival in the Middle Ages as depicted in the novels of Francois Rabelais allowed for the symbolic destruction of authority and official culture while

‘even within bourgeois culture the festive element did not die’ (p.276). The converse though, is equally true. Whilst the community was indulging in their festivities, the revelries were supported by planned entertainments and the ancillary supplies of food and drink, demonstrating that, in the festival culture, the bourgeois element does not die.

As Chris Anderton (2008) correctly notes, the move to a more structured political economic exploitation of the social need for the easing of hierarchies did not take place until the 1960s and early 1970s. However, it is possible to see many of the ongoing commercial opportunities offered by the carnival, exploited after the middle ages, as the spectacle of Louis XIV’s Versailles and the eighteenth-century aristocratic English taste for horticulture were translated into spaces and places for bourgeois entertainment. In his historical narrative of the importance of parks and parkland, *A Walk in The Park,* Travis Elborough (2017) details how the commercial pleasure gardens of London were ‘opened as hard-headed business ventures’ (p.48), designed for a clientele wary of the commons and heathland who were also denied access to the closed-off areas under private ownership. However they did wish to enjoy the staged pleasures of outdoor entertainment ‘as long as they could afford the entrance fee’ (p.49). The most famous and once infamous space, the Vauxhall pleasure gardens on the south bank of the River Thames, was reopened under new management in 1732 with the addition of new eating areas and a concert hall, the ‘Rotunda’, that could hold 2,000 people. In a move to provide more edifying entertainment, the opening was marked by a masked ball attended by the German composer Handel, who would later choose the gardens for the debut of his ‘Music for the Royal Fireworks’.

While festivals and festive gatherings continued as part of the fabric of social and commercial life, George McKay (2015) considers 1951 and the Festival of Britain as marking the birth of the modern festival industry. This organized mix of politics, culture and commerce inaugurated a post-war decade where popular music would come to embrace both the visceral nature of rock and roll and the loosening of traditional elements in the established genres of folk and jazz. While the more violent tendencies of the 'Teddy Boys' with their Edwardian-influenced dress and use of cut-throat razors gained popular notoriety, McKay relates how tensions between the followers of modernist and traditional jazz spilled over in 1960's 'Battle of Beaulieu' at the jazz festival of the same name. This dispute between subcultures, centred on music and associated lifestyles, presaged much of the tension around the staging of festivals over the following decades.

In a period of growing uncertainty and complexity, the social tensions of the 1960s manifested themselves around the demand for civil rights and in the geopolitical conflicts embodied in the Vietnam War. Much of this tension was channelled and experienced through the medium of music, with the controversy of Bob Dylan's move away from the purity of folk music to electrification and increased amplification causing consternation at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. As Joe Boyd (2006), stage manager and later producer of Pink Floyd, relates, when Dylan and the band began their electric set 'the volume wasn't particularly high, but in 1965 it was probably the loudest thing anyone in the audience had ever heard. A buzz of shock and amazement ran through the crowd' (p. 97). While the lyrical content of Dylan's songs had moved away from the political, the 'noise' encapsulated the era of

social disruption and was a foretaste of the genre of rock music that would come to dominate the music industry in the later 1960s and early 1970s.

The main outpouring of countercultural expression in the USA was evoked in the iconic music festivals at the end of the 1960s. The Woodstock Music and Art Fair and the Altamont Free Concert, were mirrored in the UK by the Isle of Wight festivals that ran from 1968-1970. To Nicholas Gebhardt (2015), these festivals were founded in the ideology of rock music as anti-establishment and liberationist, emerging spontaneously from the musical representatives of youth culture. Moreover, there was a widespread belief in 'the potential for rock festivals to alter our experience of the world' (pp.57-58). However, while the arrival of more than 500,000 festival-goers signalled the social importance of the event, the ensuing unregulated access was entirely unplanned and unwanted. The festival had been organised as a solely commercial enterprise that was expected to yield significant profit for the promoters Michael Lang, Artie Kornfeld, Joel Rosenman and John Roberts while Woodstock's enduring socio-cultural significance is largely an unintended consequence of its excessive, countercultural appeal (Robinson, 2009).

The more-planned cultures of resistance that followed the events of the 1960s, are identified by McKay (1996) as evident in the staging of the Pilton Pop, Folk & Blues Festival in September 1970. Attended by 1,500 people and with a ticket price of £1, which included free milk from the farm, in 1971 the festival was held at the summer solstice and became known as the Glastonbury Fair. The festival offered free entrance and was intended to be a reaction to the over-commercialisation of other festivals at that time

(Glastonbury Festivals, 2017). Similar events took place elsewhere in the UK, including the Windsor Free Festival in Windsor Great Park which ran 1972 until 1974. Despite a peaceful philosophy – including the promotion of communal living and the abolition of rented property – the nine-day festival ended abruptly with Thames Valley police officers forcefully removing everyone from the site (UK Rock Festivals, 2013).

The 1980s saw a mix of politics and social awareness adding fresh impetus to the UK festival scene. The Greenham Common peace camp was established in Berkshire in 1981 to protest against the deployment of 96 cruise missiles at Greenham Common air base (Marsden, 2013) and the first Glastonbury Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) Festival was staged in the same year. Following the 'Battle of the Beanfield' in 1985, large-scale outdoor illegal parties or raves saw 1988 dubbed the 'Second Summer of Love'. Steve Redhead (1997) questions whether there is a tendency to hedonistic practices amongst youth cultures during times of economic downturn and wonders whether the attempts to legislate against such practices actually encourage these transgressive behaviours. One consequence that Redhead (1997) does clearly identify, following Thornton's (1995) update on Hebdige (1979), is that 'involvement in youth cultures has been prolonged' (Redhead, 1997: 101), an observation which may be seen to have some bearing on the 'family appeal' of those festivals that entered the market at the time when the youth of the 1980s and 1990s became parents in the post-millennium era.

The V Festival began in 1996 at a time when Glastonbury had been cancelled following crowd trouble the previous year. As Anderton (2008) notes, the

festival's appeal to a wider mainstream audience was maintained throughout the 1990s against a backdrop of negativity around such events following the media representations of the Castlemorton raves and the passing of the Criminal Justice Act in 1994. By focusing on safety and security, the organisers were able to project the image of an audience experience far removed from the lawlessness and countercultural ideologies of other large-scale outdoor festivals. Moreover, the programming of the event relied on a booking policy closely aligned to the actions of the recorded sector, which helped to position the festival within the mainstream of popular culture. Indeed, in 2003 the three headlines artists – the Red Hot Chili Peppers, David Gray and Coldplay – had between them 'accounted for a quarter of all rock music album sales' (Anderton, 2008: 45) in the previous year. This booking policy and the improvement of festivals' image increased the interest of sponsors who wanted to be associated with the brands and their audience demographic, which in many ways prepared the way for the new wave of festivals.

One of the key elements in the growth of the music festival sector and a rise in overall festival attendance was the creation of so called 'boutique' festivals. These are characterised as small- or medium-sized events offering a high level of customer service and experience. Roxy Robinson (2015) also notes that they are sites of elevated interactivity between producers and consumers, breaking down norms of artistic distance in acts of co-creation. Alongside more creative programming and greater concern for the event design elements involved in the 'spatial organizational and aesthetic arrangements' of the festival sites, Robinson (2015: 167) perceives an underlying ideology

based on a new, ‘utopian zeitgeist’, a mode of living distanced from, rather than resistant to, the everyday concerns of the connected and ‘always on’ imperatives of the networked age. On a more pragmatic level, she also believes that the emphasis on audience agency meant that there was a reduction in the need for boutique festivals such as Green Man, Bestival and the Big Chill to compete with the larger festivals in the competitive marketplace of securing headline artists.

While boutique and niche festivals are often associated with notions of independence and small-scale promotion, which will be considered in more detail later, the organisations that own or operate these events do not always match this perception. One of the earliest boutique events held in the UK is the Latitude festival which takes place in mid-July in Henham Park, Southwold, Suffolk. Founded in 2004, the festival is owned and operated by Festival Republic, an organization which was originally formed in 1982 by Vince Power as part of the Mean Fiddler Group after its takeover of the Reading Festival. The current organisation is owned by Live Nation and the event company MCD, the latter founded by Denis Desmond, now the Chairman of Live Nation UK.[17] Along with Reading and Leeds festivals, Festival Republic also controls the Wireless Festival in London and the Download Festival in Leicestershire in the UK and the Berlin Festival in Germany.

[17] The Live Nation Annual Report (2016) states that ‘the Company acquired the remaining equity interests in a festival promoter based in Ireland along with other smaller companies’ (p.81), which may refer to the purchase of MCD’s shareholding.

Just as Live Nation and AEG Live compete in the live music sector in relation to the operation of venues and concert promotion, the consolidation of festival ownership is also the site of contest and competition. As the organisation of Festival Republic indicates, the shareholding or ownership of festivals is not always transparent, even with regards to the many small-scale and boutique events that comprise the membership of the Association of Independent Festivals. Indeed, Glastonbury Festival, which has a very clear identification with the organisers Michael and Emily Eavis, was operated by Festival Republic for a period of ten years from 2002 until 2012, as the festival dealt with ongoing issues around securing an entertainment licence following the difficulties of the 1990s. However, the publicly announced activities of the largest and second largest live music organisations are evidence that a period of mergers and acquisitions of festivals continues to take place, mirroring the development of the global live music sector since SFX entered the marketplace in 1996.

With the purchase of a majority stake in Sweden Rock Festival, Live Nation brought the number of festivals they control in Sweden alone up to six, as they continue to build their global festival portfolio. This portfolio now consists of over eighty festivals worldwide, including more than half of the top twenty-five festivals in the global marketplace, part of a strategy that saw seven major global acquisitions in 2016, contributing to their US$113.1m spend in one financial year (Ingham, 2016). Moreover, the formation of a new promotions company to trade as Metropolis Music, saw Live Nation become a stakeholder in the V Festival and expand its booking team with the addition of staff from the Metropolis promotions company (Hanley, 2017).

This expansion, however, continues to cause friction in the marketplace. A recent dispute in the USA between AEG and Azoff MSG Entertainment (MSG) concerning restricting the ability of artists to choose venues operated by different promoters as part of their touring schedule, has now seen AEG erect similar restrictions around The O2 in London. With Live Nation supporting MSG in the dispute, AEG issued a statement referring to the use of a 'coordinated booking strategy' to protect their business interests and accusing Live Nation of the 'height of hypocrisy' due to its threat to file an anti-trust action in response to this policy (Sutherland, 2017). Moreover, the statement highlights that Live Nation are using their influence to direct promoters to venues that use Ticketmaster as their ticketing provider, even when they do not have a stake in those venues, which underlines the possible monopolistic effects of their vertical integration strategies. Competition in the festival market is further highlighted by the creation of a new event by AEG Live. Described by US trade magazine *Billboard* as 'The Battle of the New York Festivals' it is seen as another stage in an ongoing narrative where 'Live Nation and AEG Live have been engaged in an escalating competition as the festival market has exploded' (Rys, 2016). However, while the long-established Governor's Ball operated by Live Nation has now been joined by AEG's Panorama, the situation in the UK is further complicated by a relatively new entrant into the marketplace, Global.

Like SFX and Clear Channel, Global is primarily a media and communications organisation. Founded in 2007, Global own a number of radio stations including the top four commercial radio brands in the UK: Heart, Capital,

Classic FM and Smooth. Alongside LBC and Radio X, Global stations have a combined audience reach of 25.1m according to the Radio Joint Audience Research's (RAJAR, 2017) *Quarterly Summary of Radio Listening* for the second quarter of 2017. Their branded events include Capital's Summertime Ball which takes place in Wembley Stadium in June each year and the Jingle Bell Ball held at the O2 Arena in December. Heart Live and Classic FM Live also host live music concerts and events. Global Publishing is a music publishing division with a roster of artists such as Ellie Goulding, The Script and The Waterboys, and the Artist Management division also has a number of contracted artists, while the Global Academy, which opened in Hayes, Middlesex in 2016 in partnership with the University of the Arts, London, offers full state education from 14-18 and vocational training in the creative industries (Global, 2017).

In the festival marketplace, Global have made several acquisitions in a short space of time. Having only entered the sector in 2015, the organisation now claims to be the second largest festival operator in the UK. Their portfolio of events includes Festival Number 6 which takes place in Wales, South West Four and Field Day in London, Kendal Calling in Cumbria and the Y Not festival in Derbyshire. Internationally, Global control or have a shareholding in the Hideout festival in Croatia and Snowbombing in Austria and Canada, which UK trade magazine *Music Week* describes as 'a series of strategic moves made by Global to grow its festival roster across the UK, Europe and Canada' (Hanley, 2017b). The growth to a portfolio of seventeen festivals has been accompanied by a recruitment in staff, including Live Nation executive Debbie Ward, who is part of a new commercial festivals team as Global seek

to expand their client base of brand partnerships for festivals, using the leverage of their existing radio listenership to broaden sponsorship opportunities (Jones, 2017).

This period of mergers and acquisitions mirrors previous eras of consolidation in the recording industry. Peterson & Berger (1975) noted how a cycle of concentration and competition could be observed, as new companies entered the marketplace or innovative technologies disrupted the established means of production and consumption. Tschmuck (2012) identifies periods of 'merger mania', including the period 1985-2003, where the initial promise of the 'dot.com bubble' burst as the sharing of digital music files bypassed the distribution channels in peer-to-peer transactions between personal computers. Negus (1992) sees a web of majors and minors, but is dismissive of any 'aesthetically or ideologically alternative form of music making' (p.18) as independent companies are just as engaged in the commercial exploitation of music as the major corporations. It does appear, however, that the festival sector is moving towards the end of a cycle of innovation that began around 2003 with the emergence of boutique festivals; the concerns of the members of the AIF expressed at the Congress in Cardiff in November 2016 supports this view. As the Chair Jim Mawdsley reported, the strong move of Global into the marketplace and Live Nation's policy of booking artists for multiple events posed challenges around exclusivity clauses in contracts and inflated fees, suggesting that the independent festivals consider working together to increase their buying power. Such a move would accelerate consolidation and reduce diversity within the festival ecology.

Festivalization of Culture

As Frith (2007a) states, the growth in the live music sector has ‘undoubtedly been the festival’ (p.4) while mergers and acquisitions offer economic benefits of consolidation for the global corporations. Alongside the economies of scale in negotiating costs with suppliers, the earnings potential of a live event taking place across whole days or multiple days, is increased by the opportunities for ancillary sales of merchandising and beverages. Consequently, as the festival industry matures, the ability to commercialise the carnivalesque (Anderton, 2008) moves beyond the organisations involved in promotion, creating a network of specialist and niche companies providing the means for producing these temporal sites of production and consumption. At the macro production level, these become industrialised developments of those ‘art worlds’ that Becker (1982) identifies when new art forms are at their early stages of innovation. These range from the festival necessities such as sound and lighting, marquees and temporary structures, food and drink outlets, health and safety provision and sanitation, through to more esoteric elements like wellbeing, body-painting and balloon-shaping.

As festivals continue to grow in economic importance, the organisers of these cultural goods and services develop from part-time and weekend suppliers to form part of a year-round festival industry, moving from site to site within the established festival calendar. Moreover, as labour is engaged in these portfolio activities, the way of life embodied by festival ideologies of freedom, escapism and hedonism can be seen as embedded in far wider social and economic actions. Sean Nye & Ronald Hitzler (2015) argue in their study of the growth of the Love Parade in Berlin, that these notions form part of a mind

set that can be characterised as ‘easyjetset tourism,’ where the need or desire for experiential consumption has led to an ‘eventization’ of culture. This has been encouraged by the development of the events industry in the provision of spectacle and entertainment, from the one-off staging of mega-events such as the Olympics through to the promotion of local or regional events as part of long-term event tourism strategies. As Getz and Page (2016) point out, events are a key part of image-making and destination attraction, and this highly developed tourism system involves both tourists and residents in an almost continuous cycle of marketing and promotion.

Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor & Ian Woodward (2016) see that, as these strategies are often grouped around the myriad of events described as festivals, it is reasonable to posit a ‘festivalization of culture’, as these events take on so many functions and purposes in contemporary society. This also informs the study of music tourism, where space and place are animated by the music, even outside the duration of the planned events. In his exploration of the King Biscuit Blues festival which takes place in Helena, Arkansas, Robert Fry (2014) highlights the ways in which promoters use festivals to commercialise space and how they carefully construct notions of localism and authenticity for the audience. Fry discusses how heritage and reanimation allow an historic site of music production to exist in the present, as the boutique festival ideal of blurring audience and performer is enacted ‘through the act of visiting and interacting with Helena during the real time and space of the festival weekend’ (p.73). Indeed, he views this as a form of ‘moral tourism’ demonstrating how the industry can be characterised as an inversion of Frith’s progression, from commerce to culture to nature, as producers offer

consumers a festival ideology of ‘back to nature’ freedom for the price of the entrance fee.

This promise permeates many areas of everyday existence. While Webster & McKay (2016) admit the difficulties in defining music festivals, Chris Stone (2009) suggests that there are at least 19 types of pop festival in a taxonomy ranging from commercial to charitable event. As Webster (2014) points out, the potential overuse of the term ‘festival’ has prompted many organisers to opt for alternatives, which is especially pertinent as marketers use the term for anything from a ‘Festival of Speed’ which aims to ‘create the largest car culture event in the world’ (Goodwood, 2017) to a Festival of Governance, where the Good Governance Institute seeks to turn ‘the sometimes “dull but worthy” world of corporate governance on its head’ (Festival of Governance, 2017). In addition, Anderton (2016) identifies a process of ‘churn’ whereby the supply of events is constantly changing and evolving, with many festivals never progressing beyond the first year and articles regularly appearing predicting the end of the growth cycle (Ferguson, 2015; Rinaldi, 2015; Hermann, 2016). Indeed, as the Pemberton Festival in Canada was abruptly declared bankrupt in April 2017, questions were raised if this marks the symbolic end for independent festivals as Bestival in Toronto also ceased trading after two years and the Secret Garden Party in the UK hosted its final event (Helmore, 2017). It is as actors within this structural and largely economic context that the practices of festivals organisers will be explored first.

Three Discourses

Getz (2010) identified three strands of festival studies: Event Tourism, Event Management, and Classical. At the macro level, the most relevant discourses are those of Event Tourism and Event Management, as they are more or less instrumental in nature and structured according to industrial modes of the production of culture. The Classical discourse, with its basis in the roles and meanings of society and culture are largely confined to the meso and micro analyses, where the practices of the organisers will be examined as human agents engaged in social actions and interactions. As has been seen in Chapters Four and Five, the shifting balance between these industries affects the ways in which music is produced and consumed. This section will now consider in what ways festival organisers are conscious of operating within these organisational structures.

Organisational Structures

The degree to which festival organisers perceive the organizational structures of the music industry sector in which they act, is one of the key differentiators between the respondents. This can be classified as a more or less emic or etic viewpoint, equating to ‘industry insider’ or ‘industry outsider’. The more embedded in the music industry – often a process of self-identification – the more likely the respondent will be to identify and discuss the organisational structures of production. The more they present themselves as outside or peripheral to the music industry, the more likely they are to adopt a viewpoint aligned more closely to the consumption perspective. The etic position should not be confused with ‘outsider’ in the sense of ‘maverick’, which is a way of using deep industry knowledge to bend or shape existing rules. As Negus (1997) notes, the difficulties Sony experienced in their takeover of CBS were largely due to their initial inability to grasp this distinction. The existing A&R personnel were trained specialists who used their understanding of the system to make decisions that often appeared to go against the grain, while the ‘mavericks’ that were introduced by Sony were unable to grasp the workings of the organisational structures.

The discourse around the music industry often appears to be in apparent opposition to other organisational cultures. Respondents describe a culture that is unlike other industries, that is less structured and more open to experiment and risk. To the festival organisers, it differs greatly from a culture such as that identified in British Cycling (discussed in Chapter Four). There are many points, however, where festival organisation interacts with other industries and R3, the most experienced of the respondents, identifies one

area in particular, regarding the use of a venue which normally hosts corporate and sporting activities:

> […] they were absolutely flabbergasted that I needed a thousand pounds in cash to pay somebody from Jamaica because they wouldn't take a cheque and I had to pay somebody else in cash because they'd gone bankrupt before.

R3 puts down the use of cash and the apparent lack of accountability to the way in which music festivals are still somehow part of a 'cottage industry' yet to adopt modern corporate practices. However, in an era of mergers and acquisitions, such practices are unlikely to be widespread in the contemporary festival industry.

Event Tourism

Growth in music festivals

The discourse of Event Tourism is largely concerned with addressing issues around the impacts of events within a globalised society of consumers. A number of factors are considered in relation to the development of event tourism and these will be applied to the study of music festivals as a particular feature within this growth. R2, a long-time organiser and promoter of a number of different events, sees the growth as one of the ways in which the festival industry has continued to change over time: 'So one [i.e. a festival] appears, it lasts two or three years, or a year, it goes and somebody fills in the market'. It is evident here that he views the organizational structure as dictated by the marketplace, where production is tested by the actions and reactions of consumers as economic actors. Similarly, R3, as another actor

fully immersed in the industry, believes that 'there just seems to be so many people trying to do new kinds of festivals, new kinds of events'. This clearly reflects a pejorative view of those entering the industry without long-term experience or sufficient understanding, while also highlighting how the music industry is widely perceived as allowing such experimentation and risk-taking.

However, each new entrant has the potential to disrupt the market. If the total ticket sales for all events remained static, then any sales diverted to a newcomer will have an economic impact on existing events. This is also evident in the ways that R2 and R3 consider that technological advances have had a deleterious effect in terms of further lowering the barriers to entering the market. They believe that the internet provides information that was previously unobtainable without structural knowledge and that this increased visibility means that 'It's not as daunting as it was maybe 10, 15 years ago' (R2) while 'everything seems quite achievable now, once you've got a Mac' (R3). Although the disruptive potential of technological advances is unlikely to be as serious to the live industry as the effects of digital technologies on the recorded industry,[18] it is perhaps this access to 'insider' knowledge that is of the greatest concern to the long-established promoters.

For respondents who have been involved with one event for a considerable length of time, their viewpoints can be plotted around the middle of the emic/etic axis, thereby retaining a more balanced production/consumption

[18] Watson (2013) details how advances in digital recording techniques continue to place both new and experienced producers and engineers in a precarious and increasingly exploitative working environment.

view. R8 believes ‘the fact that it’s been a very tough economic climate has meant that people choose to potentially have their holidays in this country,’ a trend that is popularly known as ‘staycation’. This results in festivals becoming more family-orientated occasions, especially the boutique events that offer more than just concert-style entertainment. R4, R5 and R6 all point to the shift in the balance between the recorded and live sectors, such that: ‘bands need to play live now to make their money’ (R5); ‘the industry's been putting money into it to make it happen’ (R4); or, more simply, ‘the whole live sector is growing anyway’ (R6). These views place the industry at more arms-length than full immersion and tend to obscure some of the realities of the live music sector. As discussed, many artists will receive only a token fee for a festival performance, or even play for free. Without the support of record labels and with given travel and crew costs to attend festivals outside the live music circuit, these performances are still often viewed as promotion for new and early career artists, while the higher fees are concentrated in rewarding a small percentage of established or heritage acts.

For R1and R7, growth is seen as a broader issue. While R1 has experience of a number of events at an operational level as well as wider recorded music industry knowledge, she still views festivals as sites of consumption rather than production. The focus here is on trends in new types of festivals, concentrated in urban areas that are more convenient to access and less expensive to attend and reflect largely uncritical views of consumption rather than production:

> I think people start off being like, ‘oh, I'll go to this one-day festival’, and then realise that actually they really enjoy the festival scene and can continue that into picking a bigger festival to go to.

R8’s festival takes place outside the mainstream of the music industry, both in musical genre and geography, and this allows for a similar viewpoint: ‘I think probably people like to come out of their houses to actually listen to music, and I think that’s probably something that is unlikely to change any time soon’. That said, she saw this appeal in the context of the changes in recorded music consumption while the growth in music festivals may lie in their ‘antithesis’ to this digital abundance.

Impacts of music festivals

Webster & McKay’s (2016) literature review divided the impact of music festivals into a number of linked categories. These are named as: economy and charity; politics and power; temporality and transformation; creativity: music and musicians; place-making and tourism; mediation and discourse; health and well-being; environment, both local and global. The organisers were also conscious of the multiple impacts of their events, although again many variations can be identified. R2, having promoted events in areas of low economic activity, including regions which have been in receipt of European Social Funds (ESF) and European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), has a strong awareness of the economic impact of festivals at local level, both in the preparation of applications for potential funding and the completion of reports as required in those cases where funding had been granted. He affirms that his strategy has always been to involve local businesses in his

events, both to align with the funding objectives, such as the Government's plan to 'encourage communities in England to take, own and design solutions to local issues' (Department for Work and Pensions, 2015: 127) but also to recognize his own place within the community: 'the town had an amazing day because they had several thousand people eating, drinking, travelling, taxis coming in through there. So the economic benefit for that was amazing'. His identification with 'the town' demonstrates an acknowledgement of both the social and economic impact of events and the understanding that promoters in such areas need to rely more heavily on governmental policies to support their entrepreneurial activities.

Other festivals also place an emphasis on their social impacts. As Leadbeater & Oakley (1999) claim 'creative communities can provide ideas, contacts, complementary skills, venues and access to the market' (p.25) and festivals often provide the means for these communities to form. In *Bowling Alone,* Robert Putnam (2000) sees the decline in the usage of communal spaces of leisure as a weakening of those ties that bind local communities together. This diminution in the 'networks of community engagement [that] foster sturdy norms of reciprocity' (p.20) reduces the social capital on which healthy communities are based. As R7 confirms:

> […] we've got people generally in the communities where the gigs are going to be. One, so that you can do the kind of liaison with the halls, and people making teas and all the things that you need to do from a ground-level. But also hopefully, making sure that everybody in those local communities are really aware of what's going on.

Similarly, R6 asserts that the success of her festival relies entirely on having ‘very good relationships’ within the locality. This attention to the concerns of the local community not only provides for greater cohesion but allows for a sense of ownership and pride among a wider cross-section of stakeholders.

Place-making is another impact that many of the promoters see as key to their success and image is an important element of Event Tourism. For festivals, this is expressed by the way in which the promoters conceive and mediate events. To R2, ‘what you have to deliver is the concept in advance in terms of the art and the creativeness to gather people's interest.’ Festivals need to be distinguishable within the marketplace, especially if they are new events. R8 agrees: ‘For a festival to be successful, I think you have to have a very clear idea of your own identity. What is it that you stand for?’ This sense of purpose is a vital part of forming an image while one of the challenges that promoters face is maintaining their attraction against the novelty of new festivals. As R1 expresses, from a broadly consumer perspective, there is now a far greater choice of events and she sees a clear connection between booking artists and retaining identity. Even as events grow bigger, it is important for festivals ‘to stay within their musical boundaries’, which indicates that those consumers who form part of a festival ‘fan base’ prefer the booking policy to remain consistent, in order for their loyalty to the event to be maintained.

Just as tourism strategies often use festivals as part of their place marketing, as messages of freedom and escape, promoters often use place as part of their festival marketing. As discussed previously, the relationship between festival and place resonates with historical notions of ritual with many events

drawing explicitly on location. Glastonbury is seen as a sacred site which provides far greater place marketing opportunities than festivals that are based in Reading or Leeds. R7's festival takes place in an area of outstanding beauty and the marketing is based on the 'iconic' images that are produced for tourist consumption. To R2, the blend of location and programming is vital by adding an extra layer of attraction when a particularly unique venue has been secured. He sees the consumer reaction as: 'Oh actually, I've seen the band five times before, but I'll travel because it's a castle'. However, as the issues around the Fyre festival demonstrate, choice of location and programming are only two of the factors in the production of festivals. This luxury event was scheduled to take place in Great Exuma, the Bahamas, but was cancelled amid accusations that the bare necessities of food, water and electricity had not been provided (O'Connor, 2017).

Event Management

Event Manager

Festivals are creative businesses that are built on risk with event management the means by which those risks are ameliorated. As Bowdin et al. (2011) set out, the role of the event manager is 'to monitor and evaluate progress, coordinate decisions in all areas so that event objectives are progressed and communicate with, inspire and motivate those responsible for carrying out the various elements of the plan' (pp.188-189). With all this responsibility for strategic planning and implementation, it is perhaps surprising that none of the respondents had received any direct training for the role. In relation to the roles that they had already assumed, all of them

described their learning as experiential and formative. Some of the phrases used to describe this process included: ‘hands on’ (R2); ‘accidental’ (R3), ‘dive in at the deep end’ (R8); and ‘hard knocks’ (R4). This reflects Berridge’s (2011b) observation that event management is an emerging area which is developing along four key paths: firstly, by identifying an events management body of knowledge (EMBOK); secondly by drawing on the lived experience of the workforce; thirdly, by establishing event degrees which lead to trained personnel; and fourthly, through the growth in industry and academic research.

However, whilst the festival organizers recognised the advantages in employing staff who had received event management education, this is still seen as only a step towards event management. R2 views the ideal situation as a mix of academic knowledge and real-life experience: ‘We’ve got some people coming through the colleges and training and whatever. I think without the experience of actually physically doing it and starting at the bottom, they get found out very quickly’. Although R1 received her training in theatre management, she gained her festival knowledge through volunteering at thirteen events over one summer: ‘I got in my car the day after Uni finished. I got out of my car the day before Uni started. And in between the time I think I took about four days off to wash my clothes at my parents’ house’. This formed the basis for paid work the following year building on skills developed in stage management, artist liaison, accreditation and volunteer management. As Forde (2015) highlights, the economic realities of staging music festivals means that event managers often rely on such personal motivation for career

development in order to fill the production roles that carry a greater responsibility and are essential for events' successful running.

Planning

Event planning often requires only an individual or a small team at the beginning of each annual cycle. The organizational structures are conceptualized as temporal imperatives, normally constructed along timelines and by the use of milestones. None of the organisers discussed any software that they use to assist with this process and seemed to rely on knowledge and experience. The conceptual framework is one of aggregating levels which allows the task of staging a festival to be broken down into achievable aims. While the Fyre festival and the cancellation of the Y Not festival have led MacNeill (2017) and others to question why so many festivals seem to go wrong, a variety of reasons are put forward, from a lack of facilities through to bad weather, all with the assertion that the problems could have been avoided through better event planning. As R2 asserts, the potential challenges outdoor festivals in particular face each year include 'Weather, locations, competitors, budgets, cash flow, availability of artists, exclusivity, the willingness to do it, motivation' and it is clear that all of these challenges need to be met. While the latter elements will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Ten, economic challenges are common to all events and affect every organiser's practices.

Location

Location is one of the foundational issues in event management. It involves both geographical considerations of access to services and target markets

alongside the capacity of the venue to perform under a variety of conditions. At the same time, the location must always allow the audience to experience the sensation of 'time out of time' that constitutes every planned event (Getz, 2007). While the weather conditions can be poor, the cancellation of an event is every promoter's last resort with its short-term economic effects and long-term damage to the identity of the brand. The attraction of a unique venue is quickly replaced by perceptions of poor organisation if the site becomes difficult to navigate with such problems potentially causing severe damage to relationships between audiences and promoters, and between promoters and venue owners. R1 describes how one festival failed because of its location: 'The first year was phenomenal. The weather was brilliant. The second year it rained so much – and it's a private listed estate – that it got wrecked. And they were like, well, you can't really continue on with this because the location doesn't have the capability.' This element is often overlooked when considering why some festivals close and why events are especially vulnerable as they grow in size.

For R8 the selection of the venue is the most important decision that a promoter has to make. She describes the process as one that involves a search for a venue that blends visual appeal with logistical capability, whilst being sited within reach of a suitable target market. Inevitably, some compromises need to be made: 'We ended up having to go for a location further away from easy access to the big numbers of people because we valued the looks and the beauty of the site'. Moreover, in order to reduce the risk of location failure, the decision was made to sacrifice the marketing advantages of using a unique venue, which, as discussed earlier, is a

recognised way to engage and attract audiences. As R8 confirms, ‘we were very wary that the place that we were looking at had already hosted events of a certain size so that we knew that you could get 15-tonne trucks or lorries down narrow lanes, or that it could logistically be doable’. The interplay between the concerns of marketing their events, the capabilities of the location and the need to ensure audience satisfaction, lies at the heart of the practices of festival promoters.

Licensing

Alongside the need to manage the third-party vendors and contractors, organisers are also required to meet the regulations governing the staging of temporary events and the granting of premises licences as set out in the Licensing Act, 2003 (UK Government, 2003). The pressure of obtaining and renewing premises licences affects the wider live music sector, as seen in the case of the nightclub Fabric, London. The 2,500 capacity venue was one of the UK’s best-known nightclubs but was threatened with permanent closure in 2016 after Islington Borough Council revoked its licence ‘due to the supply of class-A drugs in the venue and the recent deaths of two young men’ (Rawlinson, 2016). Following a campaign to reopen the venue, the Farringdon nightclub was allowed to reopen under strict new licensing rules including ‘32 new conditions put forward by Fabric’s owners that would prevent drug abuse and allow the club to open its doors again’. The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, who had supported the campaign, pointed out at the time that ‘over the past eight years, London has lost 50% of its nightclubs and 40% of its live music venues’ (Ellis-Petersen, 2016). It is interesting to note that over the same

period, the music festival marketplace continued to grow, despite the need for organisers to obtain a premises licence on a year-by-year basis.

The granting of premises licences falls under the remit of the relevant local authority, each of which operates a Licensing Committee. The Licensing Act, 2003 sets out four licensing objectives which must be met:

1. the prevention of crime and disorder;
2. public safety;
3. prevention of public nuisance;
4. the protection of children from harm (UK Government, 2003).

Due to the unique nature of every festival, organisers usually need to produce a detailed Event Management Plan to support the application for a licence detailing any possible of areas of concern for health and safety, from a demographic breakdown of the audience through to a traffic management plan. R8 notes how this ranks in importance amongst all those factors relating to the staging and re-staging of an event: ‘I think safety is almost number one, because if you have an unsafe event, word spreads pretty quickly’, adding that a Health & Safety officer fulfils ‘one of the most important roles’ in safeguarding a festival’s survival.

For larger events, a Safety Advisory Group (SAG) involving members of the emergency services is formed to review the event’s Health & Safety policy and planning. Meeting at regular intervals, the SAG will monitor the possible effects on the local area and community, making recommendations that can be added as conditions to the premises licence. R2 confirms the development

of this part of festival organisation and the importance of local knowledge gained through experience:

> Close to the site we've got a main hospital. So the one thing we can't have is thousands of people in cars blocking an artery to a hospital – that's the priority. There's zero tolerance on that. They've done it in the past where they've had ambulances that couldn't get out...I'd rather pay a couple of grand and manage that, than somebody ring me and say that they can't get an ambulance in.

Due to the complexity of many large-scale events and the need to demonstrate that all conditions will be met, premises licence applications are often only approved close to the beginning of the festival. This is indicated on printed tickets and marketing materials, namely that the staging of the event remains 'subject to licence'. While this helps to protect the organiser from potential legal action on the part of ticket-buyers, the pre-planning stage is a highly pressured activity, where a declined application means that the event cannot take place.

Marketing and Media

The importance of marketing in the production of culture is stressed by every promoter. As R2 argues, all other elements of a festival, from the conception of the event through to the programming and the provision of the onsite facilities, are effectively pointless 'unless you get the people there in the first place'. However, unlike the work of concert promoters, festival promoters need to both attract and retain customers over an extended period of time. Indeed, as R8 estimates, each year it is necessary to gain new audiences

equivalent to 40% of the previous year's ticket sales, as the circumstances of the festival attendees change due to economic or social reasons, which can range from starting a family through to choosing to attend fewer events. While Du Gay (1997) emphasises the role of marketing in producing and circulating meaning in the cultural economy, which will be explored further in the meso study of the production and consumption of symbolic goods and services in Chapter Nine, at the macro level marketing can be viewed as an organisational activity that relies on the understanding and use of the current media landscape. Promoters tend to break this down further into a distinction between traditional media – in TV, print and radio form – and social and online media, which as a marketing tool offers both new opportunities and significant challenges in a competitive marketplace.

Traditional media practices often revolve around a series of partnerships that are closely allied to forms of sponsorship. The expansion in media coverage has made festivals more accessible and desirable with the BBC (2017a) claiming that their coverage of Glastonbury in 2016 reached 18.9m people, which is 31.9 percent of the UK population. While the amount that the BBC paid was not given, it is clear that the value of media rights for some of the major festivals has increased, making events more attractive to potential sponsors (Anderton, 2015). For smaller events, this sponsorship is often based on a 'benefits in kind' arrangement, where media outlets gain increased access to artists and are able to produce unique content, sometimes appearing as 'media partners' on the festival marketing literature. Both R8 and R5 point to a strategy that develops ties through the physical involvement of media producers, either as performers or in branded areas on site. This

reciprocal arrangement is ‘obviously not a financial sponsorship, but it’s helping us with promotion, which is really important as well’ (R8) as the mutual association helps to increase media coverage and aids in brand differentiation and positioning, a vital part of the marketing communications for all events (Masterman & Wood, 2011).

Social and Online Media

The relationship between live music and social and online media is a complex and contested narrative. With the advent of Napster at the turn of the millennium (Alderman, 2001), the wide-scale distribution of file sharing between consumers had a clear effect on the revenues of the recorded music industry. As has been seen, this change in consumer behaviour also coincided with a rise in the income generated by the live music industry. However, while anecdotal evidence suggests that fans were keen to ‘put something back’ into the music industry through the purchase of concert and festival tickets and artists’ merchandise, no cause and effect can be clearly established, especially as other factors including the consolidation of concert promotion companies have also affected the marketplace. However, it is clear that advances in communication technologies do offer new opportunities for the marketing of festivals through event websites and social media channels including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. Moreover, as streaming platforms now offer a legitimate way of supplying digital music on demand, changes may be perceived in the ways in which live music and social media interact.

In a study of the relationship between live music events and social media activities for a University of Oslo research project entitled ‘Clouds & Concerts’, Anne Danielsen & Arnt Maasø (2016) investigated the effects of music streaming from a number of viewpoints. In Norway music streaming and radio are the main ways in which music is consumed and one of the meeting points of live music consumption is in the way in which users now search musical content in relation to any event, which is part of the eventization of culture discussed earlier. In particular, Danielsen & Maasø note in the project’s main findings the interplay between the Øya music festival, which takes place in the centre of Oslo in August and changes in streaming patterns around the event. They found that not only was there an increase in the streaming of artists performing at the event, but that ‘the streaming of Øya artists impacted the listening patterns of many users beyond those attending the festival, indicating a general trend towards eventisation in relation to music-streaming preferences and inclinations.’ Furthermore, events and festivals are supported by local music distributors and vendors who also produce unique online content for pre- and post-concert consumption, a trend Danielsen & Maasø see as linked to the resurgence in the consumption of vinyl as part of new ways to experience music, which can also be seen as the restoration of a healthier live music ecology.

Similar strategies are adopted by independent UK festival promoters, although with significant variations. Despite understanding the marketing opportunities offered by social and online media, some of the respondents felt restricted in their use of the available channels by existing consumer habits. ‘We gave up with Twitter. We weren’t really getting much response with that.

Our Facebook page is where we seem to put most of our feeds and information' (R6). For R7, who feels she is fighting against the perception that 'classical music is for old people', innovations are also of limited appeal: 'we have discussed the possibility of live streaming some of the concerts, but then decided actually for the difficulty in doing that, it wasn't worth what we would get from it, which is probably nothing'. For these events, with a relatively fixed audience base, such media channels serve largely as a means of providing information for those who are already interested in attending, rather than attraction or retention strategies.

To R5, social media is now the primary way of advertising festivals and attracting and retaining audiences. In keeping with a festival marketing strategy that aims to engage consumers on a regular basis, he states that social media is now 'your first port of call when you put tickets on sale or you announce the line-up for next year' and that this is how 'you're retaining the people who came last year as well as trying to reach the new people,' either to grow the audience capacity or to ensure that new attendees fill the gap left by those whose patterns of consumption change. This attention to consumer trends is in keeping with R5's business background, one which he describes as operating on different principles to the music industry when he first entered it, but which he now successfully applies to his festival organisational and promotional practices. As discussed, R1 takes a view more closely aligned to the consumer and there is evidence here of the challenges that social media presents, a point that is rarely discussed. She states that 'Technology is a great and awful thing' because of the constant pressure in providing all year round content:

> With more people totally into social media, you have to be up there. You have to post every day because otherwise people are going to forget you exist and another festival is doing that. When it comes to your choice of who you're going to spend your £190 with, it's not going to be the one that you can't remember, or the one that was great last year, but "actually this one's been at me all year being like, hey, you should come". That's a challenge.

The competitive marketplace and the need to sell tickets each year evidently place a burden on festival promoters that is not always visible. Here, as in all the debates around the music industry and communication technologies, a balance needs to be struck between delivering promotional content and generating income.

A somewhat less pressured way in which online and social media are used by promoters is as 'information in', namely a way of gathering data on prospective artists and assessing their position in the marketplace. The two respondents who placed the greatest emphasis on the programming of their events, R3 and R4, both highlighted the use of media in this way. R3 estimates the audience attraction from online sources: 'I will go and look at their YouTube hits or whatever and think, well I've got to fill a tent that's got two thousand people in, and I'm up against thirty other stages, am I realistically going to pull a big enough crowd?' This assessment of online metrics against likely onsite consumer behaviour and the ability to match artists when 'putting together a bill' has, he believes, 'obviously changed everything that we do'. R4 makes similar claims, explaining that it is now possible to perform the function of A&R discovery without even attending live

music concerts as she is ‘able to listen to my peers’ opinion instantly and form my own opinion based on that rather than having to go to gigs and actually meet and talk to people.’ This demonstrates the development of taste-making through online communities and helps explain one of the ways in which festival businesses have been able to function successfully outside the cluster of city-based creative industries, a process that was not foreseen by Leadbeater (1999) or Landry (2000) at the onset of the digital era.

Booking

As described above, the booking of artists forms a key part of festivals’ strategic marketing. These annual events often rely on the release of information at staggered intervals to increase ticket sales, which can be mapped to a simple AIDA formulation: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. The concept of the event, including the name and the location gains Attention, especially if the venue is unusual or unique, while the first announcement of the headline artists provides the Interest. Desire is created through the uploading of bespoke content, often in the visual form of a short video suitable for sharing on social media and Action is encouraged by a series of announcements generally based on the notion of scarcity and the release of tickets at variable prices. The pressure to provide this content is indeed a marketing function, but it can be seen why concerns continue to be raised about the lack of suitable headline artists through a distortion of the music ecology. These debates revolve around structural issues such as the lack of grassroots venues for artists to learn their craft (Behr, 2017), the concentration of festivals’ ownership and a ‘closed booking’ policy (Helmore,

2017; Sutherland, 2017), the paucity of female performers (Harris, 2015), or more simply the over-supply of festivals (Hermann, 2016). Indeed, such is the pressure to secure available artists, R8 affirms that she tends 'to start each year's festival one month before this year's festival has happened,' an indication of the continual need to remain engaged with the event and to develop long-term strategic planning in such a globally competitive marketplace.

Ticketing

Ticketing is seen as perhaps the most important issue for all of the promoters. On the promotional level, many festivals operate a tiered ticketing system of revenue management pricing, where the sale of a perishable item is 'divided into differentiated subset inventories' (Lewison, 2017: 272), usually beginning with an 'early bird' ticket offered at the lowest price. Once this ticket is withdrawn from sale, an announcement is commonly made that this tier has now sold out and a new price is introduced for the next ticket offered. This has the effect of encouraging advanced ticket sales and facilitating cash flow, whilst also introducing an element of scarcity into the marketplace. The Truck Festival in Oxfordshire, which was acquired by Global from the investment firm Edition Capital as part of the purchase of the Impresario Festivals brand in October 2016, now operates a six-tier ticketing policy ranging from £90.50 for the ticket launch date through to a final price of £115 (Truck Festival, 2017). Independent UK festival promoters also use these strategies, with AIF Board Member Stuart Galbraith, the CEO of Kilimanjaro Live, stating in conversation with Simon Frith that live music promoters should seek to adopt

the dynamic pricing model used successfully by airlines, in which ticket prices become progressively more expensive as the event draws closer (Live Music Exchange, 2012b).

Business models

As Galbraith (Live Music Exchange, 2012b) sought to emphasise, live music promotion does not necessarily follow the business models which might apply in other industries. The forces of supply and demand mean that festivals often rely on a scarcity in the supply of headline artists and limits on the number of tickets made available for sale. It has been seen that the lack of scarcity in the recorded sector through the advances in digital distribution has eroded revenues and removed or reduced the control of circulation. However, in the live music sector these scarcities are often exaggerated through the imposition of 'exclusivity' clauses in performance contracts, whereby an artist is permitted to play at one event but restricted from performing at others due to geographical proximity, the date of performance, or both. R5 believes that: 'the trend toward exclusive bookings is definitely on the increase. Originally it was just the headliners, but you can see it now seeping down to some of the smaller bands' as competition in the marketplace continues to intensify. For independent festival promoters, this concern is not just about providing a suitable line-up. They see that booking agents are now taking longer to confirm agreements, as they wait to see if another promoter will insist on adding an exclusion clause to their offer, thereby reducing the ability to make artist announcements that are timed to coincide with the marketing imperative of selling tickets.

The other form of scarcity in restricting ticket sales also poses challenges for the promoters, especially in making decisions regarding increasing the capacity of the event. Where a location has been secured that can sustain future growth, promoters still need to decide at what times and to what levels increases can be made. One of the factors that can affect consumer attitudes toward an event is the perceived practice of placing undue strain on the event production by selling too many tickets. MacNeill (2017) reports that the problems with the Hope & Glory festival which was scheduled to take place in Liverpool on Saturday and Sunday 5-6 August 2017 could be attributed to a 'lack of facilities', with the first day 'marred by overcrowding and hours of delays', leading to the cancellation of the event on the morning of the second day. Moreover, the cancellation of the Y Not Festival a day early was seen by some as partly due to 'overcapacity' as the event grew from 8,000 to 25,000 attendees in just three years, with social media comments 'citing "greed" as the main issue' given the location's inability to cope with the weather conditions (MacNeill, 2017).

Festivals often require year-round planning and the securing of facilities must be made in advance of the event. While the granting of a licence requires that health and safety terms and conditions must be met, usually in a consultation between organizers, local authorities and the emergency services in the form of SAGs, difficulties may only become apparent once the event is taking place and the weather systems are known. Both R5 and R8 advocate the importance of long-term knowledge of sites and the ability to understand and accept economic and logistical limitations. With his background in business

management, R5 believes that: ‘in terms of falling by the wayside… a lot of those have been due to trying to expand, and not necessarily having the demand to do it.’ For R8, every year sees new challenges that require on the spot problem-solving: ‘I think also if one stays on the same site, you obviously get to know your site better and better, and you manage from year to year to improve and come up with solutions to various things.’ This accretion of knowledge in terms of the unpredicted and the unforeseen, clearly links to the ‘hands on’ ‘in at the deep end’ experiences of event management detailed earlier, a key factor in festival promoters’ practice.

Summary

This chapter looked at the music festival sector and explored its development through an ability to address issues of image management during a time of negative media perceptions. It explored the growth of the independent music festival, especially around the creation of boutique and niche events. It also considered the notion of a festivalization of culture and applied the phenomenological experiences of the promoters to Getz’s (2010) three discourses. The chapter demonstrated the promoters’ awareness of issues around event tourism and event managements and explored their practices at the macro or organisational level. Part Two of the thesis will consider the organisation of music festivals at a social or meso level.

Part Two: Organisation

Chapter Seven: Cultural Structures

Introduction

Part Two of the thesis now focuses on the organisation of festivals from a culture of production perspective. Adapting Negus (1999), it argues for the insertion of a meso level that can be identified between the macro study of industrial structures and the micro analysis of individual practices. This three-part division enables music festivals to be viewed more clearly as particular cultural commodities marked by the narrowing of the gap between producers and consumers. This process of creation or co-creation is absent from previous studies of the recorded music industry while the actions of Peterson's (1990) 'decision-makers in the culture industry' (p.111) bear little resemblance to the practices of independent music festival promoters. Chapter Seven, therefore, looks at the network of relationships involved in the organisation of independent music festivals. It begins by considering the growth of the music festival sector as the emergence of a new 'art world' and applies Becker's (1982) identification of the 'distribution systems which integrate artists into their society's economy' (p.93) to the activities of the independent festival promoters. It then discusses the festival supply chain and the key relationships around securing artists and obtaining event licences. Chapter Eight looks further at organisation as a social process while Chapter Nine discusses music festivals as types of goods in a cultural economy.

Cultural Distribution

Distribution is a key element in the industrial activities of the recorded music industry. As Peterson & Berger (1975) noted, through the control of circulation, record companies were able to raise prices by artificially restricting supply, the basis for the system of copyright that underpins the recording industry. As Leyshon (2001) has foreseen, the disintermediation of digital technologies through peer-to-peer file sharing proved disruptive to all of the musical networks and caused many of the investors in places of consumption, such as the Virgin Megastore and other high-street music retail outlets, to end or reduce their business activities. What was not identified was that much of the locus for consumption would shift to the live sector, and particularly to the independent music festival sector. Fonarow (2006) has observed that: 'The indie community's arguments over membership deal with the nature of the ownership of musical recordings and their mode of distribution to a larger public,' (p.26) and this changed from distinguishing between Rough Trade and EMI, to choosing to source your new music from Green Man or V Festival.[19]

The change in distribution marked such a fundamental shift in the music industries that it can be seen as the emergence of a new 'art world'. As Becker (1982) argues, at a different point in the development of the music industries, 'so many new groups and kinds of people were cooperating in the

[19] In the third year of the Green Man festival, in an article entitled 'When bands play the Carling weekend because "it's not a brand", you know you've got to find a new festival', John Harris wrote: 'So I sprinted off to the gazebo under which the organisers had put an ad hoc record shop and spent £10 on a CD called *These Were The Earlies*. And that was me done: the perfect festival experience and not a corporate hoarding in sight.' *The Guardian*, August 26 2005. Available from: https://indiethroughthelookingglass.com/the-green-man-festival-2003/the-green-man-festival-2005/

production and consumption of rock-and-roll that we can reasonably speak of a new world having come into existence' (p.313). In the same way, the growth in independent festivals in the UK from around the turn of the millennium can make a similar claim to mark the establishment of a new world in the live music sector. Artists, entrepreneurs, volunteers, food vendors, merchandisers, ticket-sellers, booking agents, lighting designers, P.A. manufacturers and educational institutions *inter alia* all emerged to fulfil the functions of suppliers in new social groupings. As Becker further identifies, developing art worlds require distribution systems that allow for the participants to enter into the economic system. Distribution is seen here as equating to the organisation of music festivals and Becker's categorisations will be applied to the practices of independent festival promoters given that social knowledge of the art world is transmitted from producer to consumer.

Self-support

The first category Becker identifies is the system of *self-support*, which requires the least amount of external involvement and thereby provides the greatest freedom to the cultural producer. In this, the artist relies on a very limited amount of resources, both human and material. However, the staging of a music festival involves a large number of human actors performing a variety of specialist tasks, such as stage-hands, sound engineers and security personnel, who require both training and, in some cases, even professional accreditation.[20] Moreover, the materials necessary to support and protect both

[20] Security staff engaging in licensable activities such as searching persons or bags require a licence to undertake this activity under the provisions of the *Private Security Industry Act* (2001).

the performers and the attendees include a wide array of goods, from marquees through to fencing. While festival organisers may indeed engage in extensive problem-solving concerning the lack of available resources and 'frequently exercise their creativity by trying to make equipment and materials do things their makers never intended' (Becker, 1982: 58), the necessities of health and safety regulations limit the application of creative practices in many areas of festival production.

Furthermore, festival organisation and promotion is a high-risk economic activity and almost all respondents highlighted the difficulties of raising sufficient capital for events to take place. For R2, the 'first thing is not losing money', especially in an economic climate where small enterprises and business start-ups often find it difficult to obtain credit from financial institutions. R8 offers a clear example of the obstacles to self-supporting a music festival:

> I think the financial risk is a huge challenge, especially in the early days. Obviously, we lost £300,000 in that first year [of the festival]. For two nobodies with normal jobs, we were lucky that 'X' could sell his house. He was running a painting and decorating business at the time, and he could channel stuff from there. I think finances is a big challenge. Making your event profitable and less of a risk. That's it.

While R8 enjoyed greater freedom to design and stage an event, the level of risk is far higher than in the development of art worlds that do not require such initial levels of resource gathering and explains why R6 considers having 'never been in the red' as one of the key markers of success. It also helps to underline some of the structural challenges that lie behind Anderton's (2016)

observation of the high degree of ‘churn’ in the festival marketplace, where new events take the place of festivals that have failed.

Patronage

Distribution through patronage reflects a system where art is produced to order and according to the taste of the patrons concerned. Drawn from a stratified ‘leisure class’ or established institutions of religion or state, the patrons display their own knowledge in commissioning and supporting such works as they dictate. Whilst the Bourdieuian notion of particular fields of production being closely allied to social class can be difficult to map, the influence of such patronage can be seen in events that rely more on the transmission of cultural capital than on the accumulation of economic capital. R7, whose event includes outreach activities with schools and music institutions, describes how the constitution of the festival requires the delivery of ‘high quality art to the communities’. This then determines the parameters of the programming, where R7 is conscious of the need ‘to keep your funders happy as well’, although this is generally measured in terms of audience satisfaction determined through a mix of ticket sales and an engagement with broader festival activities.

For R6, patronage crosses not only lines involving political as well as cultural capital. Comparing her event to similar ones that take place under the auspices of other local authorities, R6 believes that her access to state funding is limited by the perception of her festival, which seeks to highlight the significance of a period of time in the seventeenth century and its particular relationship to the area:

> For example, one thing I could share with you is the local council do a community fund of about £500. I applied for that in 2015 for the 2016 festival and they turned us down. The letter said, 'We cannot be seen to be supporting anything that's political'. My argument was there was nothing to do with the 'P' word in the application form. It purely spoke about a historical community festival. They were the ones who were saying it was a political event. In that respect we've had a lot of problems.

In this context, it is not just the involvement of patrons that can affect the organisation of an event, rather the withholding of state patronage is also a potential constraint. Festival organisers rely on obtaining entertainment licences to stage their annual events and whilst there may be no direct correlation between the type of programming and the granting of licences, the events which gave rise to the Public Order Act 1986 and the Criminal Justice Act 1994 discussed in Chapter Five highlight some of the potential barriers to social and cultural expression.

Public Sale

The system of *public sale* places music festivals firmly within the distribution model of the cultural industries. As discussed, the industrialisation of the means of production has allowed for a rapid growth in the number and scale of music festivals and an increase in what Becker (1982) describes as 'those organizations which sell works or tickets to performances to anyone with the money to buy them' (p.107). The difficulties arising from the interposition of these professional intermediaries has been identified in Chapters Five and Six

as distorting the competitive market through the concentration of live events into a smaller number of suppliers, including Live Nation, AEG and Global,[21] leading to an increase in ticket prices and a restriction on the ability of artists to perform at venues of their own choosing. Alongside the effects of secondary ticketing, the operations of distribution through public sale have an effect on festival organisers, especially in the ways that exclusion clauses in artist contracts limit on booking of events 'by forcing artists into exclusivity deals which do not allow artists to play any other festivals' (Webster, 2014). As far as R5 is concerned, 'I think the exclusive thing is a really big thing at the moment because there are just so many festivals. There's so much money at stake that the promoters are desperate to make sure that they're not similar line-ups to competitors'. The negative impacts of this competition mean that organisers are often left with a festival programme far removed from their original intentions, a problem that is exacerbated by the tendency for the corporations to increase spending on the events they acquire without changing the public perception that is usually based on the development of an initially independent brand.

Parallels with the recorded music industry can also be clearly discerned. The growth of the independent label sector in the 1970s and early 1980s was driven by the activities of those entrepreneurs who were prepared to invest 'in the production of many copies of a work intended for mass distribution' (Becker, 1982: 108). In *How Soon is Now?: The Madmen and Mavericks who*

[21] On 21 August 2017, issues around secondary ticketing and exclusivity deals led the Association of Independent Festivals to call for the Competition & Markets Authority to investigate Live Nation's increasing dominance of the UK's live music sector (AIF, 2017b).

made Independent Music 1975-2005, Rough Trade records founder Geoff Travis told author Richard King (2012):

> We always saw distribution as a political thing. We learned when we were students that controlling the means of production gives you power. We wanted there to be an independent structure that you could tap into which gave you access to the market without having to engage with all the normal routes. That's what independence is: it's about building structures *outside* of the mainstream but that can help you infiltrate the mainstream (p.46).

However, having infiltrated the mainstream, subsequent problems around distribution eventually led to the dissolution of the label and saw Travis engage in a number of ventures with the major labels. The sale of Alan McGee's Creation to Sony and Daniel Miller's Mute records to EMI, meant that the mavericks were all more or less absorbed into the major label structures and many of the independent events developed since 2003 which are now all owned or part-owned by Global/Broadwick Live, including Truck, Y Not and Kendal Calling, have followed a broadly similar path.

Dealers

The role of *dealers* in distributing art has less recognisable applications to the promotion of music festivals than to other cultural productions. Becker (1982) sees their role as higher risk as they attempt to integrate new artists into the market place, by 'transforming aesthetic value into economic value' (p.109). This requires the establishment of a distribution network that adheres to the following pattern:

Dealer > Group of Artists > Group of Buyers > Critics > Gallery-goers

While more analogous to the work of agents in distributing individual artists, the role of dealers can most closely be matched in festivals' art world to those events which specialise in promoting a particular non-mainstream musical style. While the operation of genre will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine, festivals offer the opportunity to group artists together in a concentrated arena in front of a dedicated and self-selecting audience. These groupings then ally with music critics through media partnerships, where the writers have an interest in promoting the artists, often as a means of sponsorship in kind. This process can be further developed in events such as the *Pitchfork* festivals, where the media organisation itself, known primarily for the international promotion of new and left-field artists, stages events in Chicago, USA in July and Paris, France in November, whilst continuing to review and promote a range of selected global events.

This circular pattern of distribution, where the media is more closely involved in the factors of cultural production, is not necessarily a phenomenon linked to digital technologies. Indeed, the links between festival promotion and the media are longstanding as evidenced by R3's early experience of interactions between the two. As a journalist, R3 was sent to review the first Lollapalooza festival (which began as a farewell tour for Jane's Addiction), as conceived by frontman Perry Ferrell and including a line-up of artists as diverse as Living Colour, Nine Inch Nails and Ice-T (Smith, 2015). R3 joined the tour for the East Coast section for three dates and remembers that 'every night in the hotel was a massive party. It was interesting because everyone thought we were a band as well. We were just a bunch of journalists who were staying in

the same hotel. It was very rock ‘n’ roll’. The way in which these professionals are able to experience festivals in such close proximity helps to underline ways in which the music industry integrates critics into its modes of distribution. As Becker (1982) observes, dealers and critics ‘develop a consensus about the worth of work and how it can be appreciated’ (p.115) and such immersive practices lie at the heart of festival production, where the notion of an experience economy is amplified and exemplified in temporary sites of cultural consumption.

Impresarios

The promotion of festivals as a form of distribution is most closely analogous to Becker’s (1982) identification of the work of those intermediaries termed ‘impresarios’. Their relationship with the art produced is less personal than that of the dealer, as the cooperating parties engage together in the pursuit of profit or the raising of income. In an interview with Simon Frith during the Live Music Exchange event at City University, London in 2013, Paul Latham, CEO of Live Nation UK and Chairman of Creative and Cultural Skills discussed his attitude to live music promotion as always coming from ‘a venue point of view’, with an attitude of ‘take the rent, don’t take the risk’ (Live Music Exchange, 2013). Whilst acknowledging the importance of promoters as towards the top of what he describes as a live music pyramid, with the best promoters those ‘who just had to be there and took their chances’, Latham was content to accept that promotion was not his own specialism. As he describes, his route into live music promotion was through bar and venue management and it is therefore little surprise that a corporation that has

always recognised the importance of maximising income from ancillary sales should be led by an impresario who makes no claim to have the skills of a promoter. However, it may be of some concern to an industry that prioritises the identification and exploitation of music talent that a corporation controlling around 23% of the total capacity of the UK music festival market is not shaped by a similar vision.

The organisers of independent festivals tend to be less visible and more closely linked to their productions. Indeed, as can be seen by the activities of organisers such as the Secret Garden Party's Freddie Fellowes, who prefers to operate under the pseudonym of 'Head Gardener', festival organisers are far more likely to remain behind the scenes.[22] The key factor is in the promoter/event relationship, which for the independent festival is more personal than that of the more profit-driven impresario, where the intended make-up of the audience is part of the production. Fellowes stated in a rare interview with *Tatler* that 'We try to appeal to like minds rather than to people who might be at odds with what we're trying to do' (Bell, 2017) or, in the view of R8, 'I feel we've been very lucky that there are so many people out there who have a similar taste in music as we do'. For the impresario, the promotion of live music is not tethered to the art world in which it is embedded and, as distributors, independent festival promoters rely far more on developing deeper and longer-term relationships. Such a close identification is one of the

[22] Although Fellowes did share with *Tatler* his pleasure in blowing up a pirate ship being attacked by a giant octopus during the Secret Garden Party festival in 2013: 'That's what I want. Those moments where people turn to each other and say, "Did you see that?"' (Bell, 2017).

key elements in establishing the authenticity of an event, a process which will be considered further in Chapter Nine.

Systems of distribution can be altered when an art world is seen to enter to the meta-system of the cultural industries. Following Adorno's (1991) negativity towards the mass-production of culture, Becker (1982) also argues that the 'requirements of culture-industry distribution systems produce more or less standardized products' (p.128), although it is the inability to predict what audience wants and needs rather than the subjugation of the consumer that drives this homogenization. The cultural industries' system can only distribute the type of art that it is 'convenient to handle rather than from any independent choice made by the maker of an art work' (p.128) while the actions of corporations in the pattern of mergers and acquisitions discussed earlier certainly supports the tendency for the centralisation of decision-making and the attempt to concentrate the supply of events into fewer hands. BBC England's data unit analysed more than 600 separate headline performances across 14 UK festivals in 2017 and reported that, not only was there a gender imbalance that saw eight out of ten top slots occupied by all-male acts,[23] but that 'a quarter of all headline slots were taken up by the same 20 acts'. Dr. Simon Warner, a popular music researcher at Leeds University explains this in the report, stating that: 'There remains a small number of groups who can actually generate consumer interest, and I think it's down to sheer economics' (Sherlock & Bradshaw, 2017). However, while independent festival organisers are certainly subject to similar commercial pressures,

[23] Wireless Festival added a women-only stage in 2018 in response to this criticism (Snapes, 2018).

Robinson (2015) argues that one of the advantages of promoting smaller, boutique events is that they are not as reliant on securing headline artists and offer the organisers more freedom in their choice of programming.[24]

Festival Supply Chain

Despite the processes of consolidation and integration, the live music supply chain still functions as a series of largely distinct operations. While corporations such as Live Nation encompass areas including both artist management and event promotion, such vertical integration does not represent the industry norm. As Negus (1997) attests, the difficulties that Sony experienced in trying to obtain operational benefits from the projected synergies and thereby bring together the 'hardware and software' or the 'texts and technologies' of the recorded music industry, indicate the different occupational groupings and their particular cultural views. It can be asserted, therefore, that these groupings also persist in the live music sector, which may also be affected by legal rulings against individuals who have fulfilled multiple roles and sought to charge a separate commission for each function, such as Wadlow v Samuel (professionally known as Seal), a process known as 'double dipping' (Harrison, 2017). Despite the blurring of these distinctions in the structuring of '360 degree' recording contracts that allow labels to claim a share of other artist income streams including live performance and merchandise revenues, the key live music occupational groupings of

[24] More than 100 festivals have now joined PRS Foundation's Keychange initiative and pledged to ensure a 50/50 split between male and female artists on their line-ups by 2020 as part of the campaign (M-Magazine, 2018).

manager, agent and promoter usually remain distinct entities in the UK music industry.

In their investigation into the merger of Ticketmaster Entertainment and Live Nation, the Competition Commission (2010) produced an illustration of the live music supply chain in its simplest form (Fig. 7.1).

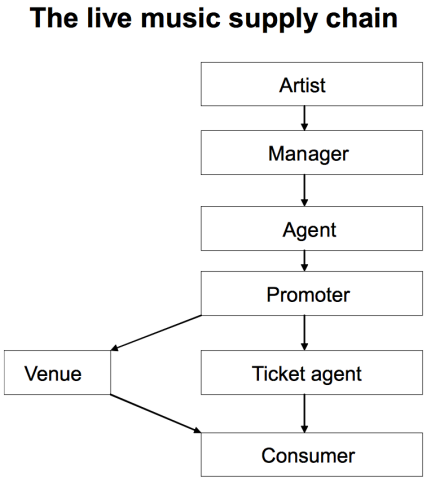

Figure 7.1: The Live Music Supply Chain (Competition Commission, 2010: 11)

In this schematic, the artist employs a manager who is then responsible for negotiating with the agent for their live performances. The agent then contacts a number of promoters in each region or territory to secure a series of alternative offers which are then forwarded to the manager to make a decision regarding where and when the artist will tour. The relationship between the promoter and the ticket agent, which was the subject of the Competition Commission's investigation, is shown as a straightforward transaction, with the ticket agent deducting a commission for all ticket sales made. This model, however, has been complicated by the secondary ticketing market, where, as Behr & Cloonan (2018) ruefully observe, 'the general picture is one whereby

at each attempt to deal with the secondary market for tickets, the proposed legislative bar has been lowered' (p.8), thereby allowing tickets to be re-sold at a price which does not have to match the face value of the original ticket and where the extra revenue is not shared with the artist or promoter.

Due to the large number of ticket sales for many events and in response to changes in the marketplace, festival organisers commonly use more than one ticket agent to sell their tickets to consumers.[25] Alongside the established companies such as Ticketmaster, Eventim and Ticketline, newer entrants include See Tickets, Ticketweb, Skiddle, Songkick and Billetto, each offering additional promotional activities and access to existing customer databases. This development in online commerce has accelerated the ticket-selling process and supported the growth of the market. As R5 explains:

> I do suppose people like to have internet access for their tickets. Just simple things like, I'll order a ticket, have it in my inbox, give it as a present, things like that. The ticket systems have definitely helped in that respect.

However, many of the respondents still rely on less technological solutions, with R6 describing the process as 'still very simplistic' and R7 stating that 'at the moment, it's all pretty manual'. For R5, though there are wider benefits in utilising traditional off-line methods of ticket-selling in the building and maintaining of relationships within the community,

[25] In 2004, the Green Man Festival worked with Glasgow-based e-commerce company Simbiotic to develop a bespoke ticketing system for the event so that customers would not be subject to the booking fees that the major companies were charging.

> We're actually in the process of trying to work out how much of a financial benefit to the local community the festivals are. We're going to work in some questionnaires for that. We link up with all the local shops, and offer tickets in them. They can take the booking fee, try and support them and build a bit more traffic in there.

This increase in the number and type of ticket retailers demonstrates another development in the art world of the music festival, as new groups and different kinds of people contribute to the processes of both production and consumption.

Agents

However, the relationships between festival promoters and booking agents remains the key factor in the festival supply chain. As discussed, the importance of securing artists in order to market the event and to sell tickets is of paramount importance for large-scale annual events while the relationship between the festival promoter and the agent can be a determining factor in this process. As Andy Reynolds (2013) details, 'All good agents will have developed working relationships with the promoters to the extent that most of the negotiating is unsaid: each knows the other's business well' (p.13). Notwithstanding this, as the festival industry is one where respondents believe the barriers to entry have been seen to be lowered, as discussed in Chapter Six, the knowledge of how these relationships work is something that may need to be acquired through hard-earned experience. As R8 explains:

> When we started out no one knew who we were. We'd never worked in music. I didn't even know what a promoter was. I thought that bands

> booked their own shows and sold their own tickets, whether it's Arcade Fire at Brixton or whatever. I didn't know booking agents existed. It was a huge learning curve for us.

The learning curve for entrants without any music industry experience is severe. Established festival promoters have a competitive advantage in their ability to secure artists at an earlier stage in the annual booking cycle. This is one of the reasons why new entrants often find it difficult to position and sustain their events in the festival marketplace.

Networking

Developing and maintaining a network of relationships is a central element of the music industry. This is evidenced by the growth of conferences and events within popular music, such as the annual SXSW Music Festival in Austin, Texas which describes itself as 'an essential destination for global professionals [featuring] sessions, showcases, screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking opportunities' (SXSW, 2018). While live music industry professionals are represented and events curated by music festival organisers, the longer-established MIDEM in Cannes, France has come to acknowledge the growing importance of the sector by hosting an inaugural live music summit at its 2018 event. Working with Pollstar, the live music business trade media platform, the summit has been created to respond to changes in the music industry environment:

> With the live music sector forecast to become the second biggest source of revenue for the global music industry, generating a projected $38.3bn in 2030 (source: IFPI Goldman Sachs Global Investment

> Research), it is Midem's role – as the leading business event for the global music community and Pollstar's role – as the only trade publication and event covering the worldwide concert industry, to give this vibrant sector greater visibility and a louder voice (MIDEM, 2018).

This recognition of the current industry balance alongside forecasted financial trends helps to explain the consolidation of ownership discussed in Chapters Five and Six, which has continued to take place during a period of corporate expansion into the live music industry and the music festival sector. However, while events such as the International Live Music Conference (ILMC) in London and the AIF Congress in Cardiff also offer opportunities for members to network within their communities of interest, broader events such as The Great Escape in Brighton allow organisers, agents, artists and managers to meet within the culture of a live music environment. Described as 'Brighton's answer to Texas's South-by-Southwest festival' (Sturges, 2012), the event was founded in 2006 and is now a music industry convention attended by more than 3,000 delegates. Operated by MAMA Festivals and billed as 'The Festival for New Music', The Great Escape takes place over one weekend in May and promotes over 450 artists across 35 venues, promising applicants 'a great opportunity to meet key music industry figures (who come to TGE looking for the next big thing)' (MAMA, 2018). As R5 states, it is important to attend such events in order build and develop personal relationships:

> In terms of who we book and who we go around, we have our own database. We don't particularly play the traditional industry game of going to the events. We do go to Great Escape, and we do have a

> good relationship with agents, but we have a list of who we want to book. We enquire into those. We do research on ticket sales.

The use of networking events as a means of developing industry relationships is an important part of the process of organisation. However, the need to maintain a professional distance from the influence of agents is clear, allowing each promoter to distinguish their event in a crowded and competitive marketplace.

The need for distance is echoed by R8, who also remains wary of too much industry influence. Recognising the pressures placed on organisers to enter into a complex network of *quid pro quo* agreements which favours artists sharing the same booking agent, R8 emphasises the necessity of maintaining strict control of the decision-making process:

> We don't do many favours. I know sometimes it is expected if an agent gives you your headliner, they would ask you to also book a smaller band. We're lucky. The agents do understand that they can't just put anything forward. It does have to fit within our niche taste in music.

Such an approach is in keeping with niche music festivals, but contrasts to some extent with the position adopted by R3. As a long-standing industry insider, R3 credits the industry relationships he has developed as fundamental to his working practice and demonstrates an evident pleasure in the arrangements, describing the process as 'doing a little bit of juggling between "I'll give you a better slot here, if you give me a better price there"'. While this attitude reflects that he is often booking artists for a number of different events with different audiences and market profiles, it also underlines

the dynamic operation of *emic* and *etic* status in the shifting balance between agent and promoter relationships.

Suppliers

One other structural difference between the live music supply chain as identified by the Competition Commission (2010) and the work of festival organisers concerns the complexities surrounding the use of the venue. As has been seen, through a policy of mergers and acquisitions, corporations have sought to integrate venue ownership or long-term lease agreements into their business models. The facilities that the venues offer including sundries such as the offer of food and beverage and parking, aid the profitability of live music promotion by generating ancillary income as calculated in the PRS reports (Page & Carey, 2009, 2010, 2011). Even promoters who hire a venue for a one-off event and need to count hall fees as a cost in budgeting for a live show performance can be seen to benefit from the provision of these services (Reynolds, 2013). While they may not receive a percentage of these facilities' profits, they are an important aid in attracting and retaining customers, with the AIF Six Year Report 2014 stating that 'The general atmosphere and overall vibe, character and quality of the event' has been by far the most important motivation for attending a festival' (Webster, 2014: 19). As the problems encountered by such diverse events as the Hope & Glory festival in Liverpool and the Fyre Festival in the Bahamas have demonstrated (MacNeill, 2017), a perceived disparity between the price of admission and the quality of the facilities provided can result in the cancellation of events and a demand for a full refund of the cost of the ticket.

Despite these well-publicised failures, the support infrastructure for producing large-scale temporary events has grown in parallel with the festival market. As discussed, the growth in this art world has seen the development of a range of new and specialist suppliers and their selection is a significant part of the organisation process. This is evidenced in the analysis of audience surveys in the UK Festival Awards Market Report (2013):

> Food and drink is a key income stream for most festivals. It's also one of the most talked-about elements from a consumer point of view. No longer restricted to a few burger vans dotted around the site, the options for eating and drinking are an important element of creating a good festival – and something many festival-goers comment on (p.23).

The development and professionalisation of this sector is demonstrated by the creation of the Festival Supplier Awards in 2014. With categories ranging from 'Best Concession/Bar' through to 'Best Festival Technology Supplier', 'Best Temporary Water Supply' and 'Best Temporary Roadway', the growing industrialisation of the festival supply chain is evident. Moreover, with a 'black tie' dress code and an individual ticket priced at £250 plus VAT, the festival infrastructure sector can be viewed as being in rude financial health (Festival Supplier Awards, 2018).

However, the provision of these facilities offers festival organisers both opportunities and challenges. Key decisions need to be made over how much control the organiser wishes – or is able – to exert on the character of the event and how this level of control is balanced against the costs incurred in hiring specialist suppliers and the revenues that would be raised by the

renting out of concession spaces or ‘pitches’ to third-party vendors. While the necessity to increase income is acknowledged by all the festival organisers, R5 cautions against organisers being perceived as ‘people who are just quite clearly trying to make money out of every possible thing they can’. The dangers of this approach were strongly illustrated when Woodstock festival was recreated at Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York in 1999 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of “peace, love and happiness”. Under the heading the ‘19 Worst Things About Woodstock 99’, *Rolling Stone* branded the re-staging as the ‘anti-Woodstock’ and ‘the day the Nineties died’, with the ‘organizers trying to wring every last dollar from festivalgoers from exorbitant ticket prices to costly water bottles’ (Kreps, 2014). Moreover, according to R8 a key element in the successful organisation of events is ‘attention to detail. Not letting any aspect of your festival slip’. The need to maintain control of the event while depending on a wide range of disparate suppliers, highlights some of the risks and pressures of organising annual, public events.

Summary

This chapter examined the work of festival organisers as a social activity. It applied Becker’s notion of the development of an art world and characterised independent festival organisers according to his categories of distribution, namely, self-support, patronage, public sale, dealers and impresarios. The chapter then considered the live music supply chain as applied to the music festival sector and the network of relationships involving promoters, agents and suppliers. The next chapter discusses organisation as a form of cultural and creative labour.

Chapter Eight: Cultural Work

Introduction

This chapter now looks at the practices of independent festival promoters in organising the resources necessary for staging events. Festival production requires the expenditure of both economic and cultural capital and it is a combination of these elements which determine the types of event the promoters organise and the levels of risk they are prepared to undertake. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Ten, the overriding necessity is for the festival to take place each year and this is usually a matter of generating sufficient income from ticket sales and ancillary revenues to meet the costs of staging the event. As Bourdieu (1984) acutely observed, the accumulation of cultural capital comes to have increasing value. This can be seen with the continued growth in the importance of the creative industries, especially in those economies where traditional forms of manufacturing have declined under the effects of what Harvey (2005) terms the 'neoliberal turn'. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) notion of the 'new cultural intermediaries', a class fraction which is somewhere between primary teachers and industrial and commercial employees, 'the most typical of whom are the producers of cultural programmes on TV' (p.325), this chapter considers how the practices of festival promoters can be seen as cultural intermediaries, organising and delivering unique productions. The chapter thereby rejects Bourdieu's disparagement of the cultural intermediary as 'devoid of intrinsic value' (p.326) and argues for the importance of the creative work of festival promoters in facilitating and creating new, experiential goods and services.

The chapter begins then with the application of a model of cultural production taken from the recorded music industry. It considers how far the roles of the 'producer' – which in the recorded sector involves the responsibilities for overseeing and delivering a completed creative project – can be mapped to the work of the independent festival promoter. Using the concept of 'brokerage', parallels are drawn in terms of the ways in which the producer and the promoter are required to deploy their accumulated cultural capital and, to use Bourdieu's (1984) term, demonstrate 'the "flair" which is needed to make it profitable' (p.89). The chapter then examines how the promoters interact and utilise various forms of labour. Festival organisers need to mobilise the resources necessary to stage their events, developing those links 'both material and human' that Becker (1982) views as the 'characteristic feature of any art world' (p.70) and which often involves the use of volunteer or 'free' labour. The chapter will consider these practices critically as types of employment that could be viewed as exploitative.

Brokerage

To the sociologist Ronald Burt (2004), working practices that involve making connections and bridges between disparate corporate activities can be termed as *brokerage*. In this series of connected exchanges, those individuals who take on the role of *brokers* in providing alternative visions and ideas, receive disproportionate benefits in the form of compensation, positive evaluations and promotions. Moreover, in the pursuit of their daily occupation, these workers 'whose networks bridge the structural holes between groups have an advantage in detecting and developing rewarding opportunities' (p.354) also

accrue increased social capital. Burt identifies four levels of brokerage that can lead to these individuals benefitting, beginning with the simple raising of awareness of issues between groups. Transferring best-practices across these structural holes forms the next level of brokerage, followed by drawing analogies between different practices to show that imitating the actions of separate groups can offer each participant positive benefits. The highest level however, and the most difficult to observe, is the synthesis of individual ideas and practices, where working patterns are transformed and new products and services are created.

Organising festivals' human resources requires the successful integration of all four levels of brokerage when mobilising or utilising human resources. The first level of raising awareness can be observed in the practice of alerting potential participants to the opportunities that might arise. This can range from an email to the booking agents asking for an up-to-date roster, through to a post on the event website asking for volunteers. Transferring best practice, the second level, is evident in the knowledge transfer from year to year, and visible in the briefing given to stewards and other staff on the festival site before the event takes place. The third level of analogies, which looks for 'common ground' and mutual benefit, takes place both in negotiating performance contracts and in processes such as agreeing work rosters for volunteers, or finding ways in which the community can become actively involved in the festival. The fourth level is one that is little understood in festival organisation. While live music promoters understand that they are selling something intangible (Cloonan, 2013), it is not often recognised that the production of an intangible good is a creative act and that festival

promotion, in particular, requires the creative synthesis of an extensive range of individual creative and cultural labour.

There is no existing study that examines this level of festival organisation brokerage in operation. It is necessary, therefore, to draw parallels with a model from the recorded music industry, Elizabeth Long Lingo & Siobhán O'Mahony's (2010) study of country music producers.[26] Drawing on Peterson & Berger (1971) and others, the study investigated the ways in which the processes of brokerage could be observed in the act of bringing creative projects to fruition. Their research into this process of 'creative brokerage' was based on the ethnographic observation of twenty-three independent music producers in Nashville where the country music industry is based. Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) considered how the producers 'moved between two ideal conceptions of brokerage—as strategic actors extracting advantage from their position and as relational experts connecting others to foster creativity and innovation the operations of leverage' (p.47) and these ideals can be seen in the working practices of the festival promoters. In a dynamic marketplace, the balance of leverage changes over time and promoters need to be aware of the status of their event within the marketplace. The importance of expertise in relationships highlights the need to understand when, where and, indeed, why to network with the relevant contacts.

However, Long Lingo & O'Mahony differentiate between the type of structural brokerage that sees individuals benefit from their ties and associations by

[26] The term 'producers' in recorded music refers to a specific, studio-based role in the creation of new recordings.

exploiting their control as ‘conduits for access to information’ derived from the relational brokerage which ‘emphasizes how that unique information can be put to creative use’ (p.49). In this latter formulation, brokers can only accrue benefits from the successful completion of collaborative projects through a process of *integration* which involves ‘the selection, rejection, and synthesis of disparate ideas and contributions into a coherent whole’ (p.50), and it is this creative organisation of knowledge and relations which most closely aligns with the practices of independent festival promoters. According to Fonarow (2006), it is a pre-requisite of membership of the indie community to engage in the ‘discursive practice of critical judgment’ (p.57), and there are many individuals within that community who can act as a simple conduit, providing information for those who are willing to set themselves up as the gatekeepers. As Webster (2016) argues, the role of the festival producer requires that they are ‘both proactive and reactive to the changing face of the music’ (p.20), while the promoters are required to select and reject according to the creative decisions that will shape their events.

Long Lingo & O’Mahony (2010) identify four phases that the country music producers needed to undertake in order to bring their creative projects to completion, which can be compared to the practices of festival promoters:

(1) resource gathering

(2) defining project boundaries

(3) creative production

(4) final synthesis (pp. 57-58)

While these distinct phases are not linear and can indeed be highly iterative, the pattern does indicate the mode of completion of a recorded music project.

However, while such projects are limited by commercial restraints and time pressures, organising festivals as annual events that are more or less fixed in the calendar according to such necessities as venue availability, constitutes a far more pressurised series of linked phases. Furthermore, and as discussed further in Chapter Twelve, the repeatability of these phases year on year and the need to balance this work with the other demands of promotion, including marketing and ticket-selling, is a further indication of the multi-tasking that festival organisation demands.

(1) Resource Gathering

In the first phase, Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) consider *resource gathering* for country music producers as involving the collection of two primary resources: a portfolio of suitable songs and funding or other support from record labels. The first resource is gathered mainly from music publishers. Their role is to secure and administer copyrights and to generate income for their writers through marketing and promoting the songs that they control, often making them available for other artists to record and perform (Gammons, 2011). The publishers will then suggest a range of possible songs, ranked according to such factors as the previous success of the songwriter, the familiarity the producer has with their past work and the type of finished product that the producer intends to offer to label. Initially, the producers 'identified a set of 30-50 songs that were candidates for a project' (Long Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010: 66) and potentially suitable for the artist to record.

For festival organisers, the resource gathering follows a similar pattern. Here the booking agent provides the first resource as the representative of a number of performers, although it is the agent who collects a set of offers while the organiser waits for the decision. As R5 explains:

> I think there is a kind of hierarchy from the booking agents. We're always going to try and get the biggest band we can first, then try and work down our list. I think the agents are trying to get the biggest festival they can and work down their list. So we have to meet somewhere towards the middle or the bottom.

For the independent organisers, this phase represents one of the more serious elements of risk, as marketing the event often depends on securing and promoting the artists with the highest profile at the most advantageous points in the ticket-selling cycle.

It is less common for organisers to deal directly with artists or their managers, although this depends on both the size of the event and the music genre concerned. Where the financial interactions of agent and promoter often obscure the relational brokerage which occurs between the shifting power structures, these processes are made more visible outside the mainstream music industry. R7, who organises a classical music festival, is far more conscious of the integration that characterises the cultural production of her event:

> The way the programming works, the artistic director has this overall idea, but we get musicians to come up here then work in lots of different configurations. So, for example, we wouldn't get a string quartet up to do one concert and then go away again, and then a piano

> player and flute player to come and do another thing. We'd always make sure that people come up for as much of the festival as they can, and then use them as a pool of musicians.

The use of these human resources shows a clear synthesis of creative ideas, guided by the brokerage of the festival organiser. While this may be impractical for artists performing at larger events where festival dates often form part of a series of national or global bookings within a fixed tour schedule (Reynolds, 2013), smaller festivals are able to benefit from the relational ties between the artist and the promoter. However, it is to be hoped that being part of 'a pool of musicians' falls within what is agreed in advance between the artist and the promoter, according to the 'Emerging and Independent Artists Festival Code of Conduct' drawn up by the Musicians' Union and the AIF (Musicians' Union, 2015).

The second resource for country music producers, funding or other label support, lies within the purview of the record company's A&R department. As Negus (1992) confirms, under the terms of standard recording and producer contracts, the work undertaken in recording studios is overseen by the A&R personnel but is largely left to the artist and producer to complete the project once a budget has been agreed. For festival organisers, while ticket sales are generally the most important part of raising revenues and the relation between consumer and producer remains paramount, other means of increasing income streams can also be a significant part of any project.[27] This is

[27] Additional income streams for the first year of the Green Man festival in 2003 included a match-funded grant of £1,500 from Tourism Partnership Mid-Wales to assist with marketing and £1,000 from the Brecon Beacons National Park 'Sustainable Development' fund.

especially true of the smaller or publicly-funded events. While R4 states: 'I'm lucky enough that it's a local authority paid-for event. The budget's not huge, but it's there', other organisers operate on less stable platforms, with R7 pointing out the need to 'keep the funders happy' as one of the primary aims of her work.

Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) believe that the 'ability to engage in a dialectic approach to brokerage, or what we call nexus work, could be considered a type of social skill' (p.77) and this can be seen in R7's observation of the relational factors that need to be considered when accepting financial or other support:

> Then we've also got one very kind gentlemen who happens to be one of the sound recordists who gives us a big chunk of money each year just because he's very nice…That can potentially get a bit awkward because then you feel like you're kind of tied to him and his friend doing the sound recordings, which we don't necessarily always want to happen, because it can actually be quite disruptive to the festival.

While this exchange can be seen as largely of mutual benefit and to increase social capital through a process of reciprocity, it is also evident that planned events can potentially be weakened through a reliance on such non-commercial transactions. Describing this relationship as 'complicated', R7 highlights here the need for organisers to balance their intended cultural productions within the framework of highly socialised parameters.

(2) Defining Project Boundaries

For producers of country music, the project boundaries are set by the requirement to complete a piece of music according to the imperatives of the timing of the release and allocation of scarce resources. Record labels determine recording budgets and producers will normally be bound by the terms of a Producer's Contract, placing the onus on them to provide a satisfactory recording on time and within the agreed budget. However, while the project boundaries appear to set by clear criteria, Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) found that 'when producing a creative work, producers were actively engaged in defining these boundaries' (p.64) through the brokerage process. For festival organisers, the ability to define and redefine the project boundaries is even more pronounced. Despite the limitations set by the availability of suitable artists, it is often the fluidity of the cultural production that sets individual events apart. As R3 explains, 'because they're all competing for the same acts' it is advantageous for festival organisers to establish a 'point of difference' either through delineation by genre or by a unique shifting of production boundaries:

> The specialist ones, the metal ones that *Kerrang* get involved with, some of the surf festivals and things like that, they're always going to do well, because they're offering more than one thing. But a lot of festivals are just trying to replicate what Glastonbury did, or what other festivals do on a much smaller scale. I think it's hard to make the numbers add up.

While making the numbers add up and maintaining commercial viability remains the over-riding priority for most organisers, the need for innovation

and originality in combining the cultural production factors is evident. This is especially pressing in such a competitive marketplace during a time of corporate expansion and a growth in the issuing of restrictive performance contracts.

The setting of project boundaries, however, is not always entirely within the remit of individual organisers. While the need to break even remains to the fore, many smaller or not-for-profit festivals are delineated by internal organisational concerns which set the production limits. For R6, these are laid out in a written constitution, the terms of which are overseen and enforced by the members of a festival committee:

> So it's really important that we sit down as a committee and say, right, we need 100 fliers, or 100 posters for the town, or whatever it might be. You've got to get a rough idea of how much it's going to cost and get that okayed by everybody… the money in the account isn't our money. It belongs to the festival. Everything must get voted on by the committee.

While R6 affirms that each year 'there can be challenges, but we get there in the end' the planning of events according to a constitution and the agreement of a committee clearly requires the employment of significant brokerage skills. Although such clear restrictions are not typical of festival organisation, sophisticated social skills such as persuasion and compromise[28] are required to ensure that momentum is maintained and the event takes place.

[28] A personal memory that still stands out was having to ask the neighbouring farmer if he would allow the event to continue uninterrupted, even though the attendees had inadvertently parked in the wrong field, which had not been hired. The agreed compromise was free entry to the festival and a pint at the after-show.

(3) Creative Production

The third phase in the recording process is that period following the initial negotiations regarding the selection of suitable songs through to the completion of the multiple recordings. Creative Production relies on establishing and reinforcing a shared aesthetic whilst remaining in control of the creative process. R2, who works with a number of colleagues on a portfolio of live music events and festivals, stresses the importance of maintaining a conceptual distance between each of the events:

> Our philosophy is you've got one person in charge of the event. There's one person responsible to oversee, whether it be the creative director or whatever you want to call it. It's that person's responsibility to manage the whole process from the idea to the final wash of the finances a week or two, or a month after the event.

Having one person in charge helps to maintain a creative vision which is not often recognised in promoters' practices. As Jordan (2015) argues, in response to an increasing festivalisation of culture and as discussed earlier in Chapter Six, organisers need to become even more creative in their work as 'festivalisation is changing and reshaping the cultural market place, audience expectations and production processes' (p.11) while one-off events are increasingly configured into 'festivals'. As Webster (2016) observes, audience development often relies on this concentration of events, thereby 'acting as an amplifier which attracts media attention' (p.22). Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) note how the producers were concerned that they would be unable to capture the 'studio "magic" that would enable their projects to sell in the fickle country music market' (p.67); this creative responsibility also weighs on the

festival promoters as they seek to keep up with the challenges of attracting and maintaining their audiences.

(4) Final Synthesis

The final phase for the country music producers involves putting the recorded elements together into a balanced, coherent whole. This process of selection involves identifying and amending the required recordings, while leaving the unused elements on the 'cutting room floor':

> The trigger for the final synthesis phase was a mass of raw vocal and musical recordings awaiting editing and mixing; the phase concluded when the artist and label accepted the final product (Long Lingo & O'Mahony, 2010: 72).

Indeed, acceptance by the label is so important that the final product may be rejected by the label if it is considered unsuitable for commercial exploitation, often requiring the producers to undertake much of the work again through remixing the original recordings. For the organisers of festivals, the final synthesis is only achieved when the planned event has taken place and there is no opportunity for a remix. At the festival site and for the duration of the event, the role of overseeing the final synthesis moves from that of event planner to event manager, a position for which, and as discussed in Chapter Six, none of the respondents has received any formal training.

The necessity of facilitating and encouraging teamwork is identified by almost all respondents as lying at the heart of their practice. One of the organisers of the Edinburgh International Festival, Louise Mitchell, confirms that: 'Festivals are highly pressured environments' and that those working behind-the-scenes

‘often have to go beyond the call of duty’ (Mitchell & Stoyanova Russell, 2015: 213) and effective team-building is therefore one of the most important organisational and social skills that the promoters need to deploy. R2 states simply that ‘teamwork is everything,’ while R3 characterises the work as ‘a big team effort’. To R1, it is the ability to integrate roles that is the most important element: ‘Teamwork is the most important thing, hands down. I don’t think anything would ever be accomplished if everyone just did their jobs by themselves.’ Meanwhile, R4 highlights the need for a core of workers operating at the centre of activities being fully aware of their roles and responsibilities:

> This one I’m working on at the minute, I don’t think it could be a smaller team. Because of that, it means that everybody in that team really had to work very hard, and it had to be very focused. The amount of time it was all put together and took place, and with the team, there was no time to make mistakes. So everybody had to understand what it was that was being asked of them straight away. And people did. We were very lucky.

The transfer of knowledge by the organisers as knowledge brokers may be simpler with a smaller team, but the demands of briefing other members of staff quickly and efficiently is a key skill. As Stadler, Fullagar & Reid (2014) maintain, ‘the ability to co-ordinate and integrate temporary or seasonal staff’ is key to the role of festival managers while ‘the understanding that all staff have about the nature and scope of their individual roles and organizational responsibilities’ (p.41) is crucial to the festival’s success.

Some independent events rely on employees who return year after year, thereby forming a part of the long-term, shared vision. R5 is the only full-time member of staff working on his event, but employs the same part-time members each year during the final stages of preparation and staging. As Becker (1982) observes, such freelance workers often provide 'one solid chunk of undivided attention' to a project 'they then forget' (p.89), which helps to underline why R5 attests to the importance of those who are able to carry this embedded knowledge and the ease with which this can then be transmitted and absorbed:

> I think having the same team for 12 years…it's just really well-oiled now. Everyone knows their roles. It sounds quite strange, but it just kind of happens once we delegate information out and everyone knows what they're doing. We don't have a full team meeting in advance or anything like that. It's just done through myself as a pivot having conversations with artist liaison, stage management, door staff and security. Everyone knows their role now.

Although this 'pivoting' role may sometimes be delegated, its importance is not under-estimated, even if the size of the event requires a greater degree of specialisation. As R8 confirms: 'we as organisers, we can have our visions, our dreams, but that means nothing if you don't have a production manager who can make it into a reality.' The successful transition from 'vision' to 'reality' serves as a succinct distillation of the role of the on-site festival manager.

Working with Volunteer Labour

One of the features of working with seasonal labour on cultural events such as music festivals, is that a number of employees are prepared to offer their labour for free or for payment in kind. The latter may take the form of tickets for the event or the provision of food and drink and accommodation in return for services including issuing wrist-bands, stewarding and litter-picking. However, as volunteer labour, these workers pose distinct challenges to the festival organisers. In his study of the motivations of student volunteers working at events, Wakelin (2013) sought to establish whether their actions could be identified as altruistic or performed for reciprocal benefit. He noted that volunteers contributed £22.5 billion to the UK economy in 2003 and that participation in events 'remained the second most common voluntary activity in 2011' (p.63). Given the importance of volunteering to the sector and the cost benefits to festival organisers of employing volunteers rather than waged staff, managing these workers is a key component of event management. While Wakelin reports that 'some 70,000 volunteers were required for the London 2012 Olympics' (p.66), smaller events can be even more reliant on volunteer labour, where the need to break-even remains paramount.

Organisations now offer volunteering services to events, the most popular of which is the scheme operated by Oxfam, who provide volunteer stewards for a number of UK festivals. These range from the large-scale Glastonbury, Reading and Leeds festivals, down to boutique events including Bearded Theory, 2000 Trees and Beautiful Days. In return for a donation to the charity, Oxfam stewards undertake on-site duties including monitoring crowd levels, enforcing smoking bans or acting as a member of a response team in case of

an emergency (Oxfam, 2017). However, whilst training is provided for anyone new to the scheme and a supervisor is allocated to each volunteer on their first shift, it is recognised that festivals are dynamic environments that differ significantly between events, with variables such as the capacity and demographic make-up of the crowd, the time of day or night, and the effects of the weather. While these volunteers benefit from training and supervision, measures still need to be taken to ensure attendance and suitable behaviour throughout the event, including adherence to a stated code of conduct that sets out the standards of behaviour expected.

Alongside the charitable sector, volunteers may also be recruited through other third-party organisations. Festaff Ltd, who provide volunteer staff for a number of UK festivals including Kendal Calling, Boomtown and Creamfields, require potential volunteers to apply for events by first registering with the company. A registration fee of £35 is required for festivals which include camping, of which £20 is returned at the event and £15 is retained as an administration fee. For one day events such as British Summer Time and All Points East, there is a non-returnable £10 administration fee (Festaff, 2019). The company, which is registered in Carlisle, was set up in 2012 and has a reported Turnover Gross Operating Revenue of £378,000 in its accounts filed on 31 January 2016 (BizDb, 2019), indicating that offering supporting activities in the form of providing volunteer staff is a significant economic activity. As Jaeger & Olsen (2017) note, festivals have morphed into 'becoming a rather heterogenic field of limited companies, individual entrepreneurs and volunteer associations' while volunteers are 'in danger of using their time and money to work for shareholders who run a commercial

activity' (p.410). Such contradictions underline the complex and individual value systems (Bachman, Norman, Backman & Hopkins, 2017) that volunteers apply when choosing to undertake these unpaid and often demanding activities.

In a similar way to accepting any other benefit, either monetary or in kind, working with volunteers requires the organiser to make some accommodation for the greater complexities of this type of short-term and socially-based employer/employee relationship. This is illustrated by Wakelin's (2013) data collected from 389 students at the University of Plymouth, who produced '495 reasons to volunteer' spanning motivation categories from 'CV and career' through to 'fun and enjoyment'. While perhaps not as limiting to festival organisers as in those art worlds where Becker (1982) argues 'The artist's involvement with and dependence on cooperative links […] constrains the kind of art he can produce' (p.26), there are evident limitations in working with volunteer labour in the planning and staging of events. As R6 confirms:

> Sometimes when you've got volunteers, they're fantastic, because you couldn't do it without them, but they perhaps don't understand the importance and the need that, actually, we do need this turned around quite quickly. One of the youngsters does the minutes, but he doesn't always understand he'd be in a much better place if he knocked them out within the week, not the night before the next meeting when some people have forgotten that meeting had even taken place.

This also highlights one of the other issues of working with volunteers whose motivation is to gain experience or accreditation.[29] Festival organisers, who often did not undertake any formal training themselves but instead learned through their own working experience, can then be cast in the role of trainers, another addition to their required skill set.

Training and integrating volunteers is a vital role. As Bowdin et al. (2011) confirm, much of this takes place entirely on site because of 'the infrequent nature and short duration of events, training of event volunteers usually takes place on the job under the direction of the event manager or a supervisor' (p.338). This training involves not only an explanation of the different types of work that may be required, but also the transfer of deeper event knowledge. Abfalter, Stadler & Muller (2012), in a study of knowledge sharing at the Colorado Music Festival, detail how this process 'does not incorporate formal ways of knowledge sharing but relies instead on flexible and informal activities' (p.12). The seasonal staff, however, called for more knowledge to be documented and highlighted issues around the longer-serving employees forming cliques and, having internalised the knowledge themselves, 'do not wish to discuss every detail again' (p.11). In their study of the management of the volunteering experience at the Olympic Games in London, 2012, Holmes, Nichols & Ralston (2018) report how the event organisers LOCOG often seemed to adopt a 'take it or leave it' approach[30] with many volunteers feeling

[29] It is notable that the FAQ's on the Festaff website particularly highlight the benefits of volunteering for students taking Event Management courses (Festaff, 2019).

[30] Muskat & Deery (2017) also note: 'Event staff and volunteers reported that event organizations often missed out on the opportunity to access the individual knowledge that they acquired and created during the event' (p.439) as they were not included in any post-event feedback sessions.

that much of the experience was negative, despite the overall positivity of taking part.[31]

Managing or running an event remains one of the key drivers for volunteering. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) report that 20.1 million people volunteered through a group, club or organisation in the UK in 2017/18 and, of these, 39% organised or helped run an activity or event (NCVO, 2019). However, even though the DCMS *Community Life Survey 2017-18* highlights that respondents were around six times more likely to volunteer 'to improve things/help people' than to use the experience 'to get on in their career' (NCVO, 2019), promoters must be careful not to take their labour for granted. Much as streaming has finally returned growth to the recorded music sector, it can be argued that access to this pool of free labour has been one of the key elements in the rise of the music festival sector, allowing organisers across all types of events to improve their balance sheets. For the smaller scale festivals, this can mean the difference between failure and survival, enabling promoters to reach their break-even figure, while for the larger independent and corporate festivals it can be seen as addressing the 'value gap' around the imperfect workings of the secondary ticketing market. However, it is vital that festival organisers recognise their responsibilities and duty of care to all those who volunteer their labour. As will be discussed further in Chapter Twelve, the creative industries are often the site of exploitative or self-exploitative practices (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011) and

[31] In my own volunteering experience, I was struck by the importance of possessing knowledge. Once it became clear that I could not provide answers to questions around the provision of technical facilities, I was quickly dismissed from all discussions by the performers and other staff, a humiliating experience.

festival promoters, whilst needing to monitor the toll that organising events can take on themselves, must continue to guard against the effects of their practices on others.

Working with Artists

Working with artists is a key role in organising festivals. This function is generally managed through those members of staff and volunteers assigned to artist liaison, the interface between the festival organisation and the performers, and it is their responsibility to ensure that the artist is in the best possible mood to perform. R1 recalls her first experience of the role:

> I started in the artist liaison team five years ago and I was looking after a band, and they'd had the worst journey. They'd arrived on site and they were absolutely miserable. J, who runs it, was like, that's your job. You've got to make them be slightly less miserable when they get on stage.

From this, R1 saw how the work of the artist liaison team can be crucial to a festival's success. As discussed in Chapter Five, some of the artists will not receive sufficient payment, even to cover their costs of performing at the event. Moreover, the additional inconveniences of travelling long distances and performing in temporary spaces within a limited time frame can also affect an artist's mood, something that the artist liaison team must identify and counter:

> If they're happy and they play great sets, people are going to want to come back. If they're happy and they're on stage and they're bringing that vibe, that's exactly what the audience feed off (R1).

This link between the level of performance and the satisfaction of the audience offers another explanation regarding the high fees that headline acts can command. Artists who have a long-standing track record of successful live performances not only facilitate the sale of tickets, but add to the on-site and post-event experiences which serve to encourage consumers to return for subsequent events.

Even for the smaller or funded events where ticket-selling is not so crucial, the mood of the artists remains central to the staging of the event. R7 lists 'keeping your musicians happy and giving them a good experience so that they want to come back and play again' as one of the three measures of success that ensure the festival is maintained year-on-year. This is especially challenging for R3, who relies almost entirely on artist liaison skills to encourage the best performances from the artists who, for reasons of gaining extra publicity or given the desire 'to play a more intimate show' at a larger event, have asked to play the stage in his area of the festival:

> It's great to have that Cliff Richard *Summer Holiday* 'yeah, we'll do it right here' but the reality of the situation is it's still a lot harder than you think and the worst thing you can do is let bands down. When we have people playing for nothing, you make sure they have a good time and they're well looked after and they get what they want sound-wise and light-wise.

Although Auslander (2008) points to the frustration of the presence of the artist 'in front of us' (p.66), and the need to maintain the essential distance between the performer and the audience, the level of connection between the artist and the production team is certainly heightened in smaller, more

performative spaces. However, for R3 there is still an element of exploitation in this transaction, even when the artists have asked to perform and the terms of the contract have been agreed by both parties. It is clear that only being able to offer 'very little other than beer, towels and water' goes against his ingrained desire to see the artists sufficiently rewarded for their creative labour.

Working with the Community

Volunteer staff are often drawn from within the community where the event takes place. This provides benefits to the festival promoters in that it helps to build bridges and ties between the event and the local population. As R8 details, although none of the team had any pre-existing ties with the festival location, the openness of the community to the event was a key part of their ability to grow the festival over a number of years:

> We have a very good relationship with the licensing authority, which is based only 10 minutes' drive from the festival site. Through them, and obviously through when we started out and you had to put posters up to say you were applying for a licence, we have got to know a lot of the locals. We don't necessarily get involved on an all year-round basis, but we tend to go to the local area once or twice a year and hold a pub meeting where we listen to what everybody has to say, and where we also potentially test new plans to see whether people would oppose them…We do liaise with them a lot.

Not only does this represent good business practice as it reduces the waste of time and other resources in the planning stages of the event, it also provides

the local community with an important sense of ownership and belonging. Such embeddedness in the community helps to explain the continuing longevity of the event, whilst also assisting with the festival's 'bottom line'.

Over and above the remit for her festival to provide 'high quality art to the communities', R7 also stresses the importance of looking to involve local residents in the event. This has the double benefit of ensuring that the event has sufficient staff and that awareness is raised in the area, thereby helping to grow the festival audience:

> It's very much about the community. It's about the places. So for example, the village halls and things, it's making sure that we use those venues and keep things within the reach of local people… One, so that you can do the kind of liaison with the halls, and people making teas and all the things that you need to do from a ground-level. But also, hopefully, making sure that everybody in those local communities are really aware of what's going on.

As Wakelin (2013) confirms, many volunteers are motivated by the altruistic desire of 'helping the community'. Not only does this aid in increasing social capital (Putnam, 2000), it also points to the importance of festivals in maintaining community ties in an increasingly digital era. As Bowdin et al. (2011) highlight:

> Even in the high-tech era of global media, when people have lost touch with the common religious beliefs and social norms of the past, we still need social events to mark the local and domestic details of our lives (p.4).

Indeed, as networked communities of labour continue to find new ways of global production that can link individuals across previous limitations of time and space, festivals remain one of the few ways in which communities have the potential to unite in the performance of economic, social and cultural labour.

However, working with and within the community remains problematic. The use of free labour and the almost cynical appreciation of the benefits of community involvement raise questions about the altruistic motivations of the organisers. Although the positive impacts of festivals on a local or regional area are advanced uncritically by reports such as UK Music's *Wish You Were Here 2017* (UK Music, 2017b),[32] Deery & Jago's (2010) synthesis of the studies of the social impacts of events highlights the need to assess both the positive and negative impacts of events and urges a consideration of the limits of community tolerance. They argue that while the short-term, mainly economic impacts are often positive, the negative impacts of crowding and anti-social behaviours, including 'drunken, rowdy and potentially life and property-threatening behaviour' (p.8), often affect both the event and the event destination. Indeed, Laing & Mair (2015) identify how festival organisers can contribute to the building of strong and cohesive communities, but question whether their efforts are focused on the attendees rather than on the local residents, recommending that they 'encourage greater attendance from the local community if they wish to be the socially inclusive events they aim to

[32] For example, the report calculates that 600,000 music tourists were attracted to the region of the East of England alone, spending £74 million on festivals including Latitude at Henham Park and V at Chelmsford (UK Music, 2017: 19).

be' (p.266). Festival organisers must consider how far their events are genuinely beneficial and inclusive while not merely relying on carefully-produced economic data or the hedonistic experiences of the few to justify the disruption, or even exclusion, of the many.

Summary

This chapter looked at the organisation of festivals as the mobilising of human resources. It used a model drawn from the recorded music industry to consider how festival promoters use brokerage in constructing and staging creative events. It then took a view of three aspects of human relationships, namely working with volunteers, artists, and the community respectively while asking questions regarding the mutual benefits of such ties. It concluded with the observation that festival organisers must be aware of their own intentions and the social impact of their work. The next chapter will consider how the organisers work with festivals as types of cultural goods or services.

Chapter Nine: Cultural Goods

Introduction

This chapter looks at independent music festivals as types of cultural goods in an experience economy that increasingly values products for their aesthetic over their use value. It considers their place in a growing aestheticisation of goods and the importance of the concepts of niche and genre in the positioning of events in the marketplace. It then considers the notion of authenticity and the role of the audience as consumers before viewing the activities of fans in the co-creation of events.

The sociologists Scott Lash & John Urry (1994) argue that in a post-Fordist economy, goods and services will increasingly be valued for their operation as signs, symbols and images. The shift from a functional system of exchange will witness a move away from utility value towards that of the symbolic and the aesthetic. Lash & Urry recognised that whilst this may represent a systemic change for the exchange of many goods and services, ‘in the culture industries, both use-value and exchange-value have always been sign values’ (p.123). As Peterson & Berger (1975) identified, the recorded music industry is one market which operates within this value system and the festival industry exists in a similar symbol-production domain, relying on the creation and supply of a diversity of cultural products. While Adorno argues that the commodification of music had brought about a standardisation and homogeneity of the product, Negus (1997) believes that ‘the more messy informal world of human actions, working relationships and cultural meanings’

(p.94) leads to far greater individuality in the recorded music production process while the latter may be even more evident in the production of independent festivals, which are separated and individualised by structure, time and space.

In this, festivals exemplify what Urry (1995) describes as 'the production and consumption of a particular social experience' (p.130) which characterises the continuing move away from a use-value economic system. The Harvard economists B. Joseph Pine II & James H. Gilmore (2011) view this move as a paradigm shift for the global economy. Drawing on the practices of the Disney corporation, they trace an evolutionary line from commodity > good > service > experience, and argue that 'in a world saturated with largely undifferentiated goods and services the greatest opportunity for value creation resides in staging experiences' (p.ix). Moreover, this is a fundamental shift, because in this new economy '*experiences* represent the basis of *economic* activity' (p.xix), an activity where consumers are 'engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level' (p.17) with the goods they are consuming. It is no surprise that organisers recognise the primary place of festivals within this new economy and the natural advantages they enjoy over the providers of other goods and services. As R3 asserts, 'I think people do travel much further now… travelling has become a lot easier than it used to be and people are willing to go and get an experience'. This act of travelling indeed enhances the consumption of the event, adding another layer to the desired movement away from the everyday and the routine.

Aestheticization

Both R6 and R7 also acknowledge the importance of enhancing the consumer experience. Whilst their festivals are very different in terms of aims and location, they concur in the ways in which their events are intended to be consumed, Indeed, R6 believes that 'experience and escapism' are fundamental to the appeal of the event while R7 sees that actually 'having to go out and experience live music' is much more than 'just listening to music'. While the Live Nation *Annual Report 2016* focuses on 'a demographic that increasingly values experiences over material possessions' (Live Nation, 2016), R2 accentuates the appeal of festivals by highlighting the added value of blending location with live music programming:

> If you pick a lovely location like, for example, Caerphilly Castle, and you put a band on like Ocean Colour Scene, who people can see in any major city, but if you put them in a castle, people will think, "Oh actually, I've seen the band five times before, but I'll travel because it's a castle".

This demonstrates the wider attraction of festivals in an experience economy, where their size and scope encourage further activities such as travelling and tourism. The addition of these extra elements thereby allows for far greater opportunities for physical, emotional and intellectual engagement with the symbolic products, while extending these experiences across both time and space.

The embellishment of the aesthetic underlines how festival organisers are reacting to the demands of an increasingly consumerist society. Where Jean

Baudrillard (1988) argued for a greater focus on the acts of consumption and Bourdieu (1984) for an emphasis on the ways in which cultural goods are consumed, Du Gay (1997) recognised that producers would be required to follow a process of increasing *aestheticization* or 'fashioning' of these goods, in order to compete in a growing consumer-led cultural economy. For Pine & Gilmore (2011), this leads to the 'mass customizing' of goods, 'producing only and exactly what individual customers want' (p.xiv) which is reflected in the observation by Getz & Page (2016) that 'Increasingly it will be necessary to "custom-design" highly targeted event experiences' and that this 'has to be based on greater knowledge of the planned event experience' (p.620). As R6 explains, for the producer, this is measured in terms of audience satisfaction: 'I would say it's a success because everybody goes away very happy' while R8 focuses on the importance of the event planning: 'there are so many little details. That is one thing, attention to detail. Not letting any aspect of your festival slip.' The range of responsibilities that this embodies, from the demands of event logistics through to the responses of individual audience members, indicates the organisers' involvement and embodiment in the consumption of the festival experience.

Niche

In their University of Wollongong study of the links between cultural festivals and economic development, Chris Gibson, Gordon Waitt, Jim Walmsley & John Connell (2010) calculated that there were 2,856 events taking place in 2007 within just three Australian states: Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales. This represented Australia's largest investigation into the contributions

of festivals to social and economic life in rural and regional communities and the research team sought ways to distinguish between the multitude of small- and large-scale events. One of the methods chosen was the use of tailored keyword searches on Internet search engines that were intended to identify the possible niches that the events occupied within the marketplace. They used terms linked with ‘particular styles of music’, ‘common festival types’ and more specific terms ‘associated with demographic groups, subcultures, and other leisure activities’ (Gibson et al., 2010: 282). It is taken for granted by Gibson *et al.* that festivals can be divided in this way and the festival organisers clearly support this heuristic demarcation. R1 affirms her belief in the importance of new festivals ‘starting in a niche’, while R8 believes

> … that you can almost find a niche festival for whatever type of music that you're into these days, whereas maybe 10, 20 years ago there wasn’t such a good selection of different types of festivals.

As the sector continues to offer the opportunity for new events to enter the marketplace, either alongside the existing festivals or as replacements for failing ones, it seems that the essential requirement is to find and occupy an identifiable niche. There is little evidence that the type of niche itself is of equal importance.

However, the use of niche as a means of being placed within the market does help to delineate events and is a useful tool for targeting audiences and selling festival tickets. Particular styles of music can be found in many festival names, such as the Cambridge Folk Festival and Montreux Jazz Festival and these clear identifications provide benefits both for starting events and for

those seeking longevity. Moreover, they offer the audience an insight into the aims and objectives of the organisers. As the University of Wollongong (2013) study has found:

> The vast majority (74%) of festivals were run by non-profit organisations, usually tiny in size. Only 3.3 percent of the festivals surveyed were run by private sector/profit-seeking companies. Reflecting this somewhat, the stated aims of festivals were more often than not linked to the pastimes, passions or pursuits of the individuals on organizing committees, or to socially- or culturally-orientated ends such as building community, rather than as income-generating ventures.

This underlines that festivals are very often created in the image of their makers, namely as expressions of the organisers' own passions or pursuits. The ways in which these events then come to be consumed is personally or socially beneficial for the attendees, but festivals are driven by the particular intentions of the festival organisers and their individual modes of production.

Furthermore, the production of niche events can be likened to the operation of musical 'scenes'. As William Straw (1991) asserts in his attempt to define the notion of 'scene' within popular music terminology, 'the point is not that of designating particular cultural spaces as one or the other, but of examining the ways in which particular musical practices "work' to produce a sense of community' (p.373). However, instead of coalescing around a particular metropolitan part of Canada, the cultural spaces of festivals are deliberately designed and produced by the organisers. This is seen by them, not as a

‘scene’, but as an ‘identity’, the importance of which R1 affirms: ‘Starting with an iron rod of identity as a festival, something that other people don’t offer, is something that would really help anyone starting a festival’. R8 is equally unequivocal about establishing this aspect of the festival concept:

> For a festival to be successful, I think you have to have a very clear idea of your own identity. What is it that you stand for? I think festivals that have a very clear identity seem to do better.

It can be seen how closely R8 aligns her personal identity with the staged event. It is not going too far to argue that festivals can be viewed as cultural goods that have been produced as physical and symbolic representations of the organisers’ own personalities and drive.

Genre

Within the music industry, niche markets are often determined by the given music content genre. However, and as Negus (1999) has observed, it is necessary to refute the arguments of Adorno (1991) who argued that the recorded music industry is simply able to produce these cultural goods and impose homogeneous products upon a mass audience. Instead, Negus wishes to fully understand the dynamic interplays of genre practices and the ways in which the corporate organizations actively intervene in ‘the production, reproduction, circulation and interpretation of genres’ (p.28). This Negus sees as much broader than just the drawing of boundaries and lines between the codes and conventions of a particular style of music, suggesting that these more fluid entities should be termed ‘genre cultures’ or ‘genre

worlds'. This indicates the fluidity of the relationship between the producer and consumer, where 'social tensions and divisions formed in relation to these broader genre cultures are shaping the music business as much as the music business is shaping the meanings of genres' (Negus, 1999: 30). However, this still embodies the sense that the 'music business' and 'genre culture' operate as separate nodes of communication, each shaped by the actions of the other, thereby undervaluing the position of the producer *within* the genre, a status that can be detected in the practices of independent festival organisers.

Fabian Holt (2007) develops this view of genre in popular music and stresses actors' positioning in a far more integrated way, believing that 'Genre boundaries are contingent upon the social spaces in which they emerge and upon cultural practice, not just musical practice' (p.14). As the organisers create these social spaces, they also begin to define the cultural practices of the consumers, helping to shape experiences by both the musical programming and type of festival they wish to operate. As Holt continues: 'Genres are identified not only with music, but also with certain cultural values, rituals, practices, territories, traditions, and groups of people' (p.19). Planning elements such as choice of location, event timing and the way the programming is structured, all influence the groups of people attending. R2 organises a number of discrete events and describes the process:

> We promote across different genres. So what's one person's festival is not another person's festival. I look at some festivals and think, 'Oh, they're really cool, really hip, really awesome, and I'd love to be involved in that.' But I always think that's what they do every day, those

> bands. They have a feeling for it. Whereas somebody like us, we promote festivals we like, but we look at it as a business.

Festivals are intentionally produced by the organisers according to their understanding of genre cultures. The control of production clearly shapes the audience experience, from the hip to the unhip, but within the greater limitations of finance and market competition.

Negus (1997) also recognises that genre cultures are shaped more by the actions of the producer than by the activities of the consumer, stating that: 'It is the role therefore of the producer of cultural goods to understand the signs and symbols that define those distinctions and discriminations that mark the generic musical and social boundaries' (p.77). This can also be seen in the work of the country music producers; the phase that Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) term 'resource gathering' reflects how the producers 'explicitly considered how all parties to the process would react to creative decisions, in this case introducing the record label's market criteria to the artist' (p.60). This inevitably shapes the actions of the artist, pre-determining the genre boundaries before the production takes place, thereby demonstrating that the understanding of genre cultures is critical to the producer's role. However, while these producers may, like R2, also have an understanding of a wide range of genres, R8, who has organised a single event over an extended period of time, illustrates the benefits and challenges of immersion in one defined yet fluid genre:

> I feel we've been very lucky that there are so many people out there who have a similar taste in music as we do, so maybe one challenge –

> touch wood that it never happens – but what do we do when the trends change and people are no longer into what we love? I don't know.

The role of the organiser is a type of weathervane, requiring them to stay open to any change in boundaries or dynamics, whilst also helping to operate control from within the genre by privileging the staging of one artist or performance over another.

Authenticity

Cultural goods are seen by Du Gay (1997) as ones that blend cultural values such as beauty, authenticity and truth with the rational and instrumental logic of economic exchange. The use-value of recorded music is difficult to define, especially in an era of digital streaming where the music delivered is not owned by the consumer, thus notions of authenticity continue to carry particular weight. As Negus (1992) observed, specialist roles such as Artist Development and Product Management exist within record companies to identify and enhance those elements which allow for successful differentiation of the product in the marketplace. Where the Artist Development seeks to improve the quality of the recorded output – for instance in securing the producers of country music in Long Lingo & O'Mahony's (2010) study discussed in Chapter Eight – the Product Management Team utilise information gained from market research in order to assess whether the finished product is ready for release. However, as Negus (1992) detected, 'the act of purchase is informed by a number of discriminations,' the most important of which is an 'ethic of authenticity' (p.71). It is also often necessary

to fashion the image of recording artists in order to project this cultural value through a process of ‘media manipulation’ and enhancement. When this process is exposed, as evidenced by the revelation that the performers Robert Pilatus and Fabrice Morvan did not sing on the Milli Vanilli recordings, such an overt lack of authenticity saw the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences revoke Pilatus’ and Morvan’s Grammy Award (Philips, 1990) as the music industry attempted ‘to reaffirm the value of authenticity and deflect the accusation of simulation’ (Auslander, 2008: 124), which is seen as antithetical to the ideology upon which ‘rock’ music is based.

The Milli Vanilli ‘scandal’ serves only to underline the ongoing importance of authenticity to the recorded music industry. As Peterson (1997) argues, the term is not synonymous with historical accuracy and indeed the more ‘authentic’ country artists were not necessarily popular with wider audiences. This indicates ‘the fact that authenticity is not inherent in the object or event that is designated authentic but is a socially agreed-upon construct’ (p.3), one in which the all of the producers and consumers of country music culture concur. Negus (1999) also believes that ‘authenticity mediates social relations’ (p.130), believing that artists can be ‘re-embedded’ into the lives of fans who are able to experience authenticity through a relationship based on a shared understanding of the beliefs and values that underlie the given genre. With the continued distancing effect of digital music, where even the ritual of purchase and consumption of recorded music has been disrupted by the unending abundance of streaming and the dilution of mediated relationships between the artist and the fan, it is little surprise that the arena

for constructing these cultural values has largely returned to the live sector, where the opportunity for sharing face-to-face interaction remains.

At the time that Negus conducted his study into the production of popular music, live performance was viewed by the music industry mainly as a means for supporting the marketing of the recorded product. Incentives such as Tour Support were offered, which sought to meet any gap in the funding of live activities, and live performances were scheduled around record release dates. However, as he points out, the 'intuition of acquisition' which A&R staff used to determine which artists were suitable for the record label to sign, was supported by a series of characteristics which meant that 'the live, stage performance' were key criteria in the decision-making process. As Negus (1992) affirms:

> Despite developments in video, digital recording and telecommunications technology which have enabled artists to reach global audiences without the need of traditional touring and stage performances, staff making decisions about which artists to acquire place considerable emphasis on their live performance potentials and abilities (pp.53-54).

As YouTube replaces MTV and streaming and online radio platforms cross previous territorial and geographical boundaries, live performance abilities have actually been seen to grow in importance, with release schedules for many artists now seen as an adjunct to their festival appearances. This process continues to insert the notion of authenticity back firmly into the live industry sector.

Walter Benjamin's (1999) 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' offers a useful way to consider the experience of authenticity in this context. Where the mass production of the recorded industry allowed for the captured performance to be repeated endlessly and on demand, the live sector retains the uniqueness of the performance on that given day, in that location. For Benjamin,

> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be (p.214)

Moreover, Benjamin argues that 'the presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity' (p.214). While it may be stretching the concept of a 'work of art' by including the performance of a music artist at a popular music festival, the 'presence' of the artist certainly raises the audience's experience of the event. The aura of the work of art, embedded in its 'fabric of tradition', echoes the social relations of live performance and also reveals something about 'changes in the medium of contemporary perception' (p.216). As R1, the organiser most closely aligned to both producer and consumer, relates:

> better lighting, video production and effects have definitely been a massive impact for some of the festivals that I work on. People's attention spans are shorter now, more so than ever before. With the technological age, everything is instant gratification, and keeping people's attention has become so much harder. So you have to give them a lot more to focus on.

The aura of live performance is enhanced by technological advances in sound and lighting while the presence of the original is amplified by a culture of production that seeks to overwhelm the senses. The better the production, the more the consumer is fixed in the present with the experience of time and space magnified in an attempt to satisfy the demands of both instant gratification and long-term memory recall.

A search for authenticity helps to explain the growth in music festivals in a digital era. Indeed, as Frith (2007a) argues, live performance has always been 'the truest form of musical expression, the setting in which 'musicians and their listeners alike can judge whether what they do is "real"' (p. 8). It is interesting that he substitutes the synonym 'real' here, as Negus uses the same term when discussing the politics rap artists' identities. Whereas Peterson reported that 'authenticity' was the most popular answer offered by country music producers to *Billboard* magazine when asked what factors they considered when selecting new talent, none of the festival organisers used the phrase in any of their responses. While this may be a reflection of the questions that were asked, it is still significant that the word was not in common use. Instead, the term seems to be embedded in the values of an 'independent' festival, a social construct shared between producers and consumers. As R5 explains: 'We quite like the independent feel. I think people really do tune into that. I think the bands reflect that as well. It's not a traditional mainstream line-up.' While Negus (1992) has been keen to refute the simple dichotomy between the commercially-minded majors and the artistically-inclined independent companies, the independence claim carries a greater aura of authenticity for festival organisers and audiences. Even if, as

discussed earlier, the ultimate ownership of independent festivals may be in the hands of corporate entities controlling up to ‘5% of the global market share of the live music industry’ (AIF, 2016), this may be why events seek to be joined together as members of an Association of Independent Festivals, or why changes in ownership are not communicated directly to consumers.

Audiences

Reports produced on behalf of the music industry have consciously sought to categorise live music audiences as ‘music tourists’. The umbrella organisation UK Music (2016b, 2017b), artfully using a phrase shared by the back catalogue of Pink Floyd and the limited lexicon of the holiday postcard, entitled their series of reports ‘Wish You Were Here’, emphasising both the music and the tourist. The methodology used in the study dictates that ‘live music must be the primary attraction at the relevant event’ and that music goers are counted as tourists if they fulfil the following criteria:

- For overseas visitors, if they book their ticket to a music event from their home address in a country outside the UK;
- For domestic visitors, if they travel at least three times the average commuting distance in the Government Office Region (GOR) in which the event took place in order to attend the event (UK Music, 2017c: 2).

The reports are constructed to maximise the overall value of live music to the UK economy, adding ancillary items of travel and accommodation in order to encourage local and regional government authorities to recognise the importance of licensing or otherwise supporting such events.

Positioning live event audiences as music tourists allows festivals to be viewed through the sociological lens of Dean MacCannell's (1973) notion of 'staged authenticity'. In this view, the tourists seek to experience a place or activity 'as it really is' as the 'touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experiences' (p.597). Moreover, although MacCannell is concerned with the types of experiences found in tourist settings such as Las Vegas and San Francisco, he argues that sightseeing is a form of ritual while tourism itself 'absorbs some of the social functions of religion in the modern world', even declaring that 'The concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society' (pp.589-590).

The tourist is unwilling to accept a mere performance, requiring instead an experience that allows them to see what lies behind the simple presentation. However, 'What is taken to be real might, in fact, be a show that is based on the structure of reality (p.593), MacCannell believes that tourism is primarily a social activity, a need to share with others in the enactment of social roles.

While the festival organisers do not describe their events in quite such theoretical terms, they certainly all consider the motivations of their audiences. R6 sees the attraction of the social element in that 'a lot more festivals perhaps are more family-friendly now. So it's become something for the whole family to share'. This theme is amplified by R1, who uses the term 'family' in a broader sense:

> It started as a real family, as in a core amount of people go and those same people go every year. It opens up to more people and their

> friends. I think that's the reason that it's been going for nearly 10 years now.

The idea of a ‘festival family’ indicates that the audiences are searching for both authentic experiences and closer social ties, As MacCannell (1973) argues, tourism offers the opportunity to engage in both:

> In our society, intimacy and closeness are accorded much importance: they are seen as the core of social solidarity, and they are also thought by some to be morally superior to rationality and distance in social relationships, and more “real” (pp.591-592).

It can be argued that music organisers are staging events that allow the audiences to increase their social capital, helping to revive some of those elements of social cohesion that Putnam (2000) sees in *Bowling Alone* as being eroded in modern society.

While MacCannell considered various types of tourist activity, these are of course all underpinned by the affordability of the events concerned. Alongside the rapid growth in provision, festival ticket prices have also increased manifold at a higher rate than many other consumer goods. As R5 suggests, music tourists’ social behaviours are affected by economic considerations with ‘people choosing to go to festivals in England rather than going abroad for holidays’. These decisions are influenced by annual concerns such as currency exchange rates and the convenience of remaining in the UK, a point supported by R8:

> I think the fact that it’s been a very tough economic climate has meant that people choose to potentially have their holidays in the country as

> opposed to going abroad, and festivals are a really nice alternative of something different to do.

Festivals as holidays return events to their more primitive functions, of ritual or carnival, allowing for practices that can be 'out of time' and transgressive. For the organisers, this requires careful event planning and management, ensuring both the wellbeing of the audience and the health of the business; as R8 explains: 'I think safety is almost number one, because if you have an unsafe event, word spreads pretty quickly'. This understanding of the need to allow the broad scope of activities that constitute 'festival time' while almost invisibly protecting the consumers underlines the almost unique nature of festivals as cultural goods.

Fan cultures

As Gemma Gelder & Peter Robinson (2009) confirm in their comparative study of Glastonbury and V Festival – one of the earliest studies of visitor motivations for attending music festivals – attendees have multiple motivations. While the study argues that broad distinctions might be drawn, for V Festival, the 'music/artists playing' was a very important factor for attending, while for Glastonbury, 'socialising with family and friends' was considered the most important factor for visiting. However, such categorisations offer little detailed insight. Similarly, in Webster's (2014) report for the Association of Independent Festivals, the most important factor in motivating the audience to attend is ascribed to 'The general atmosphere and overall vibe, character and quality of the event' (p.19). While Gelder and

Robinson do usefully point out that research should focus more on event organisers than audiences and Webster's report was commissioned by an organisation of festival managers, such data is still too slight to assist in the meaningful planning of events. Indeed, Webster's main category of 'atmosphere' and 'character' could easily be placed under MacCannell's 'authenticity' and is often only made apparent by its considered absence, such as when audiences cite the drive for profit, or 'greed', as the reason for 'the quality of the event' diminishing (MacNeill, 2017).

The search for a more granular understanding of audience motivations may indeed be fruitless. While researchers into Artificial Intelligence seek to use technology to predict hit records before they are released, including the Hitwizard (2018) project in the Netherlands built by Dutch tech agency Goldmund Wyldebeast & Wunderliebe, there is little evidence of similar technological progress in advancing knowledge of live music audiences. Despite the collection of more and more data regarding consumers' purchasing patterns, the situation is still very much as found by Steve Redhead (1997) when he assessed the audience behaviours of those involved in club cultures and subcultures:

> … what culture industries' audiences think, what really moves them in what ways, is something no one knows in such a quick and direct way; in fact, for all the devices of audience research, it is something no one at all knows for sure (p.125).

The annual failure of even long-established festivals demonstrates that there is no simple formula for designing events to meet audiences' needs and

motivations, especially when so many of the means of production remain outside the organisers' control and where festivals serve to fulfil diverse social functions in changing economic climates.

Festival audiences may exhibit more identifiable consumer patterns of behaviour when they take on the role of fans. As media scholar Mark Duffett (2013) points out, there is a particular type of bond between the producer and the consumer: 'What all the definitions of fandom discussed so far have missed out is its highly personal, experiential, inner dimension. To become a fan is to find yourself with an emotional conviction about a specific object' (p.30). In describing the growth of the UK festival market since 2003, R5 recognises the importance of seeing the festival attendee as a 'fan':

> I suppose as festivals go on and longevity continues, they build their own fan bases. I think one thing you would've seen is that people originally would have done one festival, and then eventually are doing two or three festivals a summer. I think the early festivals, they'd get their loyal crowd that would go every year.

The understanding of the consumer as a 'fan' and the successful nurturing of fan bases, or in R1's even closer term 'families', is one of the main ways in which festivals develop and survive. Maintaining this core identity, whilst recognising the 'need to keep new people coming through' (R7) is one of the most significant challenges that organisers face.

Co-creation

Festivals differ from many other cultural goods in the degree to which producers and consumers overlap. As Page & Connell (2011) assert, festivals are designed for public participation and cannot be consumed merely as a spectacle. Borrowing from media studies, it is possible to apply Henry Jenkins' (2006) notion of a convergence culture to the music industry. Here, Jenkins argues that the move to a digital economy is more than just a technological shift in consumption, but that 'convergence represents a cultural shift as consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content' (p. 3). This is mirrored by Leyshon et al.'s (2016) call for greater financial risk-taking in the recorded music sector and a move away from the traditional record companies' business model. They argue for an increased focus on:

> … a source of funding that seeks to leverage the power of affect and emotion through the phenomena of crowdfunding which, by targeting fans, has the potential to provide the investment needed to develop new music and establish musical careers but without the need to generate market standard returns on investment as demanded by more traditional funding routes (p.251).

Such a move recognises how the digital age has disrupted established business models and offers new opportunities for artists who are able to exploit the closer connection between themselves and their fans.

For the live sector, this has been reflected in the development of crowdfunding initiatives such as Songkick (2018). Established in 2007,

Songkick seeks to link artists more closely with their fanbases, initially in assisting with making pledges for live music events to be staged and more recently as a more conventional ticketing outlet. Whilst festivals have yet to fully exploit these possibilities, which may be due to the need to produce a diverse programme that has less specific appeal than an individual artist or given the requirement to raise larger sums of money in advance, events do benefit from an enthusiasm for co-production. Where Negus (1999) saw that in recorded music fans 'are central to the production, reproduction and circulation of numerous genres of music [relying on] a point of identification – a connection that will be taken to be genuine or authentic, of some shared interest, lifestyle or mutual understanding' (pp.126-127), it is easy to see how this point of identification can be more deeply developed between a festival and its attendees, especially over an extended period of time. However, as Leyshon et al. (2016) caution, 'fans can all too easily fall out of love with their objects of affection' (p. 246) and organisers must be careful not to provoke the demotivation or cynicism observed amongst consumers elsewhere, especially when the cancellation of events such as the Fyre festival leads to such negative media coverage (MacNeill, 2017).

The clearest examples of this close interaction between producer and consumer can be seen in those festivals styled as 'boutique', usually catering for less than ten thousand attendees and which emerged in the UK market around 2003. As Roxy Robinson explains, these are events which have been developed as alternatives to concert-style festivals, relying less on the programmed entertainment and the pressures of securing headline artists, and placing greater emphasis on audience participation. Indeed, Robinson

(2015) argues that these events, patterned on the Burning Man festival which takes place in the Black Rock Desert in northwest Nevada, 'level the performative playing field' (p.166) as they extend 'the concept of artists to all participants' (p.169). For Rihova et al. (2014), this concept of co-creation or co-production offers the opportunity to refocus on marketing's service-dominant logic, which organisers should emphasise in promoting the value-use of their events:

> Marketers, and events and festival marketers in particular, would benefit from alternative epistemological lenses that would not only acknowledge the active role of the individuals in co-creating their own experiences but also address the complex and dynamic nature of the social festival experience and the unique conditions within it (p.110).

For Burning Man (2018), and based upon its '10 Principles' written by its founder Larry Harvey in 2004, it has proved necessary to highlight that the event is 'committed to a radically participatory ethic', while its marketing is aimed at exploiting the concept of the 'consumer as producer', thereby blurring the traditional lines between organisers, artists and attendees.

Robinson (2015) sees boutique festivals as offering a 'new, utopian zeitgeist' (p.170), however, Johansson & Toraldo (2017) are more wary of such idealistic claims. In their article 'From mosh pit to posh pit': Festival imagery in the context of the boutique festival,' they point to the paradox of the boutique festival as it 'appears to allow for the maintaining of a middle-class material existence while presenting an ideational proposition of returning to an authentic festival experience' (pp.242-243). This view is closer to independent

festival promoters' sentiments and who refer to events as being successful 'as long as the audiences are enjoying themselves, and it's the kind of thing that they're expecting and what they want' (R7). The organisers, who have expended a great deal of labour in creating the events, do not see themselves as co-creators or co-producers, but as the facilitators of festival experiences. As R8 explains, the wide extent of the roles and responsibilities that the organisers undertake during the event also ensure that a distance between production and consumption is maintained, as every planned detail can affect the experience:

> We have to keep crowd management in mind because of the size of our site and traffic of crowds. There will be an element of thinking, 'if so-and-so is playing on that stage, we have to make sure that we match that size profile', but hopefully with a band that has a slightly different audience so people won't be too disappointed by the two clashing.

Even at those UK events that most closely match the participatory and 'immersive' ethic of Burning Man, such as the Boomtown Fair festival in Hampshire, there are evident limits to co-production. As the 2017 event highlighted, participants still need to be managed as problems with ticket scanners blamed for causing 'fits, fights and panic attacks' during seven-hour delays in entering the site (Sandeman, 2017). In the politics of participation, it takes very little for this to be seen as yet another cynical example of festival promoters placing profit before utopia.

Summary

This chapter considered the production of festivals as cultural goods. It views them as part of an increasing aestheticization of goods within an experience economy and explores the importance of the operations of niche and genre. It then examined the notion of authenticity in live spaces and how festival audiences can be seen as music tourists. Finally, it considers the notion of co-creation, arguing that festival promoters do not see this as valid due to the range of responsibilities that they undertake. Part Three discusses the implementation of music festivals with regards to the skills and motivations of the individual promoters.

Part Three: Implementation

Chapter Ten: Internal Factors

Introduction

Part One of the thesis took a macro view of the production of culture and considered the structures of the music industries and the place of independent music festivals. Part Two then looked at the ways in which festivals are organised at a meso level as cultural goods within an increasingly symbolic economy. Part Three will now view the production of festivals through the micro lens of festival promoters as individual actors. Chapter Ten will consider personal skills and motivations, while Chapter Eleven looks at promoters as mediators of space and asks questions regarding their roles as curators. Chapter Twelve then looks at individual actions with their environment and applies the notion of creative labour while asking how the independent festival promoters are affected by their work.

In 1972, the art critic John Berger produced a BBC television series and an accompanying essay ‘Ways of Seeing’ that concentrated on how art is consumed. Berger (1972) asserts that it is through ‘seeing’, which comes before words to a child, that our place in the world is established. Moreover, he argues that this process is both continuous and all-surrounding: ‘We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are’ (p.9).

However, while Berger focuses on the consumption of the image, he also highlights how the meaning of an image is not fixed, but always exists within its social system. This system is reinforced by the patterns of ownership and conventional forms of display, where art is shown to contain an historical and undiminished authority, which thereby justifies other forms of authority and control. It is no coincidence that cultural items stored in museums are often destroyed for ideological purposes (Shaheen, 2015), demonstrating that the ways in which art events are staged are not neutral but embody a set of cultural and social relationships. As organisers of artistic events, festival organisers are more than the simple facilitators of audience pleasure.

Getz (2010) has asked for further research into who produces events and why. In view of this and following Webster & McKay's (2016) call for insights into the creative practices of festival organisers, this chapter concentrates on the individual characteristics of those who choose to take on these cultural roles. The chapter adopts a phenomenological perspective that allows the respondents to self-describe their activities in order to highlight commonalities and differences between the individual ways of producing in this specialised promotional practice. Where the motivations of those music industry insiders studied by Peterson & Berger (1971) and Negus (1992) can more or less be explained in purely rational economic terms, the organisers of independent festivals operate in a far less stable environment, one characterised by uncertainty and risk, where the failure of other events provides a continuous backdrop to their work. Although this chapter does not pretend to offer a deep psychological analysis of such needs or motivations, or make any claim to unearthing a 'festival organiser's gene', this micro-level study considers the

emergence of patterns of behaviour that illustrate some of the pleasures and pressures involved in planning and implementing these large-scale social activities.

Motivations

In their history of British live music, Frith et al. (2013) distinguish between three types of promoter, namely between the enthusiast, the state-funded, and the commercial promoter. While they accept that these distinctions are not necessarily strictly observable and are certainly mutable over time, the typology still offers a useful way of characterising the activities of UK festival promoters. Moreover, these categories can be linked to discourses around aesthetic and social values that in the music industry often corresponds to genres or scenes. In broad terms, the enthusiast who promotes ‘because they want to, because they enjoy the music’ (p.15) can be equated to those operating within the independent music market, where the artists and performers are similarly moved to make music without the expectation of significant financial reward. Meanwhile, the state-funded promoter is subsidised to provide live music that can be understood as educational or cultural, and which otherwise could not be performed as its commercial appeal is insufficient to generate enough income to meet the costs through the normal method of concert ticket sales. Those music forms which typically attract funding from the Arts Council, such as opera and classical music (Barton, 2017), can be placed in this sector, while the commercial promoter who puts on concerts to make money can be most easily mapped on to the

large-scale, corporate events that feature a programme based on popular music.

It is difficult to chart the work of concert promoters securely which becomes even more problematical when heuristics are applied to festival promoters. Not only are the genres and scenes far more fluid than simple differentiations allow, with artists emerging from the independent sector 'crossing over' into mainstream popular music and established artists performing at independent-type events to boost their credibility or re-establish links with their fan bases, the motivations of the organisers are not always possible to discern from the events that they produce. As discussed in Chapter Six, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair in 1969, the defining and archetypal counter-cultural festival of the 1960s, was primarily designed and developed by the organisers as a commercial venture. The two initiators of the event, business partners Joel Rosenman and John Roberts, placed an advertisement in *The New York Times* proclaiming themselves to be 'young men with unlimited capital', seeking to profit from that period's enthusiasm for the music industry and its live music products, before being joined by fellow entrepreneurs Michael Lang and Artie Kornfeld. While it was noted in *The Telegraph* on the fortieth anniversary of the Woodstock Festival in August 2009 – an even less well-intentioned promotional event – that the 'combination of expensive bands, uncollected gate receipts, moved sites, and poor deals meant that though it was a cultural success, it was a financial disaster' (Robinson, 2009), it is the legacy of the 'cultural success' that has come to define the festival, another example, perhaps, of the music industry's enduring ability to manufacture an essential veneer of authenticity.

It is therefore in the attitude to the expected cultural or financial outcomes, rather than to the actual outcomes themselves, where the motivations of festival organisers can be more easily discerned. For R2, based outside the established loci of cities such as London, Manchester and Bristol, live music promotion initially offered the only entry point into the industry. However, from these initial impulses, he traces how such motivating factors have changed over time:

> I think anybody that does this for so long, or even starting out, or anybody that does it at any point, motivation is everything. What are your motivations? When I started, me and [my partner] were working in offices. And instead of buying a washing machine and a house, we put our money into music, whereas now my motivation is to do good events, make some money, pay our staff, look after everybody and come out of there without any stress.

As Webster (2011) observes, many promoters follow a similar trajectory. They begin promoting because they enjoy the music, before the effects of 'financial pressures, or because the desire to work as a promoter full-time means that financial imperatives become more significant' (p.97) sees them move towards the motives and activities of the commercial promoter. A 'good event', though, is still clearly a subjective and qualitative judgement, one that can be interpreted by individual promoters according to such metrics as their own definition of financial success, their perceived contribution to local social and cultural offerings, or the simple relief of staging an event that passes without incident.

R3's journey as a promoter can be traced back to a similar desire for music industry involvement. Here, though, the impulse is not to move from outsider to insider, since R3 was already a music industry professional in another field, but to move from one type of insider to another. This was inspired by R3's close observation of the artists who organised the Lollapalooza festival as it toured the United States in 1991:

> I don't know if you've ever seen the film *Festival Express*? Where The Band, Janis Joplin, they're going across Canada. Your sole ambition is to be on that train, where they're pissed, playing music, but that was what it was like at Lollapalooza.

Furthermore, Cloonan (2013) highlights some of the lingering appeal of the music industry's countercultural past, a nostalgia still firmly grounded in the recordings and events of the 1960s. With 'promoters as the new ruling class in the music industries' (p.79), music festival organisers no longer need to be satisfied with being merely 'on that train', but now have the opportunity to be the drivers of new events that self-consciously trade on those established rock 'n' roll tropes of freedom, hedonism and escape.

While these ideals may resonate with those more versed in popular music history, for the youngest respondents the ideology of festival promotion is based on a different social perspective. To R1, who sees the connotations of 'family' as the defining factor of the festival experience, organising events is far more about personal growth than sublimation into a grand narrative:

> Every festival that I've worked on I've had the opportunity to grow with…the one festival that I do work on still is the one that I love the most. I grow with it as it grows.

While it is an obvious over-simplification to equate the organisers' viewpoints with a generational shift from rock 'n' roll excess to an opportunity for personal growth, this may still reflect a change in the motivations of festival promoters. Where R3 held the ambition to identify the source of power that created and maintained the successful commercialisation of music, R1 is conscious of operating in an industry that now occupies a more diminished role in a media saturated society. As she says, 'keeping people's attention is key, but also impossible. Keeping people's attention is the unicorn. It is the hard-to-catch part'. In a global world of competing attractions, music festival organisers need to maintain high levels of personal motivation and desire in order to compensate for any diminution in the relative appeal of their cultural productions.

Goals and Ambitions

Alongside the essential need to break even every year, the organisers set themselves personal goals to aid their motivation. R4, an experienced industry professional now responsible for a state-funded festival, sees their goal in terms of changing the attitudes of the audience:

> […] the current thing I'm working on takes place in a pretty ugly suburban town. The hope behind it so far has been that bringing culture to such an ugly place will work in its own right as a concept, but I'm beginning to think that's harder to achieve than I had hoped.

This trace of individualism – or even elitism – is noteworthy as the event has only just taken place and the emotional reaction is still raw. As R6 describes, 'after each festival we reflect and think what worked, what didn't work' and this

reflective process is an essential part of the festival planning cycle. However, a more instinctive reaction that better captures the organisers' motivations is often expressed during the event itself, as R2 explains:

> People think it's amazing, and it is. When it goes well, you can't think of doing something better. Standing on the side of a stage, seeing 10,000 people having a good time, and you think, 'I've done that'. But nobody sees the long nights, the days, the time away from your family, the worry.

Standing on the side of a stage and watching the event being enjoyed is far removed from totalling box office receipts and defines the promoter as a social being, an instigator embedded in a cultural activity that predates and transcends the organised processes of a live music industry.

In addition, taking pleasure in other people's enjoyment of the event is one of the key markers of the organisers' personal drive. R6 characterises this impulse as based on the continuing enjoyment that her event provides, while meeting her own definition of financial satisfaction:

> I think the festival that I run annually – 2017 will be the seventh year – I would say it's a success because everybody goes away very happy. We've never been in the red, but it's very, very small. But for me, that's still a successful weekend.

The definition of success helps determine the motivation to continue. For the enthusiast it may be measured in terms of aesthetic pleasure or promoting a particular type of music or new artist. The state-funded promoter might achieve a policy aim, attracting a certain demographic to the event or gaining a level of media awareness, while the commercial promoter manages a pre-

determined return on investment expressed as a percentage of the financial outlay. These categorisations offer only broad generalisations while R2 demonstrates a keen awareness of each individual promoter's personal definition of success:

> Is Isle of Wight a successful festival with 60,000, 70,000 people? Or is somebody who does a festival with 700 people that doesn't lose any money that does something really cool in part of the UK or somewhere that does it well?

How each organiser answers that question for themselves, from the first year of planning to every annual reflection, will decide what events are staged and why. Audience satisfaction can only be measured once a festival has taken place.

Entrepreneurship

Whichever way an event is characterised, each promoter is necessarily entrepreneurial in their business orientation. While Elizabeth Chell (2008), Professor of Entrepreneurial Behaviour at Kingston University, argues against any simple identification of an entrepreneurial personality, instead viewing entrepreneurship as an activity embodied in the interaction between person and situation, the process is seen as taking the following steps: networking, image making, innovation, initiative or proactivity, opportunism, and judgement. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the importance of networking and the need to establish an identity for new events lies at the heart of the organisers' practice. R2's diversion of funds away from the purchase of household goods and R1's understanding of the need to remain in the public

eye, demonstrate both initiative and proactivity, while opportunism prompted R8 to enter the festival market without previous industry experience. The last factor, the operation of judgement, defines the work of the cultural intermediary. Furthermore, Chell's (2001) definition of the behaviour of an entrepreneur, which is characterised by 'the pursuit of opportunity, the marshalling of resources in that pursuit and the differentiation of the business in the marketplace' (p.88), can be clearly discerned in every organiser's logistical planning and event management.

For Chell, however, the key question regarding entrepreneurial behaviour is 'how they handle the risk element' (p.84). While David Stokes, Nick Wilson & Martha Mador (2010) caution against an over-reliance on trying to establish a particular attitude to risk, noting that studies of entrepreneurs 'have not shown that they have a greater appetite for risks than others' (p.229), festival promoters clearly take more risks than those engaged in other business activities. The resources required, both in terms of materials and time, are far greater than those needed in other organised activities, including the recorded music sector. Advances in digital recording techniques mean that 'it is no longer necessary for musicians to hire an expensive studio because they can access professional-sounding software to make their own multi-track recordings on their laptops at home' (Prior, 2018: 82), while the 'virality' of YouTube contemporary distribution systems allows artists to connect directly to fans and bypass the established industry gatekeepers (Hearsum & Inglis, 2013: 494). While these changes may lead some to be drawn to that sector, the shift in the balance of revenues between the live and recorded industries helps to explain the continuing attraction for entrepreneurs to initiate new

events. As Stokes, Wilson & Mador (2010) confirm, ‘the concept of risk is also used to evaluate the possible financial returns that may result from an action or investment’ (p.227), which R3 characterises in straightforward terms: ‘You’ve got to understand, who’s taking the risk and who’s making the money’. While there remains much uncertainty over the profitability of live events, which is clouded by attempts to include income from ancillary products and the distortions of the secondary ticketing market, festivals can still offer financial rewards for those willing to invest time, money and emotion.

Some of that emotional investment is seen in the promoters’ attitudes to their responsibilities. While the high-profile failure of events such as Fyre Festival and Hope & Glory suggest organisational ineptitude, and accusations of profiteering and greed continue to be attached to events like the Y Not festival as they increase their capacity year on year (MacNeill, 2017), the stereotypes of unprofessional and uncaring promoters persist. Despite calculations indicating that promoters take all of an event’s risk for a return of as little as 5% of the ticket price (Forde, 2017), there is still little understanding of the economics of festival promotion. While reports indicate that some festivals have begun to reduce their ticket prices (Jones, 2018a), payment plans that allow consumers to spread the cost of a ticket over an extended period to aid affordability, still feed the perception of an economic gold rush. However, R2 offers a more profound insight concerning the responsibilities that festival promoters undertake:

> Sometimes you think ‘Let's cancel this now’ because we're losing money, we're not doing good, nobody cares. But then you've got a

> responsibility to the PA company, the bands, the lighting, everything. They've got to work. They need to pay their mortgages.

Operating in areas that have been subject to a period of long-term economic decline, R2 has a keener understanding of the importance of festivals to the local economy and a less romantic view of the promoter's maxim that 'the show must go on'. Indeed, as industrial production declines in areas that have been left behind in a neoliberal and globalised economy, the growth in music festivals has provided many welcome opportunities for workers to find seasonal and temporary employment.

Training

As discussed in Chapter Six, the respondents all reported that they had received very little training in event management. This attitude to training, which emphasises 'insider' or 'industry' knowledge over formal or classroom learning, is found in Stadler, Reid & Fullager's (2014) study of the management structures of the Queensland Festival. When looking to introduce new employees into the existing organisational structure, they found that:

> From a senior management perspective, qualifications in event management were not regarded as highly as demonstrated experience in particular roles (technical, creative, logistical) and a history of strong collaboration (p.46).

Although R1 was a graduate in stage management and technical theatre, it was still the experience gained in all the festival work that she undertook that she considered to be the most important part of her learning: 'You're basically

just thrown into it. Uni gave me the core skills, but the stuff that I did outside probably gave me more knowledge.' To R7, working on a single event, the knowledge transfer took place over an extended experiential period:

> I had a year, basically, of shadowing the chairperson and finding out how it all worked…The first year of doing it I spent a lot of time with the previous chairperson, so caught up with her about things to do. I'm still in touch with her quite a lot actually.

The organisers were all similarly dismissive of their preparation for their own roles as either 'purely by accident' (R3) or 'by hook and by crook' (R2), they clearly see such experiential routes as the right or only ones to follow despite the evident shortcomings of learning as you go.

Given the growth and industrial development of the festival industry, it is perhaps surprising that experience continues to be more highly valued than any formal event management training. However, since the current marketplace remains characterised by volatility and change, it is understandable that those who have entered the industry in this way still prize experience in their colleagues or employees. As seen in Chapter Eight, it is vital to R5 that seasonal or temporary staff can slot into a 'well-oiled' structural system that allows the independent festival promoter to focus on the elements of surprise which accompany every new staging of the event. Furthermore, R6 confirms that this is not simply a matter of scale:

> I don't think sometimes people actually realise the amount of work you have to put into it, whether there's 100 people or 100,000 people, it's still a lot of effort. Still a lot of work.

Independent festival promotion, emerging as a new art world and with its roots in entrepreneurial enterprise, does not allow for a management structure that encourages easy delegation. The manifold responsibilities, from health and safety through to artist satisfaction, ensure that high levels of oversight remain firmly entrenched within the role.

Experience

This bias towards the importance of experience is not just an expression of the emic aesthetic, a marker of insider versus outsider. As Frith et al. (2013) detail, the live music industry has always thrown up new challenges and created the need for roles for which no previous training has been devised, as the changes in popular music promotion in the 1960s illustrate:

> […] it was do-it-yourself music made by people who thought of themselves as creative artists for audiences who thought of themselves as discriminating listeners. And this had significant consequences for what kind of people – what kind of enthusiasts – now became dominant in both the live music and the record industries (p.196).

The comparisons between this era in popular music production and consumption and the rapid growth in the UK festival market since around the turn of the millennium are easily made. Just as young people of the 1960s created new forms of musical entertainment, disrupting the established patterns of concert hall promotion that would lead to the large-scale countercultural events staged from Woodstock to the Isle of Wight, the do-it-yourself attitude of the independent festival promoters from 2003 onwards would facilitate an eventization of culture that revolved around attendance at

music festivals and the wearing of fashionable, festival-inspired clothing that far outweighed the branded wristbands or tee-shirts purchased on-site demonstrating allegiance to a particular event, one of the few markers of identity and belonging in the digital music era.

For the organisers, this experience is often gained at personal expense. Alongside the economic commitment and the losses commonly sustained in the first few years of trading, where ‘events wobble on a knife-edge between glorious success and ignominious bankruptcy’ (Forde, 2015), knowledge is also acquired at a cost. R8 describes the process as a ‘huge learning curve’ while R4 sees it as ‘learning the language’, but this latter simplification masks the more telling observation that: ‘There are no corners to hide behind when you're doing this. It has to be correct, so you just have to make it correct’. This tendency to downplay the difficulties of both the role and the impact of all the attendant responsibilities is evident in the attitude of all of the respondents, a clue to the mind set needed to continue to engage with the challenges year on year. This can be seen as an inevitable move towards a growing professionalism in event organisation and management, even if the independent promotional desire is still to ‘enjoy the music’.

Although there is no one recognised or accepted route into festival promotion, the previous industry experience of respondents clearly shaped their practices. R5 considers the process of transferring skills acquired from another industry:

> I did a business degree and then I went into managing a medical company, where I did an apprenticeship in finance, customer services,

> operations, marketing. Then the job came up at the festivals because they'd been already in existence. I joined them as an admin assistant and brought all those processes with me and identified a lot of things that from a business point of view weren't quite right. It's just applying those principles and processes to a different industry.

Despite the confidence implied by such a strong management background, he also acknowledges the other critical element of festival organising: 'apart from that it has just been learning from your mistakes. I like to think there haven't been too many of those'. However, as demonstrated by the tragic events following the decision to move the Love Parade from Berlin to Duisburg in the Ruhr valley in 2010, which left 21 people dead and over 600 others injured (Nye & Hitzler, 2015),[33] the consequences of mistakes can be catastrophic. This helps to underscore why promoters prefer to have experienced staff around them when organising and managing their events.

Personal Skills

While recognising the importance of others' experience, the festival organisers tend to play down their own abilities. Two of the more highly experienced of the respondents, R2 and R4, both refer to their work as merely 'common sense', indicating a habituation to their craft and a recognition that they had no formal training. Indeed, R2 is keen to highlight the relative unimportance of festivals and festival organisation:

[33] Four staff of the event company Lopavent and six city officials were subsequently charged with negligent manslaughter and bodily harm (BBC, 2017b).

> We're not changing the world, are we? We're not saving kids in Syria. We're not saving the National Health Service… But people like to be entertained, and I don't want to work in a pit.

This sense of humility offers an interesting insight into the promoter's mind set. Whilst Cloonan (2013) rightly highlights the distinction between those who see their work as 'glamorous' and those who see it as somehow 'disreputable', festival organisers tend to remain in the background. In some ways this can be explained by the business advantage gained in events remaining unattached to any one personality, thereby allowing them to be bought and sold with less encumbrance, while the ownership that the consumers place on events also requires the producers to appear to deprecate their own involvement.

Indeed, it takes a certain attitude to risk and reward for anyone to want to promote festivals and be prepared for others to take the credit. As Michael Eavis of Glastonbury says: 'We've managed to create a festival where almost 200,000 people all get on with each other' while quickly qualifying the remark with the question 'I'm not showing off, am I? I don't want to show off or anything' (Turner, 2015). This is the archetype of the independent festival promoter's public face, with its concern for 'moral values' (Fonarow, 2006) and the need to stay positive at all times when dealing with the media.[34]

Alongside an apparent or expressed humility, other personal skills are self-identified by the organisers. Again, the language is framed in common sense

[34] Deaths at Glastonbury include a circus performer who died from severe burns in 2016 (BBC, 2016) and two people who perished in 2014, one from a drugs-related incident (Payton, 2014).

terms but the inference is one of highly developed negotiation and people management skills. Touching on one particular issue, R7 illustrates the need to match the artists to the event:

> It's about maximising the people that we've got there to minimise the travel expenses, because it costs so much to get people up here. So it's a balancing act between the theme, the kind of music that we want and the musicians that we have available.

The phrase ‘balancing act’ also comes up in how she characterises her work with festival staff and in her description of the division of her own labour (paid and unpaid), a personal skill that R6 calls a ‘juggling act’. R8 refers to the need to get the ‘right balance’ for the audience, namely, ‘not too many kids, not too few kids’, whilst R3 sees band booking as involving a little bit of juggling between ‘I’ll give you a better slot here, if you give me a better price there’. Taking these elements of responsibility together, it is clear that the pivotal role of the organiser is to act as the balancing factor, to be the person who steadies the ship and maintains momentum in the event’s planning and management, allowing others to perform their own tasks to the best of their abilities.

This is also shown in the organisers’ need to remain calm and act as a figurative lightning rod for the heightened emotions that festivals occasion. As the central figure during the event’s staging, it is the need to react positively to change that marks the skilled event manager’s *modus operandi*, as R7 explains:

> […] you do things systematically. You get your programme, then you book your artists, book your accommodation, book travel, get funding,

> keep everybody informed. Then it's mainly the personal challenges and keeping track of things when they go wrong. I'm quite good at dealing with drama, I suppose.

The ability to keep everything moving is one that is sharpened by experience, again indicating why the organisers place such value not only on those who have managed events before, but also on their extended knowhow. As R2 recounts, reaction times can be very limited and any previous experience can be vital in defusing a difficult situation:

> I think going out there and doing it – I've been doing it for 6-8 years now full-time, hanging out and doing stuff – then you think of the experience, hands-on knowledge. When you've got a fight breaking out with 50 boys, how you manage and contain that; that's life experiences.

Here the individual and social knowledge gained over time feeds into the organiser's work, informing split-second choices on health and safety issues. No amount of planning can foresee every eventuality and it often takes a mix of social and moral authority to lessen the drama and avoid exacerbating the issue.

Creativity

The need to act and react to developing situations is linked to habits of mind related to creativity and problem solving. As Tschmuck (2012) argues in his examination of creativity and innovation in the music industry, there is a long-held idea that 'a person's most creative quality is the ability to be sensitive to problems' (p.213), however this definition lacks the social and cultural context in which creative actions take place. This process can be seen in Long Lingo

& O'Mahony's (2010) study of the work of country music producers whose 'challenge was to integrate the creative options to be pursued while ensuring parties' continued engagement in the project' (p.58), thereby solving the problems that arise in the songwriting and recording process and keeping everyone on track in pursuit of collective aims. However, the creativity involved in festival organisation and promotion is not restricted to managing and controlling the unexpected:

> When we actually created the festival, then there were so many more elements of creative thinking and creative freedom, because we hadn't yet settled into: Who are we? What do we stand for? What do we want to create? That first year – maybe and second year, but definitely the first year – so many aspects of the festival were creative, but once we'd created our identity and we knew what we stood for, you then had to start becoming creative within those lines, so to speak. (R8)

Conceptual thought is a key element in festival creation and provides the means for positioning new events, but further change is not necessarily beneficial in the commercial marketplace. Once an identity has been firmly established, both producers and consumers settle into a pattern of agreement to stay within those mutually accepted lines.

Value-added Chain

Drawing parallels with the recorded industry, it can be seen that the individual skills required are more varied than implied in the roles of the major label employees as examined by Negus (1992, 1999) and Peterson & Berger (1975). A comparison to Tschmuck's model of creative activity in the recorded

music industry helps to demonstrate how an equally innovative process needs to be followed in the organisation and promotion of festivals, a point that is often overlooked in the instrumentalist study of events. Tschmuck (2012) posits four central processes in the music industry's value-added chain:

1. talent scouting by A&R
2. music production and manufacture
3. music marketing and promotion
4. distribution (p.253)

All of these stages can be mapped to the iterative processes of festival organisation and promotion. While it is true that the 'madmen and mavericks' (King, 2012) operating in the independent recorded sector initially adopt many, if not all, of these functions before taking on specialist staff, festival promoters continue to require far more oversight of every stage, as the risks they undertake are so much higher.

(1) Talent Scouting

The first creative process of talent scouting for a record label is also the starting point for festival promotion. As R3, who has been a music industry professional for a number or years describes, this process has become more complex as media platforms have multiplied and diversified:

> When I was growing up there was three weekly newspapers telling you what to buy and now I have to go into Rough Trade and ask Nigel what I should be buying. 'I really like this, what other things should I be hearing?' because there's so much stuff out there and there isn't an easy option of, 'if you go to one place it'll tell you'… I know my son

> never reads newspapers, he just goes from one thing to the other on YouTube that get recommended and seems to pick out things that are new and exciting. I do hear quite a lot of stuff, but there's loads of stuff you never hear; it's so hard to keep up now.

The digital era has made music more available, yet its very ubiquity offers new challenges to those trying to scout new talent. For R3, the individual contact through word of mouth recommendation from a trusted source allows him to cut through a confusing abundance and maintain those essential networks that feed industry gatekeepers' practices.

(2) Music production and manufacture

In terms of festival organising, music production and manufacturing corresponds to identifying and securing all the logistical elements required to stage the event. From selecting staff through to hiring generators, this process necessitates that the individual organiser compiles a database of suppliers and a running total of potential costs. Income from ticket prices is subject to elasticity of demand and it is not possible to continue to increase prices to meet a growth in expenditure, so attention to the bottom line is essential. R2 describes the benefits of retaining flexibility and developing contacts over time:

> In terms of what you put on the stage, and the lights, and the production, that's depending on the budget that you've got. You want the best stage, the best lights, but you have to fit and tailor the production. I think where we benefit is that we can scale it. So if I've only got £3,000 to £5,000, I can find a production that will fit £3,000 to

> £5,000. If we've got £15,000 to £20,000, we can fit there. So the benefit to us is that there are options to purchase what we require.

The creativity expressed here in adapting to the financial constraints also compares to Long Lingo & O'Mahony's (2010) observation of the country music producers who used their experience when gathering resources in order to ensure the necessary production quality:

> Because only producers alone had intimate knowledge of the array of resources they would draw from, they were able to create slack when estimating project costs. Additional resources enabled producers to build creative capacity, manage the unexpected, and preserve their ability to maintain a positive narrative about the project regardless of the circumstances (p.62).

Building creative slack prevents problems occurring at a later phase of the production, an essential consideration in planning annual events, which is a process informed by experience.[35] Asking early on for more than will be required results in a reliable hedge against future difficulties.

(3) Music marketing and promotion

The process of marketing and promoting music has been seen as revolving around advances in social media technologies. As R5 attests, the use of such technologies has meant a shift in emphasis in festival promotion:

[35] One of the difficulties in applying for funding for festivals is the number of variables involved in staging events. Applicants must ensure that they build in contingencies to ensure there will be sufficient income to fulfil the funder's own strategic plans.

> In terms of technology, it is the growth of social networking and its advertising potential. It's really helped festivals reach their target audiences and new audiences.

This shift, however, still requires creative and innovative thought. R1 confirms the challenges of attracting consumers to the event and persuading them to remember that you 'exist' alongside the need to continue to produce new content for social media platforms. This is best evidenced in the development of the music festival video, a promotional tool that both advertises forthcoming events and memorialises the past. As Holt (2017) remarks, from a media events perspective, these videos 'have come to define festival identities in particular ways through their mass culture genre structures of encoding and distribution' (p.1) and have had a transformative effect on how consumers view the festival experience. Indeed, the

> […] video may also have had a central role in transforming festivals further from an oral culture to a media culture, as audiences have become familiar with the visual environment, behaviors, and social situations by watching the annual official trailers and after-movies of their favorite festivals (p.7)

In this digital media landscape, festival organisers continue to construct the event experience, capturing and directing the participants' expected ritualistic. The creative promoter is able to insert their event into the everyday mediated world of social media, attracting and persuading the consumer into the purchase of the festival ticket, an issue which will be discussed further in Chapter Eleven.

(4) Creative Distribution

Creative and innovative distribution methods also benefit from technological advances in production and consumption. The early attempts of the Festival Express and Lollapalooza to define the festival brand as unfixed and moveable have been developed to greater effect by globally-situated corporations. In a neoliberal landscape, Holt (2017) recognises that 'the mediated experience and digital identity of big industry-based popular music festivals' (p.4) now transcend regional and national borders. The ritual dynamics captured in the Tomorrowland festival's media productions, which were pioneered in the late 2000s, have seen the event grow, not only in its native Belgium, but also hosting satellite events in Georgia, USA and Sao Paolo, Brazil, with a winter festival in Alpe d'Huez, France (Tomorrowland, 2018). Although Bestival, one of the larger independent festivals, has been spun off from its original Isle of Wight location into Camp Bestival in Dorset and Bestival in Toronto, smaller independent festivals are often tethered to location, due to both necessity and design. Creativity in distribution can be seen in the staging of new events such as the Bluedot Festival at Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, an initiative devised by the organisation responsible for Kendal Calling. While likely to begin on a different scale to Glastonbury, it remains to be seen how the Variety Bazaar, Michael Eavis's 'last big gamble,' will fare on its launch in 2021 (Bloodworth, 2018).

Summary

This chapter considered the skills and motivations of the festival promoters interviewed. It has asked questions about entrepreneurial practices and offered the promoters' views on the relative value of formal event management training and the gaining of hands-on experience. In addition, it looked at the notion of creativity and its application to the organisation and promotion of festivals while drawing on a model from the recorded industry for illustrative purposes. The next chapter will now consider the ways in which festival promoters act as mediators of space and place as well as the creative use of event design. It will then examine the practices of promoters in terms of the notion of curation.

Chapter Eleven: External Factors

Introduction

The last chapter considered the acquired skills and knowledge of the festival promoters. This chapter now looks at the application of those skills given that the promoters act as mediators between performance, spaces and audience, in creative response to the problems of assembling the means of production in a market characterised by restricted supply. The chapter begins with a view of live music performance and the factors of location and space. It then considers the processes of event design and discusses the notion of curation in terms of individual ways in which festivals are produced as they move from the drawing board to the lived experience.

Live Music Performance

The performance of live music is predicated on the successful management of the behind-the-scenes processes of organisation and promotion. As Frith (2012a) argues:

> Live music is akin to magic in that many mundane things must be organised – sound, lights, seating/standing space, etc – for an audience to appreciate the musical performance itself as extraordinary, as something transcendent (p.517).

This contribution to the transcendental is not accidental, rather it is the result of a series of decisions that live music promoters must make before and during every event. As Manners, Kruger & Saayman (2012) observe in their study of the live music industry in South Africa, promoters are ‘able to

influence the performance by ensuring effective management of those aspects that can be controlled; such as good quality sound and lighting' (p.151). For festival promoters, working with the variables involved in producing sound in unique sites, predicting audience sizes for each of the stages and the need to assess the costs of hiring temporary equipment, these decisions require high levels of skills and experience. A balance needs to be struck between meeting the requirements of the performance contracts, many of which will be accompanied by technical riders detailing individual artists' requirements,[36] and providing a workable and sustainable performance space.

Promoters aim to augment or, if necessary, offset the technical requirements of the performance through establishing personal relationships with the artists. As has been discussed in Chapter Eight, the key responsibility for this process lies in the work of the artist liaison team, who measure their success in relation to the closeness of the individual relationships that they develop with the artist. R1 describes how this function is organised and managed:

> We sit down and have a team meeting every day with every single artist liaison. We all get together in the morning. We make it really clear that we pride ourselves on being the best. We pride ourselves on not treating people like princesses and princes, but becoming friends – not in a weird way – but hanging out with artists and making sure they have what they need.

[36] Meeting the requirements of the technical rider for Robert Plant and the Strange Sensation's performance at the Green Man in 2007 cost more than the performance fee. Even then, the sound engineer replaced the sound desk we had provided with his own desk, all within the 45-minute line-check.

It is significant that the artists are not treated here as outsiders or special, instead the artist liaison team attempt to bring the artists into an emic role within the event. Artist liaison offers the opportunity for the ethos of the festival to be communicated to the artist, which can result in a positive impact on their performance. For independent festivals in particular, who may not be able to offer the same fees as the more commercial events, such relationship-building can be a key part in an event's success.

Space

It is also the role of the organiser to mediate between the public and the space in which the event takes place. Following Jurgen Habermas' (1989) historical and sociological account of the transformation of the 'public sphere', Fabian Holt & Francesco Lapenta (2013) observe that the 'event sphere' can be seen as 'a complex whole of interaction between different identities and images of the event among the diverse audiences of a mass event' (p.370). However, this space for social experiences is neither accidental nor unplanned, but is shaped by the organiser and their relationship to the event location. Alongside the logistical considerations inherent in planning and staging the event, R4 details the difficulties of working in an entirely new urban landscape:

> Hopefully for next year we'll start to learn more about the place I'm currently trying to work in, which is vastly different than the last place I did a festival, which was in the mountains.

Learning more about place is one of the ways in which the individual organiser comes to terms with the physical environment, which resonates with

Georg Simmel's (1950) notion of 'the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life' (p.409) embodied in city spaces. This adjustment is acknowledged in R8's description of long-term experiential growth: 'if one stays on the same site, you obviously get to know your site better and better, and you manage from year to year to improve and come up with solutions'. Such increasing knowledge indicates the organisers' possession of a far deeper understanding of space than the touristic attitudes of MacCannell's (1973) sightseers.

In turn, locations come replete with meanings. The external culture weighs on every effort to transform those spaces and enable the festival participants to move into those 'time out of time' celebrations away from everyday life (Falassi, 1987). As Berger (1972) has stated, modernity sees consumers assailed with an array of deliberate meanings and messages:

> In the cities in which we live, all of us see hundreds of publicity images every day of our lives. No other kind of image confronts us so frequently. In no other form of society in history has there been such a concentration of images, such a density of visual messages (p.129).

In the digital age, this assault is ever more pervasive. Debates around the use of data in the psychographic targeting of publicity (Granville, 2018) and the polarising effects of social media, highlight the challenges to the festival organiser trying to offer their attendees the promise of an escape from the everyday and a route to the liminality of carnival.

In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams (1975) offers an image of the contrasting meanings of rural and urban space and their shifting relationships

over time. This is often expressed as a simple dichotomy: ‘the country as cooperation with nature, the city and industry as overriding and transforming it’ (p.352). Moreover, ‘the common image of the country is now an image of the past, and the common image of the city an image of the future’ (p.357), which captures the divergence between the symbolic positioning of a three-day greenfield festival and the more contemporary one-day urban event. The promoter of the former appears to provide the audience with a ‘knowable community’, offering ‘a world in which one is not necessarily a stranger and an agent, but can be a member, a discoverer, in a shared source of life’ (p.358). Therefore, it is little wonder that ticket-buyers become so upset when they feel that an event has become over-commercialised or oversold (Sandeman, 2017). For the latter, the promoter of the urban event embraces the speed of change inherent in city life. As R1 explains: ‘nothing's ever static because everything changes so much in an inner-city environment’, thereby it is easy to see the growing appeal of the urban event in relation to the individuality and velocity of youth.

Event Design

In a study of festival attendees’ satisfaction and revisit intentions, Woojin Lee, HeeKyung Sung, Eunju Suh & Jinlin Zhao (2017) report that ‘an affective destination image resulting from a pleasant experience can be a significant factor influencing the visitors’ attitude toward loyalty’ (p.1011). For Graham Berridge (2011b), this is more than a function of effective event planning and event management and needs to be classified separately as the purposeful activity of event design. Indeed, Berridge argues that ‘every decision made to

fill that space and create the environment or setting is, in fact, a design-based decision' (p.31) and that 'an event does not simply exist – there has to be an event concept to begin with and from that someone has to then create an event' (p.22). R2 confirms how in the digital age the design process begins with the initial concept and is then transmitted before the event takes place:

> So I think in terms of the design and layout of stuff, it isn't necessarily what you put onsite because people don't see that till the day. But what you have to deliver is the concept in advance in terms of the art and the creativeness to gather people's interest.

The ways in which events are produced is determined by the organiser's individual interpretation of the concept, from the physical and digital marketing through to the final site layout. As Berridge (2011b) states:

1. all event experiences are created;
2. all experiences within event environments are purposefully designed;
3. all stakeholders are the direct recipients of the designed experiences. (p.xv)

The experiences of the audience are thereby received and dictated by the meanings and messages purposefully created by the individual actions and intentions of the event designer and embodied in the event design. From the framing of the initial concept through to the final egression from the physical spaces, the audience experience is shaped by the forces of planning and process.

In addition, festivals are constructed sites for the enabling of social interactions and as such bear comparison to similar social constructions. As Benedict Anderson (1991) argues in his study of nationalism, the concept of

‘imagined communities’ is a cultural artefact that contains certain meanings that change over time, which can easily be applied to those temporary gatherings of small groups and individuals which comprise the festival experience. To Simmel (1997), the space in which societies act helps to define and delimit them:

> We always conceive of the space which a social group fills up in some sense as a unit that expresses and supports the unity of that group, just as much as it is carried and supported by it (p.141).

In the same way as the architect and city planner purposefully set out areas for social interaction, such as the civic space of the forum or the *atria* that populate modern sites of consumption and education (Hagan, 2014), the festival organiser also takes on the role of the ‘intelligent’ designer. As Berridge (2011b) argues:

> … events are, can and should be carefully designed and communicated experiences and that recipients of the event would be able to extrapolate the meaning they are presented with and use it for pleasure, gratification or other purposes (p.xv)

Just as carnival was a time when social norms were deliberately inverted (Bakhtin, 1984), festivals are designed to enable or facilitate liminal activities, from escaping the everyday through to the considered gratification of the weekend ‘rock n’ roll’ lifestyle.

Lush & Urry (1994) have observed that producers in a post-Fordist and increasingly symbolic economy require different skills to those found in ‘ordinary’ manufacturing industries. These producers are further marked by their ability ‘to be able hermeneutically to sense, or to intuit, the semantic

needs of their public' (p.123). As event designers, festival organisers act as mediators and symbol-producers for the communities that they help to create. As the social semioticians Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1998) attest, relations are bound by a multiplicity of decipherable signs and messages:

> The 'culture' of a group performs the same functions for it as the metasigns in individual codes. A culture, then, is a complex that consists of metasigns from a range of codes (speech, clothing, food, etc.) with a common core of social meanings (p.91).

These codes are woven into the design of an event, from the choice of location through to the selection of the website font. Representations of 'the good life, sophisticated cultural tastes, family fun, community spirit, or recreational excitement' (Getz, 2007: 318) are an essential part of the semiotic image-making process, which are then transmitted through carefully crafted and mediated visual representations (Holt, 2017). In these ways, the audience's actions are conditioned by the organiser's individual knowledge of the social codes and their ability to sense their appropriate application and deployment.

Settings

Getz (2010) posits four main ways in which an event producer can affect the on-site experiences of the attendees. These are:

1. Settings
2. Themes and programming
3. Service provision and quality
4. Consumables

As has been seen, the choice of setting often takes place within the binary coding of rural and urban, but the festival organiser is also limited by a number of ancillary considerations. These include: the logistical concerns of moving people and supplies; the geographical restrictions of an increasingly crowded marketplace; and local authority initiatives and budgetary constraints. The importance of setting is highlighted by the promoters AEG and Goldenvoice securing an exclusive contract to stage events in London's Victoria Park. This contract allows the promoter to host All Points East, a new, commercial event, alongside providing free events for the local residents of the borough of Tower Hamlets. The long-established events Lovebox and Citadel, organised by the MAMA group, are thereby required to find new sites for their events (Beaumont-Thomas, 2017), with uncertain effects on the audience experience and on the promoter's ability to maintain the volume of ticket sales.

Themes

Theming is the way in which producers mediate between the location and the audience. Whilst acknowledging that this process begins with the concept and is embodied in all event communications, it is the on-site application where it is most in evidence. As Alice O'Grady (2015) argues, festival organisers often 'co-opt the idea of the playground as a way of marketing their event' and purposefully signal 'the way in which the space is to be utilized by its participants' (p.152). Within 'temporary autonomous zones' the breadth of participants' activities is encouraged by the amount of play set out in the event design. This is a particular feature of the boutique festival, where events such

as the four-day Bestival on the Isle of Wight provide annual themes such as ‘Desert Island Disco’ in 2014, ‘The Future is Here’ in 2016 and ‘Circus – The Most Colourful Show on Earth’ in 2018 (Bestival, 2018). Events with a higher degree of theming, including Burning Man in Nevada, USA and Boomtown Fair in Hampshire, UK, appear to offer greater opportunities for immersivity and participatory practice (Robinson, 2015), thereby providing more latitude for the liminal behaviours of the festival attendees.

Service Provision and Consumables

The service provision and consumables are an integral factor in signalling the ways in which events are to be experienced. As R3 details, from an audience member’s perspective, many festivals have difficulties in maintaining high levels of audience experience:

> […] you’re kind of bored after a while to be honest, you’ve done a few tents, there’s hardly any groups on, you’ve been to Rough Trade, bought a few records, there’s not a lot much more to do.

He sees the solution as offering other modes of engagement that are not linked to the music programming, recommending that ‘because they’re all competing for the same acts’, festival organisers need to provide ‘a point of difference like Wilderness, where they did have chefs and they did have Ottolenghi cooking for everybody’. Such considerations of the lived experience of the audience demonstrates Getz’s (2010) assertion that event designers need to understand ‘how their manipulation of setting, program and various human interactions affects the audience and/or participants, and whether or not the desired experiences and consequences are achieved’

(p.7). The ability or desire to respond to consumer feedback and the degree of willingness to embrace dynamic change are important factors in the individual ways of producing.

Curation

In the *Ways of Curating*, Hans Obrist (2015) takes a personal view of the role of the curator, consciously building on Berger's (1972) earlier insights set out in the *Ways of Seeing*. Applying these notions of collection and display, Obrist reflects on his own professional practice and the work of those who have influenced him in the art spaces of museums, galleries and exhibitions. One of the earliest examples he draws upon is Henry Cole, the founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the driving force behind the 'Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations' held within the building which came to be known as the 'Crystal Palace' in London in 1851. Cole (cited in Obrist, 2015) announced the event as 'a festival, such as the world has never seen before' (pp.118-119), incorporating not only the products of nineteenth-century industry, but also food, art and music from around the world. In this way, the event came to serve as 'an icon for the age of Victorian optimism, and a testament to the power of a new cultural format' (p.119). In a similar vein, the modern festival, with its basis in tourism and the experience economy, serves as an icon for the global age of digital connectivity.

Tracing the origin of the word 'curate' from its Latin etymological root *curare: to take care off*, Obrist believes that the work of the original *curators*, who oversaw the operation of the Roman empire's public works, is still a function of the modern curator. Moreover, the mediaeval *curatus* who took on the

responsibility for the souls of the parish and the later sense of cultivating and pruning are all also tied into the four main functions of the modern curator's role: 'preservation, selection of new work, contribute to art history (scholarly research), exhibition-maker displaying and arranging' (Obrist, 2015: 24-25). However, while Obrist dismisses the tendency for the title of 'curator' to be awarded to everyone from the producer of a clothing brand to the generator of social media content, expressly dismissing the claims of musicians and DJs who are asked to curate music festivals, radio shows and playlists, Webster (2016), in a study of the role of the festival producer, argues that programming decisions are able to 'shape the field of cultural production' (p.18). Furthermore, while Emília Barna (2017) in her study of online music platforms and curatorship recognises that critical questions need to be asked about who occupies these key gatekeeping positions, the curatorial work of online DJs 'involves distinction; performs functions of representation; and exerts control'. Obrist's four curatorial functions will therefore now be applied to the practices of festival promoters.

Preservation

Preservation is the curatorial responsibility of safeguarding heritage. The festival market has been seen to grow since around the turn of the millennium, with many consciously constructed events conceptualised and developed based on folk-memories of ritual and place. Scotland's Wickerman Festival built on pagan festivities involving the burning of effigies while Wales' Green Man festival takes its name from rural mythologies linked to

celebrations of the annual cycles of sowing and harvesting.[37] Analogous to other characterisations of fertility and profundity such as Jack O' The Green and the King of the May, Green Man is associated with May Day and other annual celebrations that are still marked across the UK and Northern Europe (Frazer, 1963). In this way, the Green Man festival, although not linked to a specific historical site, was an overt preservation of ritual, emphasised by a programme focused on contemporary interpretations of folk music. As Bakhtin (1984) argues, the sanction for carnival predates the powers of church and state to license such events while carnival time represents 'a primary, indestructible ingredient of human civilization' (p.276) with all festivals in the digital age in some way preserving earlier social and cultural interactions, even when they are established with purely commercial intentions. Indeed, Anderton (2008) suggests that the success of the V Festival was based on the ability of the festival management to overcome the negative imagery of squalor and public disorder that had become attached to music festivals in the 1990s, thereby emphasising the historic sense of pleasure and inversion within the prescribed limits of safety and security.

From a musical and curatorial standpoint, this positive imagery was reinforced by booking artists who represented genres based on more mainstream and popular music consumption. In 2003, the year when the Green Man festival began and the boutique festival market started to develop (Robinson, 2015), Anderton (2008) notes that the booking policy for V Festival closely matched the album sales of the headline artists. This link to the sale of recorded music

[37] In the 1973 film *The Wicker Man*, Sergeant Howie (played by Edward Woodward) stays at the Green Man inn (Hardy, 1973).

offered a way for the organisers to gauge the relative popularity of the performers and a means by which to calculate the performance fees to be offered. As discussed in Chapter Five, the role of the agent and the promoter is to establish a performance fee based on audience size, ticket price and location, but this is complicated by the broader appeal and programme of a festival. In the digital age of reduced sales and a move away from the traditional album format, this calculation is even harder to make. However, a review of the Coachella festival in 2018 asserts that 'the more traditional rock acts are ironically now fighting for representation against dwindling youth market relevance' and the desire to see 'the so-called "internet boyband"' Brockhampton exceeds the capacity of their stage setting (Barlow, 2018). Live music promoters and festival organisers therefore have the opportunity to adopt the role of preservers of the recorded music scene, relying on those artists who have built their reputation through the production and distribution of music, whether on vinyl and compact disc or through the newer platforms of YouTube and Spotify.

Some live music genres, however, rely almost entirely on the preservation of historical works. Moving past the 'heritage' artists that often appear on festival programmes or the tribute artists that replicate such acts, festivals based on classical music and, perhaps, traditional folk and jazz, are self-consciously organised to preserve pre-existing art forms. As R7 explains, this sets a curatorial challenge when trying to promote the event:

> It does tend to be the same people who tend to come back every year. And actually it can be quite an elderly audience…Our ambition was to try and get more young folk coming to the festival, which is a noble

> aim, but it's actually really difficult because we're fighting against the whole ‘classical music is for old people thing’ that I think we're always going to have to deal with.

Preserving the musical integrity of the event and remaining true to the organisational aims, whilst still attempting to maintain relevance and to sell tickets, is a complicated task. Using a pool of musicians and new collaborations, each year R7 sets out an overarching direction to address this challenge: ‘We do it by theme. Last year it was the 20th anniversary of the festival, so that was the theme. The previous year it was music in nature, where we were using the surroundings as inspiration’. This movement between the curatorial and organisational functions allows the festival promoter to combine the available factors in unique combinations that enable the event to differ year on year. The creativity displayed in these large-scale cultural productions reflects the individual organiser’s personal stamp.

Selection of new work

In the *Association of Independent Festivals Six-Year Report*, Webster (2014) notes that ‘music generally’, ‘headline acts’ and ‘discovering new music’ all feature in the top five things that festival attendees enjoy most from their festival experience (p.19). As has been noted, the commercial pressures of securing artists in a globally competitive environment, mean that festival organisers often attempt to place known artists in new contexts or rely on their specialist knowledge to book emerging artists before they are contracted to appear at larger events. These new contexts range from R2’s use of a ‘castle’

setting to enhance the performance of a long-established artist through to R7's search for novel locations:

> There are certain venues that we use all the time each year, but then we also try and add different venues like interesting country houses and things like that. Partly just to make things a little bit different each year, but partly because that's really a great way of getting audiences in, because people like to be a bit nosey.

However, it is not always a straightforward process of selecting a venue and placing an artist in front of the audience. As R7 continues:

> …there's a church that we use, and there are always issues with using the church about where people are allowed to stand, where people are allowed to sit, what times we can go in, what music we're allowed to play in the church. And that really bugs me because I don't think that we should be dictated to by the venues about what music should be played.

Most festival organisers are not landowners and must operate under the terms of agreement obligations agreed between landlord and tenant. The need to operate within these terms and the overarching necessity of maintaining relationships places extra constraints on the ways in which venues can be used.

There are other limitations on staging events in one-off or unusual locations. Alongside the logistical difficulties of moving people and equipment or the need to meet local authority licensing conditions, organisers also have to deploy curatorial skills to understand the interconnections between artist and location. When this arrangement is in harmony, it forms an essential part of

the ‘magic’ that Frith feels in live music, but is often only apparent when the combination of mundane things fails to produce the desired effects. R3 recounts the time when he sought to relocate an existing greenfield event to a new, urban location:

> […] we then went to the South Bank and because ‘X’ was quite a splintered thing, people had different areas. Snow Boy was doing the 40’s thing, Eddie Pillar was doing the soul thing. I was looking after all those guys and wanting all these great things but at South Bank the infrastructure wasn’t right. It wasn’t the right place to do it, and it wasn’t the right place to do it in the middle of summer when it was light and you’re trying to recreate the Warehouse in the basement with A Guy Called Gerald.

Furthermore, the relationship between artist and location is a dynamic process. As Obrist (20150 asserts: ‘instead of giving each artist *space* in a museum or gallery, we would give them an allotment of *time*’ (p.139) and this is the way in which new work is presented at festivals, either staging new music or placing existing music in new settings. The timing of a performance thereby forms another important element in creating the opportunity for the transcendental to occur.

Contribution to art history (scholarly research)

Creating new festivals and sustaining existing events through careful booking and programming is often predicated on the depth and assiduity of the organisers’ research. As discussed previously, in order to establish the rationale for a new event, organisers often look to build on existing rituals,

such as Green Man, or revisit those which have been discontinued. The Eisteddfod festival in Wales consciously incorporates the Celtic tradition of the Gorsedd of the Bards, which is itself an earlier, creative reimagining by the Welsh Academic Iolo Morganwg in the late eighteenth century (Eisteddfod, 2018). As R3 explains above, many festival programmes are also consciously based on restaging or reframing cultural music events, from recreating defunct live music venues through to booking historic artists for new audiences to discover. Nicholas Gebhardt (2015) argues that the large-scale music festivals of the 1960s came to embody 'rock's anti-establishment and liberationist ideology' (p.56) and festival organisers contribute to that ideological history, either through commercialising the carnival or, like Burning Man, which began with the symbolic burning of a wooden figure on a beach in San Francisco in 1986 (Associated Press, 2018), creating new artistic stories in the countercultural hinterland.

It is not sufficient just to book an historical artist to perform at a new event. In order to increase the authenticity of the experience for both the audience and the performers, R5 confirms that the organiser needs to ensure that the operations of genre are observed and that the live performances are contextualised:

> I think it is a little bit of an art. You're just trying to make sure that you've got the contemporary people with the old heritage acts, that you've got all the remits within the festival covered, that you've got some surprises in there.

The 'art' is in the juxtaposition of artists, blending the old and the new in a way that highlights the mutual connections and adds value to both. As Berger

(1972) asserts: ‘The meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it’ (p. 29) and, in the same way, programming affects the meaning of live music performances. It is not only the setting of location and the physical effects of sound and lighting that influence live performance, but also their relationship to all the other artists who perform. R5’s ‘surprises’ include the ways in which the curator reengages the audience, drawing them closer to the performance and away from the competing distractions of the carnival site, or awakening them from the ennui that R3 recognises as the unspoken reality of much of the audience’s festival experience, despite the utopian claims of participation and immersion (Robinson, 2016).

Selecting artists to perform and placing them in a suitable context involves curatorial practice. R8 underlines the importance of this function for her own event while highlighting how artistic and creative decisions are intertwined and informed by the competitive necessities arising from the network of music industry relationships:

> The main aspect when we plan the programming is just a love for the music and how the music flows. We try to stay true to what we think would be the most lovely experience of how each stage runs, which can be tricky sometimes because the agents would like us to create the billing for each stage based on profile size. Sometimes that doesn't agree with our creative musical ear of how we think they should run. Sometimes you have to give, and sometimes we're able to stay strong. That's it.

The music and its flows are built each year on a discovery process that relies on the situated knowledge of the historical and the contemporary. For R8, this process is informed by asking such research questions as ‘What bands do we love? What bands are we into right now? What records are in our bookshelves?’, creating an annual wish list of some two hundred artists for the eighty or ninety slots available.

Exhibition-maker

The role of exhibition-maker further distinguishes the practices of the festival promoter within the umbrella of live music promotion. Obrist (2015) identifies this process of ‘displaying and arranging’ as the curatorial function which brings together all of the collected knowledge embodied in the produced event. As he argues, ‘the connections and principles that produce a collection contain assumptions, juxtapositions, findings, experimental possibilities and associations’ (p.39) and the industry connections, the programming of stages, the new artists and the musical collaborations described above, are all combined into festival meta-narratives. While Obrist believes that ‘it is not the job of a curator to impose their own signature but to be a mediator between artist and public’ (p.98), it is not possible to remove the organiser from their staged event. Each organiser is distinguished from the other by a variety of individual factors, including their personal motivations, their place within the industry, their location and their experience. As R2 affirms:

> So what's one person's festival is not another person's festival. I look at some festivals and think, 'Oh, they're really cool, really hip, really

> awesome, and I'd love to be involved in that.' But I always think ‘that's what they do every day, those bands’. They have a feeling for it.

Festivals can also be the projections of the independent promoters’ identities, which are inevitably limited by economic and social boundaries while retaining the opportunity to be guided by those individual conceptual ‘wish lists’ that are the primary visualisation of the promoter’s festival ideal.

In *The Aesthetics of Singularity*, Frederic Jameson (2015) sets out why it is necessary to move past the restrictions imposed by the style that has come to be associated with ‘postmodern’ and consider instead an historical period to be termed ‘postmodernity’. For the arts and media, he views this period as characterised by a process of ‘de-differentiation’, namely ‘interesting and inimitable combinations of photography, performance, video, sculpture’ that are encountered now in the ‘mass-cultural’ spaces of museums and galleries can no longer be classified under existing generic terms’ (p.107). In this environment, Jameson believes that the paradigmatic type of artwork is the installation, such as *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* by Damien Hirst, and that the era demands a new emphasis on the space in which the artwork is exhibited.

The changes in the production and ways in which these artworks are displayed has given rise to the need for a new figure to take responsibility for these spaces. Jameson (2015) argues that:

> … we might isolate from these practices of the new kind of museum the emblematic figure of the curator, who now becomes the demiurge

> of those floating and dissolving constellations of strange objects we still call art (p.110).

In this new art world, the curator becomes more than just an arranger. The processes of constructing spaces transcend the objects involved, placing them into *events* that exist in the present: 'The installation and its kindred productions are made, not for posterity, nor even for the permanent collection, but rather for the *now'* (Jameson, 2015: 111). The festival, as a temporary installation and produced event, is the cultural mirror of Jameson's new kind of museums while the festival organiser is analogous to the emergent figure of the new curator.

In the digital age, festivals paradoxically offer new combinations of time and space. As communication technologies and globalisation remove borders and provide instant interconnectivity, festivals are out of time places of un-networks and temporal communities. Webster (2012) notes though in relation to the Festival Awards 2012 Conference, festivals are now seen by some promoters as a '365 day-a-year activity', as the organisers attempt to engage the consumers in a constant reminder of their event, while Johansson & Torlado (2017) argue in their study 'From mosh pit to posh pit: Festival imagery in the context of the Boutique festival', media texts that are produced and circulated by the organisers provide both a memory and an anticipation of events 'premised upon an embodied, sensuous aesthetic' (p.225). The promoters can therefore be viewed as the demiurges of containable universes consumed in real time and as the producers of highly mediatised activities, just as Jameson (2015) recognises in photography:

> … it is the image that is preserved, and you consume the image, along with the idea: and indeed you consume the conjunction of elements, in what is, just like postmodern art itself, a unique event (p.115).

These events serve to open up the realms of time and space, to free ideas and emotions. As Obrist (2015) argues: 'the role of the curator is to create free space, not occupy existing space' (p.154) and festival organisers are charged with the same responsibility. This, though, is not a simple process of co-creation. While the immersive displays of the museum and gallery invite interactivity and immersive festivals require attendees to fulfil their performative roles, it is still only in the promoters' planning and implementation of events that the audience experience is formed.

Summary

This chapter considered the role of festival promoters in mediating space and place. It discussed how locations are imbued with meanings and explored the ways in which organisers use existing settings to create unique events. Furthermore, it examined how the processes of event design and curation purposefully shape audience experiences in both physical and digital locations. The next chapter will now consider further social and cultural factors that impact upon festival organisation and question the effects of staging large-scale events on the individual promoters.

Chapter Twelve: Environmental factors

Introduction

Part Three of the thesis continues with a micro study of the festival promoters as individual actors in the culture of production. Chapter Ten looked at skills and motivations while Chapter Eleven examined the application of those skills and the individual ways in which events are produced. Chapter Twelve now examines how those actions are affected over time by changes in the environment in which festivals take place. The chapter begins then by looking at the dynamic operation of taste, before considering the significance of sponsorship. It will then review the work of the independent festival promoters as creative labour before considering the effects that producing events has on the promoters' mental health and wellbeing with a focus on three areas of concern: start-up events, reputation and responsibility.

Cultural Production Circuit

The cultural economy approach is concerned with the ways in which the softer, cultural values such as art and beauty are produced on a harder, structural economic base governed by the instrumentalist pursuit of profit. Du Gay (1997) classically sees this production process as a 'circuit of culture' consisting of five aspects: production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity. As Negus (1997) argues, though, it is necessary to focus not only on the macro perspective of social and organizational structures but also to observe the human agency at the micro level. In an increasingly networked economy, individuals as producers are required to maintain far more contact

with every aspect of the circuit, remaining in greater contact with each element of the process. The rapidity of economic activity in a digital age continues to compress the forces of time and space where even discrete, annual events such as music festivals become mediatised representations available for instant consumption in a rolling twenty-four hour, global continuum.

The speed of change is changing the ways in which cultural goods are produced. Pine & Gilmour (2011) have plotted the emergence of a new experience economy where 'the greatest opportunity for value creation resides in staging experiences' (p.ix) and the growth of festivals offers strong support for this view. They argue that core economic activity has moved from producing a commodity to a good and from service to experience. However, this aspect of the historical development of goods and services highlights certain issues relating to eras of rapid change, as the experience economy continues to be reshaped and where Hearsum & Inglis (2013) have correctly highlighted that: 'These changes in the position of the audience serve to consolidate the power of the musical community over the musical industry' (p.492). In addition, while concerns for the future of the recorded music industry have been raised regularly (Lindvall, 2012), the recorded sector continues to show signs of a sustained recovery. Revenues rose by 10.6% in 2017 to £839.4 million, the fastest growth in trade income since 1995 as revenue from streaming grew by 41 per cent, although this only marks a return to 2010 revenue levels and total income remains nearly one-third lower than in 2001 (BPI, 2018), the year when peer-to-peer file-sharing technologies emerged.

A rapid growth in recorded music revenues does not necessarily indicate unbridled good news for the live music industry. As discussed in Part One, the downturn in recorded music revenues coincided with a growth in live music revenues, especially evidenced in the growth in the music festival market. Moreover, the changes do not necessarily point to a return to the roles of the traditional industry gatekeepers. Artists such as Chicago-based Chance the Rapper demonstrate that there is not necessarily any need to sign to a label, as he initially gave his music away for free and generated revenues 'not from 99-cent downloads but from tours, merchandise, meet-and-greets and his deals with Apple and other companies…eager to reach his many young, savvy fans' (Austen, 2016). In the live sector, this move has been mirrored in the US by the creation of artist-owned festivals, such as Eaux Claires, the music festival founded, curated, and organized largely by Bon Iver's Justin Vernon in 2015. Indeed, as *Pitchfork* reported in April 2018,

> Vernon is just one of many musicians to establish their own music festivals in recent years. From Jay-Z and Metallica to Chance the Rapper and Wilco, marquee acts have stepped fully into the festival market by conceptualizing, curating, and producing events that they own (Currin, 2018).

Despite concerns about long-term viability, the artists consider this development to be a reaction against the current festival market and its perceived tendency towards homogeneity and standardisation. Although similar events exist in the UK, including Fairport Convention's long-standing

Cropredy festival in Oxfordshire and The Levellers Beautiful Days[38] festival in Devon, it remains to be seen if the UK market will follow the trend in artist-owned events.[39]

Taste

In *Let's Talk About Love: Why Other People Have Such Bad Taste,* music critic Carl Wilson (2014) sought to investigate the ways in which individuals categorise music, according to their place within social groupings. Wilson was conscious that 'Musical subcultures exist because our guts tell us certain kinds of music are for certain kinds of people' (p.19) and wanted to explore the underlying codes that underpin these categorisations. His chosen method was to select an album that he instinctively disliked, Canadian singer Celine Dion's 1997 album *Let's Talk About Love* and listen to it multiple times in a variety of surroundings. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) *Distinction*, Wilson (2014) sees the operation of taste as a more or less social function:

> […] we are curious about what everybody else is hearing, want to belong, want to have things in common to talk about. We are also insecure about our own judgments and want to check them against others (p.81).

The kinds of music that people listen to are therefore shaped by their social situation and, in other words, 'Distinction boils down to *cool*' (p.93). However, as 'coolness' is a social category and not a natural attribute, the 'subcultural

[38] Beautiful Days is operated by DMF Music, an independent booking agency, management company, promoter and record label (DMFMusic, 2018)

[39] Mumford & Sons 'Gentlemen of the Road Stopover Festival' in Aviemore (BBC, 2015), and The XX's 'Night and Day' festivals in Lisbon, Berlin and London in 2013 (Hot Press, 2012) did not develop into annual events.

capital' of Thornton's (1995) youth cultures, it is not a fixed part of an individual's make-up and as 'cool things gradually become uncool' (Wilson, 2014: 97) the need for a cultural intermediary to remain connected and representative of their social grouping is paramount.

In a paradoxical environment of connectivity and disintermediation, the rate of change in the role of the cultural intermediary continues to accelerate. Du Gay (1997) notes that the cultural intermediary's role is 'to create an identification between producers and consumers through their expertise in certain signifying practices' (p.5) and independent festival promoters use a diverse set of strategies to maintain that expertise. For R3, a long-established industry professional, the dialogue with a taste-making peer remains an important element in assessing the music environment:

> Nigel at Rough Trade. He's very good because I can go in and say 'I really like that album on Soundway, that sounds a bit Krautrocky' – 'Oh, you've got to hear this then'. He works for me but always leaves me short of cash when I come out.

Negus (1997) also points to the ways in which cultural intermediaries in record companies are required to spend their time 'socially engineering a connection and point of identification between the lifestyle of a singer and the habitus of their listeners (pp.177-178), a process which takes place for R1 through the medium of technology: 'We have a WhatsApp group where we discuss line-up ideas. That's a real technological thing…we talk about it all the time. We bounce ideas off each other'. The human agency of production, with the need for dialogue and ongoing reassurance, helps to explain how annual events manage to survive and grow in a competitive marketplace and demonstrates

some of the ways in which independent festival promoters seek to remain representative and relevant, thereby meeting the challenges of their self-assigned roles.

Music festivals are representations and sources of identity formation in the circuit of culture. However, despite many events being entrepreneurial enterprises financed by risking significant economic capital, festival attendees feel a strong affinity to their chosen events. When the American rapper Kanye West was booked to perform at Glastonbury in 2015, an online petition was created, eventually signed by over 133,000 people, demanding that the offer be withdrawn (Lynch, 2015). As seen in Chapter Six, Glastonbury festival retains a strong ideological link with the countercultural ideals of hippie culture and the free festival, whereas, as Hunter (2011) argues in a study of the rap lifestyle, Kanye West promotes an ideology of rap music based on the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods. Moreover, the lyrical and visual content of the songs are predicated on gender relations where 'the substance of the connection between the male and female characters is product' (Hunter, 2011: 25). However, the online reaction was so excessive that organiser Emily Eavis reported in an interview with *The Times* that she had received death threats in a global backlash to the announcement (Whitworth, 2015), thus raising concerns for promoters that issues around music festivals' diversity are not just concerned with gender-equal line-ups.

Music festivals do not come ready-made but need to be adjusted, not only to the habitus of the intended attendees, but to the prevailing social and political environment of the areas in which the events take place. R4 details how this

process works for an experienced organiser staging a brand new event in a different area:

> I put this one together using a bit of a template from year one and year two of the previous festival I had worked on; learning as I go how much of that template is actually not relevant to where I'm doing it, or how much of it needs to be tweaked…to make it work for where I'm currently doing it. So, as in all start-up projects, loads of learning going on in these early years.

The problem here is one of enculturation for the organiser, operating in an area that has no particular history of event-making. For R6, it may be easier to gauge the prevailing environment but no less difficult to effect change:

> Just things like the initial problems of having something that's got political connotations and has a barrier. And it's really interesting when you think that there are a lot of people in town, for example, that are really into history, but they'd be the first to say they're not into politics. You say, 'well, actually, a lot of it falls under the same umbrella.'

Despite the individual intentions of the organisers, the representation of the given event determines opinions on what is 'good' or 'bad' for those who might be encouraged to attend. While more resources can be brought to bear, whether time, money or additional labour, the degree to which an environment is receptive to events is one of the key factors in a festival's sustainability over the medium and longer term.

Sponsorship

Although sponsorship may be more macro level given its discourse of mixing 'hard' business with the 'soft' cultural values of the music festival, issues around identity and representation are also embedded in these key decisions. While the festival promoter aims to increase their income streams or reduce the costs of staging the event, either through financial investment or payments in kind, the sponsor will be calculating their Return on Investment (ROI). Anderton (2015) notes how the growth in the festival market has been mirrored in an expansion in commercial sponsorship initiatives while the 'utopian possibilities' of festivals are cultural values that are attractive to many branded goods and services. He argues that 'sponsors are seeking to benefit from the semiotic associations of their involvement with music festivals' (p.202), often embracing the countercultural ideologies of outsiderness and independence. However, while the organizer may well be drawn to addressing some of the 'significant financial pressures involved in promoting festivals' (p.210), the reciprocity of these commercial arrangements risk the identity of the festival being adversely affected. As Fonarow (2006) states, 'Independence in music means actively eschewing a centralized corporate hierarchy where decisions are made by distant executive bodies' (p.51), which R5 simply articulates as: 'We don't have any sponsorship. We are independent'. Festival attendees can, therefore, be wary of the number and type of sponsors involved in an event, as the brand activations and experiential marketing opportunities provided by the physical staging of events means that sponsorship deals are often highly visible.

The issue revolves around the ways in which a festival is independent in ethos, and how far 'independent' refers only to the organisational structure. The AIF definition of an independent company, namely one that must have a share of the global live industry worth less than approx. £755 million, is of little use, allowing festivals such as Truck and Kendal Calling to be classed as independent despite being controlled by a global corporation. R8 outlines the ethos for her event:

> We were open to sponsorship, and we would have loved to have sponsorship, but because we also knew what we wanted our festival to be like, and our identity, it was very hard to find any sponsors that were willing to work with us because we wouldn't have banners, we wouldn't name a stage after a brand… We would've loved to have people's money, but we just couldn't really find any brands that would come across to our audience in a grassroots, natural feel, kind of way.

The move from the 'indie' ethos to the promotional benefits of marketing a product as 'independent', is strikingly similar to the narrative of the UK independent recorded music sector. A movement that developed in the 1980s with the proliferation of record labels distributed through Rough Trade and Pinnacle, such as Factory and Sarah, then became a vehicle for the major-backed 'independent' labels of the 1990s, like Food and V2, before ending with the 'Faustian pact' that saw Sony openly purchase all of Creation Records in 2000 (Simpson, 2000).

When making decisions concerning sponsorship arrangements, Anderton (2015) posits three engagement strategies that promoters can adopt: affirmation, acceptance or avoidance. The affirmation strategy sees the

promoter actively embrace the sponsor, from the naming of the event through to branded areas, while ‘acceptance’, as evident in R8’s attitude, sees the event and the sponsor sharing similar ethical or environmental ideals. ‘Avoidance’ is more firmly rooted in countercultural ideals. For R2, whose events are organisationally independent, the issues are more structural:

> …we don't have the brands [here] that can raise sponsorship. If we’ve got a major event on, we think, ‘Oh, that brand would fit,’ but most of the brands are in London. They do the national stuff. So British Telecom will sponsor Hyde Park, Virgin will sponsor V, but you talk to them about 15,000, 20,000 people [here], they’re not really interested.

It is important to note though that it is not just the festival attendees who may feel that the identity of the event is altered by accepting or embracing sponsorship. As Negus (1997) highlights in relation to the recorded sector, ‘The image and culture of a company is thus of strategic importance to record companies when trying to attract and keep artists’ (p.98) and this is also true for the live music sector, with artists and agents seeking to align their own brand values with those of promoters as well as their festival identities.

Longevity

As Peterson (1978) argued in *The Production of Cultural Change: The Case of Contemporary Country Music*, the systems for producing and distributing cultural goods have been built on mechanisms of change. Revisiting this argument, Peterson & Anand (2004) have observed that, in competitive environments, ‘market-sensing entrepreneurs’ are able to enter ‘from the “bottom up” by starting from the margins of existing professions and

conventions' (p.317). While R3 stresses the need for new entrants to have 'a point of difference' and R8 believes that 'festivals that have a very clear identity seem to do better', it is clearly essential not only to establish that identity but to develop and maintain a representative connection. As Peterson & Anand attest:

> Once consumer tastes are reified as a market, those in the field tailor their actions to create cultural goods like those that are currently most popular as represented by the accepted measurement tools (p.317).

However, this only operates successfully when the individual organiser is able to gauge current popularity or, more importantly, shape the identity of their event without losing their initial point of difference or clarity of purpose. Over time, it is often the new entrant who more closely matches the prevailing environment or the corporate event who can invest in new attractions to satisfy changes in consumer demand.

Peterson & Anand (2004) believe that cultural products undergo a process which they term 'the Dialectic of Resistance and Appropriation'. Drawing on theories of identity and subcultural practices, they identify six stages ranging 'from new products, individual selection (authentic), individual and group identity, moral panic, large scale emulation, industry co-opts and sanitizes the symbols' (p.325). The advent of music festivals as new products is tied to the large-scale countercultural events of the sixties, with the individual selection giving rise to what Gebhardt (2015) calls 'rock's anti-establishment and liberationist ideology' (p.56) based on a belief that this music had arisen spontaneously and was related to deeper issues of personal commitment and belief. The stage of individual and group identity saw the anti-establishment

lifestyle of the New Age hippies and their dismissal of neo-liberal ideals, leading to the moral panic that precipitated the clashes between festival goers and the forces of law and order culminating in the Battle of the Beanfield and what McKay (1996) terms other 'senseless acts of beauty'. While it appeared to be a new phenomenon, the development of the boutique festival and the proliferation of small events, alongside the rise of larger commercial events, was an emulation of countercultural ideals, offering weekend escapes and carnival practices. Meanwhile, the ongoing process of acquisition and mergers confirms the increasingly hegemonic pattern of industry co-option and symbolic production that is sanitised for the mainstream experiential and immersive consumer.

However, while the mechanisms of change for producing country music are linked to short-term decisions around the manufacture and promotion of individual recordings, the annual festival cycle is necessarily measured in units of years or even decades. The different personnel that Negus (1997) observes 'intervening, mediating and changing the sounds and images as they are being made and put together' (p.101) in the recorded sector are only engaged for the period it takes to sign, record and release the music by a given artist. If the product is commercially unsuccessful, the personnel move on to developing the next artist and shaping new music, a decision-making process that has only been accelerated in the era of digital distribution.[40] In the live sector, independent festival organisers remain far more bound to the

[40] It is interesting to note that the term record label, which relates to the printed circle at the centre of physical discs, is still used as a mark of differentiation even when the music is distributed in purely digital form.

identity of their product, engaging with personnel and support staff who are similarly invested in the event. R7 describes these dialogic process as follows:

> The event normally happens in the spring, so usually once we've recovered, by about the summer, I go down to Glasgow and I meet up with the artistic director. We sit and drink tea and eat cake and come up with ideas of what sorts of things we could do.

The time to plan and contemplate is a chance to assess the prevailing environment and to re-establish the identity and viability of the event. Festivals are cultural products that need to be tried, tested, and readjusted each year according to the results of the formal and informal event debriefs and, for many independent festival promoters, this is the time to decide if next year's event will even take place, as they battle with the economic realities and an awareness of the impact on their own mental health and wellbeing.

Creative Labour

There is a continuing emphasis on the importance of the creative industries to the UK's economy. The report by the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee (2018) report into *The potential impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the digital single market* declared that 'In 2015 the creative industries employed 1.9 million people across the UK and in 2014 the value of their exports was worth £19.8 billion' (p.7). However, employment in the creative industries is often part-time, freelance or voluntary and, as Brian J. Hracs & Deborah Leslie (2014) report in their study of independent musicians in Toronto, the advent of digital technologies has had a largely negative impact on those working in the independent music sector:

> This transition has furnished musicians with unprecedented control over their careers, but the market is fraught with uncertainty and competition is intensifying. Between 2001 and 2006, the annual incomes of musicians in Toronto declined by 25.9 per cent to $13,773 and many musicians find it difficult to earn a living (p.68).

With the Creative Industries Federation and Nesta (2018) forecasting that the rate of growth for both creative and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) occupations will be 'more than double the average job growth across the whole UK economy' (p.1), it is necessary to consider the potential impact of these occupations on those individuals working within the creative industries sector.

Hesmondhalgh (2008) in particular raises concerns about the increasing emphasis on the importance of creative labour within modern economies. Despite the overriding positivity of the creative industries discourse, Hesmondhalgh questions the relations between culture, society and the economy, and believes that there is a lack of attention to the negative effects of cultural work, where creative autonomy 'seems to offer a certain freedom and self-realization for workers, but in fact offers this freedom under certain power-laden conditions' (p.567). Hesmondhalgh points to Angela McRobbie's earlier study of the fashion industry, where engagement in aesthetic labour and the desire to 'be creative' imposes its own mix of pleasure and discipline which can lead to a worker's 'self-exploitation' evident in undertaking long hours without commensurate reward. As Hracs & Leslie (2014) attest, 'Creative work is also characterised by high levels of employment insecurity and perpetual networking' (p.67) where new technologies have further

increased the potential for self-exploitation, as mobile devices allow for twenty-four communications and a growing compression of work and leisure spaces. Ironically, the 'out of time' escape for many modern workers is the music festival, where independent promoters are likely to be in their least relaxed or hedonistic state.

Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011) therefore question what kinds of experiences culture industry jobs and occupations offer their workers, thereby countering the seemingly uncritical desirability of such roles. They argue that notions of 'autonomy' and 'self-realisation' are often 'tied to conditions such as self-exploitation and self-blaming' (p.75), which is echoed in R4's assessment of her own input and the effects of working under tight financial constraints:

> The amount of time it was all put together and took place, and with the team, there was no time to make mistakes. So everybody had to understand what it was that was being asked of them straight away… Then actually running the event, again, small staff, but again had to be very concise and effective, where everybody was working to make the event work smoothly, which it did, to huge exhaustion from all the people who were putting it together.

The acceptance of 'exhaustion' as part of the process required to initiate and stage a new event is a common feature of independent festival promotion. Indeed, the development of a cultural good or service is often seen as the self-realisation of the creator or creators, encouraging the investment of excessive labour and economic and social capital that record label employees or the staff employed by corporate promotion companies would reasonably consider to be beyond the bounds of their employment contracts.

The pressures on those independent festival promoters who are unpaid or volunteer can be particularly acute. Unlike the activities of musicians and those involved in music-making observed by Finnegan (2007), the responsibilities placed on festival organisers provide them with far more serious challenges than other actors in these realms. Small's (1998) definition of 'musicking' recognises the contribution of those 'people who are taking part in whatever capacity, in the performance' (p.13), but does not capture the possible inequity in those relationships, as illustrated by R7's description of the challenges she faces as a volunteer organiser:

> It's going back to the thing I'm giving up my spare time and then I'm getting lots of hassle for things. It seems to be unfair to hassle me for things that I'm actually trying my best with. I guess those are personal things.

The temptation to point out the lack of remuneration and to allow the event to be staged in a less organised way, is subsumed beneath the autonomous desire to complete the task. However, R7 is also able to acknowledge how the process of accumulating experience has enabled her to create more distance between her professional (though unpaid) self and her tendency to self-exploit in an attempt to protect others:

> I think I've taken a bit of pressure off myself because the very first year I felt like I had to do everything myself because I didn't really know how everything worked, and I didn't really want to give people jobs that weren't fair…I wouldn't say I've quite got it right yet, but it's certainly getting easier.

The consequences of making errors when staging festivals places immense pressures on the organisers, regardless of their employment status. The economic, social and cultural challenges these individuals face may be ameliorated over time by the gaining of experience, but are increased by rapid changes in technology, the pressures of market competition and the unpredictability of festival audience behaviours.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

There is a growing awareness around the issues of mental health and wellbeing and the effects of working in the music industry. In 2016, Help Musicians UK, the leading charity for professional musicians, commissioned the University of Westminster and MusicTank to conduct a study of musicians' mental health. The resulting report, *Can Music Make You Sick?*, inverted the more popular notions of music as a healing tool with therapeutic qualities, and instead highlighted the negative effects of music-making on those artists working within the industry. Of the 2,211 self-selecting respondents who took part in the survey that formed Phase 1 of the study, 71.1% believed that they had experienced panic attacks and/or high levels of anxiety, while 68.5% reported that they had experienced depression (Music Minds Matter, 2016). In Phase 2, Gross & Musgrave (2017) conducted qualitative interviews with 26 musicians, asking how their working conditions impacted on their mental health and general wellbeing. Headline findings from this study included: 'people in the music industry needed to believe in themselves' and that a career in the industry 'is often precarious and unpredictable'. While these factors may be found in all creative industries, they underline McRobbie's

(2001) concerns that neoliberal capitalism results in ‘casting people so adrift that they have no sense whatsoever of being needed’ (p.103), particularly as talent-led industries’ rewards are uneven and inequitable.

In addition, Hesmondhalgh & Baker (2011) highlight the precariousness and insecurity inherent in a creative economy. They argue that the precariousness or precarity of creative labour – adapted from the French term *précarité*, meaning ‘insecurity’ – counters the celebratory notion of working practices in contemporary capitalism and points to ‘the increasing insecurity faced by many, in contrast with the social guarantees of the “Fordist” era’ (p.161). Furthermore, Negus (1999), following his own experiences as a working musician, claims that the music industry is ‘a notoriously insecure place to work’ (p.88) and stresses how the culture industry is ‘a less stable and predictable entity [at the level of] micro relations and the cultural worlds within which the production of culture takes place’ (p.102). This insecurity and precariousness is certainly applicable to the work of festival promoters, as their position in the live music supply chain is the one most characterised by significant risk:

> A promoter, or festival, you're the first to pay out, the last to get paid. If it goes well, it’s the band. If it doesn’t go well, it’s the promoter. It’s a stressful business (R2).

However, whilst now having earned his living substantially from music for a significant proportion of his working life, R2 would almost certainly be outside the remit of those qualified to receive assistance from an organisation such as Help Musicians UK if he finds himself in difficulties. In defining the professions who they can help, the organisation states that ‘a mixing desk engineer or a

music librarian would probably qualify, while a booking agent or tour-bus driver would probably not' (Help Musicians UK, 2017). Specific support networks for live music promoters are not yet in place and three areas of concern will now be highlighted.

(i) Start-Up Events

The economic costs of starting a festival have been discussed, but the emotional costs are hidden beneath the commercial imperative of establishing trust with the consumer and the event suppliers. Festival organisers need to make a number of significant payments before the event is staged, placing a strain on budgeting and cash flow and increasing the uncertainty and risk. Many performance contracts issued by agents on behalf of performers, demand an advance payment of 50% of the artist's fee to be paid 30 days before the date of performance, which is non-refundable if the festival does not take place. It is also common for the suppliers of other goods and services including tent hire, audio and visual equipment, electricity, water and security personnel to require a percentage of the costs to be paid upfront, even up to 100% of the agreed amount. At the same time, income from the sale of tickets, which represents the largest part of festival revenues, is often wholly or partially withheld by the third-party vendor until the festival is completed, meaning that the upfront capital investment must be covered by the promoter. It is unsurprising that R2 observes of new entrants in the marketplace: 'Some of them don't last long. So one appears, it lasts two or three years, or a year, it goes and somebody fills in the market.' There is little sentimental concern

on the part of an established promoter for the personal and financial costs that the process of churn obscures.

(ii) Reputation

Making advance payments is an economic sign of the deficit of trust that new festivals need to overcome. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the network of relations that underpin these cultural goods need to be cultivated and maintained over time. R8, who admits to having very little understanding of how the industry functioned before starting a festival, explains how this process of reputation-building developed in the key relationship between agent and promoter:

> Our biggest challenge back then was how to convince bands and agents that they should play our festival, whereas now we could get away with not making a single wish list and just basing it on what the agents and managers put forward to us.

This movement in the supply and demand of artists' services demonstrates how the building of a brand identity over time allows the producer to negotiate from a wholly different power base. In the same way, Long Lingo & O'Mahony (2010) observe how country music producers strive to build legitimacy for their artists by using their power as brokers to orchestrate meetings and close the structural holes between the artists and the network of publishers, songwriters and labels, thereby acquiring the best possible resources for their projects. Unlike record companies whose business is based on the creation and exploitation of copyright – however precarious that might eventually prove to be – festivals are businesses with few tangible assets. Alongside, perhaps, a

long-term lease agreement for the festival site and ownership of some of the minor means of production,[41] the exchange value of a festival lies solely in its brand identity.

As Becker (1982) attests, the building of reputations is one of the defining factors in establishing the dynamic relationship between society and art. The process of reputation-making reflects how society treats 'things and people with distinguished reputations differently from others' (p.352), but the choices and selections which determine reputations are made 'by all sorts of people about whom we know little or nothing' (p.225). For the festival organiser, the ways in which art worlds are constructed over time means that, for each annual iteration, there can be little certainty or control in how their events are perceived or received by the consumer while their preferred *emic* or *etic* stance is not something in the promoter's gift. If the aestheticians and critics that apply the terms 'good' or 'bad' devote some special attention to their events, then their closeness to the industry increases and raising revenues from ticket-selling and sponsorship becomes an easier process. For the independent promoter, this trajectory can often be seen as a progression from the intermediary who is close to an artist seeking to create a new work and subject to the vicissitudes of distribution, to a role more closely aligned to the managers of the cultural industries, whose opinions and tastes then contribute to building the reputations of others.

[41] The cost and impracticality of storage means that purchasing production items is not cost-effective for annual events. As R8 recalls, they were grateful for the assistance of a local resident who would store production items 'in his brother's garage for the whole year'.

The concepts of reputation and authenticity are very closely linked. As Peterson & Anand (2004) confirm, cultural goods rely on the fabrication of an authenticity that is not fixed in time. It is a renewable resource that producers must continually update according to the prevailing environment. This need to renew and remain relevant places an ongoing burden on cultural producers who rely on their perceived authenticity in a competitive marketplace. For the relative newcomer operating on a more or less voluntary basis, this can be manifested in the constant need to be visible and engaged with the audience in a digitalised media landscape:

> …it's hard to keep producing that constant content because no one has time for that. We have to make time for it. That's a challenge that gets harder. People want instant content all the time, and the people who are at the festival then want to go and relive it with videos that they want you to put up. They need to be engaged with your festival brand all year round, even though you are only there once a year. You have to keep them engaged and you have to keep them interested for an entire year (R1).

The pressures of this role are evident. The cultural intermediary in the digital age must negotiate every new wave of instant fascination at a speed that bears little relation to the social immobility at the heart of the Bourdieuian system of trading in accumulated distinction. As the fields of production are endlessly made and remade, constant adherence to and engagement with the brand are the only acid-test of the modern festival promoter.

(iii) Responsibility

The precariousness of creative work and the risk of self-exploitation and self-blaming are further heightened by the extra responsibilities of the festival promoter. As Frith (2012b) points out, the starting point for the economics of live music can be divided into two basic models, namely non-contracted and contracted performances. The independent musician performing on the streets of Toronto is following the *busking* model where the amount they will receive from the listener is 'non-standardised and unpredictable' but with no contractual obligations to fulfil. Their responsibilities are largely contained, therefore, within the need to generate a sufficient income to meet their costs of accommodation, sustenance and any equipment required to complete the self-assigned task. Such personal responsibility bears little comparison to that of the promoters who, Frith (2012b) suspects, 'suffer the constant stress of having got a gig wrong'. For the festival promoter those stresses multiply, as R2 confirms:

> The money side, of course that's really important, and people having a good time, but people need to go home from your festival safe. If they've had a shit time and it's rained, well, that's life. If the band has been crap or the food they've had is rubbish, that's fine. As long as they go home safe, I think that's in the back of everybody's mind (R4).

Having health and safety in the back of the mind is an ever-present reminder of the risks involved in festival promotion.[42] The entertainment trope that 'the show must go on' places promoters under an added pressure to be

[42] The organisers of Kendal Calling pleaded guilty to exposing an employee to risk under the Health and Safety at Work Act after a worker suffered brain damage from an 11,000 volt electric shock at the festival in 2010 (BBC, 2013).

performers of emotional labour, required to be positive for 365 days a year. As Bryman (2004) observes that this is a consequence for all those involved in the service industries and may be considered especially true for the exemplars of an experience economy.

The risk of serious injury or death can never be wholly eliminated and only ever be reduced by the processes of risk assessment planning, which the promoter undertakes when applying for a premises licence. No matter how much events are perceived to be the co-creations of producers and consumers, there is only ever one side taking ultimate responsibility for the safety of an event. As the promoter Ralph Broadbent explains in reaction to the drug-related deaths of two young people at the Mutiny festival in Portsmouth in 2018:

> There is nothing worse than putting on a festival and someone hurting themselves or worse. It's every festival organiser's worst nightmare and obviously you do everything you can to make it safe. Even at the most well-run festival in the world, there's still a chance that someone will hurt themselves (Slawson, 2018).

Despite the understanding that attendees go to 'extraordinary lengths' to smuggle drugs on to festival sites, the author of the article still focused on how the hundreds of independent organisers of small- and medium-sized festivals could be putting their consumers at risk through 'cost-cutting' on health and safety measures alongside an inability to react to changing conditions.

Unlike the mutability of working with recorded music, the live music sector is tied to a fixed calendar of dates and times. Recording sessions may overrun

and release dates put back, but festival promotion is geared towards an ever-approaching end date when all planning must be completed and the event staged. The annual cycle sees the organiser locked into a momentum of increasing and decreasing pressure waves in the set patterns of events' lead-up and break-down. As soon as one festival ends, the need to learn from the experience coincides with planning for the following year, generating ideas and looking for artists that might maintain or develop the event, whilst surveying and assessing the changing environment. Balancing the projected income from ticket sales and sponsorship with the costs of staging the event is an annual challenge, even for established festivals:

> You never know if you're going to break even, if you're going to make a little bit of money or if you're going to lose a lot of money. Sometimes you don't even know that until you're a month to go until the festival is taking place (R7).

This economic *précarité* and the responsibility always in the back of the promoter's mind is an emotional drain and a long-term concern. These tensions are best expressed by the most experienced of the respondents:

> The one thing which I think as I'm getting older and people are more talking about it, is stress. My mental well-being. Can you put yourself through this fucking stress? (R2)

The production of festival culture and the culture of festival production relies on the myriad motivations and desires of disparate individuals, drawn to an arena of high emotion and intense activity. The personal investment and the balancing of risk and reward can amount to far more than the outward and signalled exchange of economic, cultural and social capital.

Summary

This chapter considered the operation of the cultural production circuit and the importance of taste to the cultural intermediary. It then examined the meaning of independence in attracting or accepting sponsorship and issues around longevity, before applying the notion of creative labour to the work of the promoters. Finally, it explored questions around mental health with a closer look at three specific areas of concern: start-up events, reputation and responsibility and examined the deleterious effects on the festival promoter of working in an environment of continuous risk and uncertainty. The thesis will now continue by considering the conclusions that can be drawn from the study.

Chapter 13: Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis is understood to be the first PhD-length study of the work of the promoters of UK independent music festivals. The concluding chapter provides a reflective review of the study and considers what has been learned. It begins with a discussion of the main contributions and findings in order to assess the importance of the research and to revisit the practices of the promoters and the environments in which their work takes place. The chapter then reflects on both the findings and the research approach adopted, followed by suggestions for future research directions.

Main contributions

This study was intended to address an identified gap in the academic literature. Webster's (2011) study of live music promoters in the UK is especially acknowledged but this research was intended to consider the festival promoter as a particular type of promoter, possessing a range of skills and motivations that might distinguish their practices in the live music ecology. Moreover, the work of the Live Music Exchange and its stated intention to improve the links between academia and industry, led me to see that this area was still largely outside the existing body of knowledge. As Frith commented in conversation with Paul Latham, the CEO of Live Nation, 'the academy was particularly interested in the skills and training of promoters' (Live Music Exchange, 2013) and this is a key element of my research focus. The thesis

therefore offers a groundwork for scholars of festival studies and those interested in the live music industries.

The thesis was designed to place music festivals in the context of the contemporary music industries. This is to reinforce the message of Williamson & Cloonan (2007) that the music industry should not be viewed synonymously as the recorded music industry, a fault that marks both academic studies and the making of government policies. A study that consciously views the place of music festivals as essential to the 'music industries', rather than as an offshoot of the live sector which is itself seen by Negus (1992) as merely a promotional adjunct to the recorded sector, should assist in redressing that balance. However, Negus' understanding of the roles of the cultural intermediaries in 'the articulation of an artist's musical identity' (p.133) in the production of culture and Becker's (1982) 'sociological approach to the arts' (p.1) provided the framework to express the practices of workers whose creative labour is made visible by events that are necessarily defined by their temporality and unrepeatability.

The key academic contribution of the thesis lies in the extension of Negus' (1999) model for studying the music industries. Just as Negus sought to counterbalance the macro perspective of the ways in which culture had become industrialised, by adding a micro focus on 'how staff within the music industry seek to understand the world of musical production and consumption' (p.19), the addition of a meso level has added an extra layer of understanding of the practices of music festival promoters. Festivals exist in a social world of relationships and communities while the meso level provides a necessary

perspective that recognises the organisers ability to build connections across a wide array of social networks – stepping far outside the hermetically sealed nature of a major recording company – not least in relation to all those who volunteer to help run events for their own individual motivations of identity and self-image. This three-layered model also provides for a greater focus on the lived reality of the independent festival promoters as individuals affected by the undertaking of their pivotal roles.

Webster (2011) cites the inaugural Business of Live Music conference in Edinburgh, 2011 as 'illustrating that scholars are beginning to take live music seriously as a field of study' (p.235). It was opportune timing and good fortune that I presented my first paper at the conference, allowing me to feel confident that my own research interests are necessary and of the moment. Subsequent conferences and a growing body of literature focusing on festivals, means that this thesis should be of considerable interest as a publication, especially as there remains a continuing call for more research into the work of producers in order to address another imbalance in a long-standing academic focus on consumers (Getz, 2010; Webster & McKay, 2016). The call for papers in June 2018 for a special issue of the journal of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, focusing on 'Pop music festivals and (cultural) policies' (IASPM, 2018) also indicates that interest in music festivals is beginning to penetrate the popular music studies' mainstream. Many of the topics addressed in this thesis are relevant to the perspectives that the call for papers seeks to encourage.

The timing of the thesis is also highly relevant as the relationship between the recorded and live sectors in the UK looks once again to be at a point of change. The British Phonographic Industry's highlighting of the fastest growth in trade income revenue for the recorded music sector since 1995 (BPI, 2018) can be set against the reports of artists – or rather promoters – giving concert tickets away for free (Unger, 2018). The UK Live Music Census 2017 captured a live music industry where 42% of the promoters who participated highlighted 'diminishing audiences' (Webster et al., 2018: 72) as one of the most significant negative impacts on their work. With the continuing concentration of festival ownership and the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF, 2017b) openly calling for the Competition and Markets Authority to investigate Live Nation's increasing dominance of the live music sector, this is a timely moment to investigate the practices and motivations of independent festival organisers and, to paraphrase Cloonan's (2013) description of the promoter, to question whether the ruling class is beginning to lose its crown.

Main findings

The thesis set out to answer three interlinked and connected questions. Firstly, what are the underlying structures of the music industries in which contemporary independent UK music festivals take place? Secondly, how are independent music festivals produced as cultural goods or services? Thirdly, what are the motivations of those who choose to organise independent music festivals? The overall finding is that independent music festivals continue to be promoted within an environment that is characterised by risk and

competitive practices. Despite the aggregated industry data that highlights the growth and positive impacts of the sector (UK Music, 2017a), there are no guarantees of financial rewards. Even though the value of live music 'remains centred in its live experience' (Frith, 2007a: 4) and that live music clearly continues to matter, the practice of promotion remains a social and economic endeavour that is largely self-selecting and self-taught. The effects of working under conditions that encourage risk-taking and facilitate self-exploitation, are often hidden beneath the UK promoters' need to project a positive identity around events and these practices can be seen to negatively impact their mental health and wellbeing.

The key arguments that emerged from a critical review of the literature and the discussion of the results arising from the methodological approach used are grouped into three main strands. These strands are not discrete and the arguments remain interwoven and connected.

The independent UK music festival sector is highly competitive and the site of significant economic risk.

This study has shown how the recorded music and live music industries have developed and how the balance between the two sectors shifts according to patterns of production and consumption. The development of the production of music into a cultural industry is based on a system of copyright protection and royalty payments to reward the creators and rights holders. Through a period of mergers and acquisitions the music recordings' rights holders came to be concentrated in the UK within a few major corporations and a number of smaller, independent record labels which emerged around the mid-1970s. The loss of control of circulation following the advent of peer-to-peer file sharing technologies around the millennium contributed to a rapid change in the means of distribution and a contraction in the overall size of the recorded music industry. The live industry followed a similar pattern of mergers and acquisitions resulting in the means of promotion becoming increasingly concentrated in the ownership or control of the Live Nation and AEG Live corporations. However, the growth in the live music sector in the UK from around 2000 saw the emergence of a number of independently-owned festivals, many of which were termed 'boutique' because of their consumers' increased participation and the emergence of a new wave of independent UK music festival promoters.

The advent of what Harvey (2005) terms 'the neoliberal turn' in the 1980s, saw an increasing emphasis on policies that encouraged free trade across national borders and a focus on the economic potential offered by individual entrepreneurial activities freed from the constraints of 'red tape'. The creative

and cultural industries were thereby promoted as economic drivers of a new knowledge economy and various sectors joined together to demonstrate the strength of an area of growth that could replace the decline in traditional, industrial production. One of the weaknesses of the policies that came from this consolidation of sectors was the move to unify the disparate strands around the creation and exploitation of Intellectual Property (IP) rights. For the music industry, this meant a move to basing policy decisions on the creation of music copyright in recordings, thereby continuing the concentration on the recorded music sector. Despite the contraction of the recorded industry and the loss of control of circulation, policy was still focused on the creation and retention of IP, leading to a blind-spot and a lack of support for the growth of the live music sector. Policy-making in this area, as demonstrated by the slow progress in regulating the secondary ticketing market, which would benefit festival promoters, and in adopting 'Agent of Change' to protect existing music venues, is still, at best, weak and uneven.

In turn, the processes of globalisation have seen Live Nation and AEG – both major US corporations – continue to increase their UK festival market share. This competitive pressure affects not just AIF members but also, through the use of exclusivity clauses in performance contracts, threatens to disrupt the entirety of the live music ecology. As the interview with the venue/operator Ricky Bates in the UK Live Music Census 2017 confirms, 'acts are signed to festivals not to play the vicinity of the festival or they can only play one show in a six-week period, therefore eliminating their ability to play other shows anywhere in the country' (Webster et al., 2018: 66) while music festivals and venues are competing when they need to be collaborating. Independent

music festivals are places where new artists are discovered and a positive synergy between the smaller venues that support emerging artists and the music festival sector is required, such as the model used by R5:

> We all have a proud history of supporting local bands, trying to develop them from playing our second stage onto the main stage, and then help them afterwards. If they have biographies and things like that, we can sort that for them.

It is significant that 34% of all respondents to the UK Live Music Census 2017 expressed concerns that festivals were having a negative impact and that promoters needed to do more to build bridges with the live music community. As the recorded music industry continues to recover, now is the time for music festivals to become stakeholders in that sector too. The scope for new record labels, curated by the independent music festival organisers and promoted through their networks, with regular shows for the recording artists in the local music venues, seems an obvious ecological step to take.

The economic risks of promoting independent music festivals are still not fully understood. R8's loss of £300,000 in its first year may seem excessive, but the promoters were aware of even higher losses sustained by the corporations as they sought to create new events in an effort to increase their market share. There is no evidence that such independent promoters are particularly attracted to risk, rather it is a by-product of the work they have chosen to undertake. The aim is to promote a music festival and no two promoters share the same motivations. The festival marketplace is characterised by a high degree of 'churn' and, as R5 highlights, the risks are concentrated in growing the event in later years, rather than staging year one:

‘A lot of festivals that have closed normally have tried to expand’. The temptation for promoters is to keep aiming higher, securing a particular artist or adding a new area of entertainment and there is a strong suspicion that some of the independent festivals that survive expansion have become easy prey for corporate ownership, a fact obscured by the AIF’s staggeringly broad definition of ‘independent’.[43]

Independent UK music festival promoters rely on the development and maintenance of social and professional networks.

The promoters see themselves as part of, or contributing to, a number of communities. For those who consider themselves within the music industry, they recognise the need to build relationships within the hierarchical structures, which sees promoters dealing with agents and agents dealing with managers and artists. However, this thesis has highlighted the shift in power relations that occurs over time, as the promoters are able to use their status as brokers in bringing all of the resources together into one concentrated event. This is why the actions of the corporations in disrupting or distorting these cultivated, social and economic relationships affects even long-established independent festivals. In such a competitive environment, the promoters need to continue to spread their nets wide each year before the event is honed down to a practical and realistic framework. The ‘constant stress’ of having got it wrong (Frith, 2012b), can be the promoters’ true 365

[43] For example, Kendal Calling Limited was liquidated in 2013, listing creditors including HMCPS (£45,000) and Mr. Donald Berry (£500,000). Kendal Calling is now part of the Global portfolio of festivals, but still considered independent (The Gazette, 2013).

day-a-year experience, or at least until ticket sales have reached the break-even point.

Festival organisation places the promoters at the centre of a web of relationships while, paradoxically, being quite an isolating undertaking. The promoters rely on a close network of advisers that they feel they can trust, from creative staff through to those whose music taste they respect. As R1 describes her event's booker: 'He'd go insane if he had to make all the decisions by himself with no other input' and that input comes through those channels that the promoters are most comfortable with, dependent on age and experience. Although the promoters are all aware of their audiences and programme their events accordingly, there seems little of the spirit of co-creation that is often celebrated in a participatory culture. Too much planning and health and safety considerations places a barrier between the producer and the consumer alongside an awareness of where the risks reside. The need to be visible and engaged on social media may have increased the contact, but the instant power of the consumer to 'like' or 'dislike' has added to the extent of that barrier, as the promoters are engaged in a continuous effort to please and entice, rather than exploring the possibilities of genuine collaborations, while the consumers have every right for more transparency around the spiralling costs of a festival ticket[44] in an extended period of low inflation.

[44] In the Music Festival Report 2017, 23.9% of respondents stated that a 5% increase in ticket price 'would stop them coming back next year' (UK Festival Awards, 2017).

The effects of organising independent UK music festivals on the promoters are often hidden and unsaid.

There is as yet no obvious path into festival promotion. While courses in Event Management proliferate, the promoters remain suspicious of classroom qualifications and continue to place a premium on ‘hands on’ experience. Although the usual Catch 22 of ‘how can I gain experience if you won’t employ me’ applies, one serious gap in the lack of any formal training emerges. Festival promoters not only take on all the normal risks of live music promotion, but for those whose work is outside the use of normal venues, the added elements of concern for the health and safety of everyone else involved increase the pressures and stress. The recent atrocities aimed at live music events as ‘soft’ targets have only added to R2’s simple observation that, ‘people need to go home from your festival safe’. As the music industry begins to find ways to explore the effects of the industry on the participants’ mental health and wellbeing, this thesis underlines the necessity of placing the practices of independent festival promoters high on a list of concerns.

Reflections on the findings

With my own experiences of festival promotion still relatively recent, I expected to find all of the structures to be very much the same. Moreover, as I had enjoyed a career that had moved from recorded to live music, from amateur to professional, I assumed that this pattern and level of interest in the workings of the industry would be equally shared. I was initially surprised therefore by two things: firstly, it was not my ‘exit’ experiences that were relevant, but any aspect of my own individual pathway; secondly, that an

interest in structure depends on your relation to it, and that ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ is more of a state of mind than a status. It was humbling to hear the breadth of the interests and experiences that the promoters expressed and I found myself moving quickly from a position of self-assigned authority to one of listener, privileged to be invited back into a conversation that I had left, somewhat abruptly.

I stopped being a festival promoter in November, 2011, and I assumed that what was true then would still hold true now. As a teacher of a popular module in Festival Studies and leading an undergraduate course in Music Management, I felt confident that I was up-to-date with developments. When I first read Frith recounting Philip Tagg’s observation about such courses that: ‘people can only teach what they know about which usually starts off by being ten years out of date and then ends up by being twenty years out of date’ (Live Music Exchange, 2012a), I did not understand that this would apply to me. What I know about festival promotion is partial and individual and does not relate directly to the independent festival promoters who are still promoting, or have only begun promoting since I started teaching and not doing. The continuing pressure of the corporate land-grab within the music festival sector, which seems to be squeezing the independent promoters into an almost subservient position, was both surprising and concerning.

The social patterns have also shifted. While the need to keep booking plans under wraps often meant that festival promoters maintained a respectful distance, the competition for an audience seems to have increased the role’s potential loneliness. Building relationships seems less of an organic

experience and more of a professional necessity. What is perhaps missed in studies of the growth of UK music festivals is that much of it was new and unchartered territory. Creating unique events was a lot easier when there were far fewer events while almost by definition any combination of artists and associated entertainments had not been attempted before. It was also clear how the recorded industry had to respond to the festival sector, with album releases timed to coincide with festival performances, a complete inversion from Negus' (1992) days of tour support. The independent music festival sector was virtually a buyer's market throughout the 2000s, with agents chasing the few headline slots that artists and managers demanded. Those bonds seem stretched or broken in the contemporary environment and the sector's confidence is more difficult to discern.

There is a danger in positing a 'golden age' and rose tinting what has always been extremely hard work, but there is a need to emphasise that the rewards did feel easier to obtain. The financial returns were often good and margins easier to maintain as artist fees had not yet risen to compensate for the drop in revenues in the recorded music sector following the advent of peer-to-peer file sharing. Ironically, the positive series of PRS reports (Page & Carey, 2009, 2010, 2011) might have contributed to the greater competition that festival promoters now face, prompting capital to flow into a sector that was evidently booming, or as the title of a recent article by Christina Ballico in the *Event Management* journal phrases it: 'Everyone Wants a Festival' (2018). The end of the gold rush has been predicted many times, and market saturation – or over-saturation – has been an almost constant refrain since around 2005, so I am not intending to paint too gloomy a picture. The live

music sector is still in far better shape than in 2003 and many festivals continue to sell out year on year. It is a sobering thought, though, that the economic effects of the UK leaving the European Union have not yet begun to be felt or remotely understood and that a new wave of policies based on a hyper-neoliberalism may, one day soon, find their way into the political mainstream.

Reflections on the study

My position as a PhD student undertaking research into music festivals has been a somewhat challenging experience. As an individual studying a largely under-researched area it has often been difficult to exchange ideas with other scholars. Although my early experiences of the Live Music Exchange conference gave me the confidence and desire to pursue this topic, it also created a slightly false sense of the resources – both human and material – that I would be able to draw upon. As discussed in Chapter Three, there have been clear difficulties for everyone involved, as I made the transition from a position of some status in the independent music festival industry, to becoming a student of the same topic. This problematised the study in two significant ways: firstly, I had difficulty in accepting myself as a student. I have lost count of the times it was said to me ‘you should be teaching about festivals, not learning about them’ and it has taken a great deal of critical self-reflection to remain on track while trying to be as accurate as possible. Secondly, I had difficulty in being accepted as a student. I can see now why festival promoters did not answer my emails, or follow up on my initial contact. Was I a competitor who wanted to gain an advantage, or merely a student

who can be safely ignored? Either way, the challenges involved in framing and completing the work were not those I had initially envisaged.

Obviously, my professional experience continued to have implications for the research approach adopted here. I was conscious to be as objective and truthful as possible, determined to keep myself out of the work. It was only on accepting that my experiences had positive benefits for the study, and that I could fulfil Denzin & Lincoln's (2011) definition of the interpretive *bricoleur*, one who 'understands that research is an interactive process shaped by one's personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity and those of the people in the setting' (p.5), that I was able to settle into the role of student and scholar. I believe, therefore, that although the study has unavoidably been guided by my own experiences, the data has been analysed and presented methodically. I have tested what the respondents told me against my study of the literature and my own experiences, and, while I am aware that another researcher would not necessarily produce the same results, I am satisfied of the dissertation's validity. I hope that it proves useful for future scholars to interrogate it for their own research and for the purposes of academic debate.

The question of 'insider' and 'outsider' resonated throughout the process. Trying to remain entirely outside the study appeared false and contrived and after a lengthy deliberation I added elements of my own experience to illustrate areas that were otherwise unnecessarily shadowy or incomplete. The most surprising and gratifying aspects of the research were undoubtedly the interviews. It was only as each interview progressed that I started to see

some of the value of my study. While it had been frustrating identifying respondents with sufficient knowledge to partake in the study, the moments when the interviews came to life made everything worthwhile. For every short-cut, where the promoter would be embarrassed at elaborating on a point which they assumed I knew only too well, there were empathetic moments of insight which I believe were only made possible by allowing my history and biography into the study. It became evident that this was a space for the promoters to drop their professional guard and share experiences for the first time. While, as discussed in Chapter Three, much of this was only shared when the recording had been stopped, the insights allowed me to explore questions around motivations that I do not think would have been made visible to a researcher without my background. It also allowed me to revisit some of my own experiences that had been securely locked away, to re-inhabit long moments of darkness that are inconvenient for the relentlessly positive narrative of festival promotion.

The methodology has therefore been the most problematic aspect of the study. It was shaped by my own experiences and by an institutional imperative that all respondents must be anonymised. It has therefore been difficult to convey the study's generalised results or to contextualise the work to its fullest. Without the opportunity to share the full histories and biographies of the respondents, I am conscious that some of the data may lack sufficient impact and I have had to keep returning to the research question to satisfy myself that I was achieving what I set out to do. However, such a tether did have a positive effect in shaping the final thesis, ensuring a focus on those industry structures which might otherwise have been missed, ultimately

allowing an approach to the interviewees' responses where each was weighed equally, without the distraction of the 'celebrity' of their events colouring the value of their contributions.

Suggestions for future research

This research has provided evidence that there is a large area of live music practice that remains to be explored. The study of festivals brings with it the challenge of its interdisciplinary nature, but this also allows for the opportunity of a diversity of approaches. Festivals blend questions of economic, social, political and technological topics that can be viewed holistically or as subject specialisms. This thesis has adopted a blended view through the restricted lens of the festival promoter, but there is the potential for a range of future studies, especially from the production and supply side of events.

The interdisciplinary aspect of this research has already seen me present papers at a range of conferences. At the IASPM UK & Ireland conference in Brighton in September 2016, I offered a view of the industrial development of music festivals, while at the 'Locating Imagination' conference in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, April 2017, I spoke on the role of the festival promoter as mediator between performer, place and fan. The presentation at the CHIME, 'Music, Festivals Heritage' conference centred on the phenomenological perspectives of the promoters and led to discussions around the production of culture and the culture of production. One of the key elements here was the exploration of the implications of the role of the state in facilitating or restricting live music promotion and I am particularly interested in pursuing the policy-making issues that take place around the production of music festivals.

For the live music industries, an area for future research is the continuing place of music festivals within the live music ecology. Studies in this area would allow for a greater understanding of the relationship between music venues and music festivals while identifying ways in which they can be mutually supportive, rather than competitive. As the recorded industry begins to show signs of a sustained recovery, there may be a move of capital away from the live sector, especially as the market continues to be seen as saturated or over-saturated. Moreover, in light of any future volatility arising from the consequences of the UK leaving the EU, the music industries are likely to be at the forefront of any change and remain a worthwhile area of study. Potential issues around the relative exchange value of the currency, any deregulation of the labour market, changes in health and safety standards, or an increasing focus on the economic and cultural importance of the creative and cultural industries, are almost certain to be readily observable in the production and consumption of music.

The findings of this thesis, therefore, have implications for a wide range of stakeholders working in industry, education or the framing of policy. For practitioners, there is a clear understanding of the financial risks for those looking to enter the music festival marketplace and an awareness of the unseen effects on mental health and wellbeing for those who seek to take on the responsibilities of organisation in such a responsible and demanding role. For educators, the thesis can contribute to the curriculum on a range of Higher Education Institution (HEI) courses, from festival and event management through to social, cultural and economic studies, assisting in the Office for Students (OfS) call for a Teaching Excellence and Student

Outcomes Framework (TEF) that demands ‘a high-quality academic experience for all students’ (OfS, 2019). Equally, the thesis can contribute to the development of a discrete field of Festival Studies, building on a multidisciplinary approach and an interdisciplinary mindset of openness and collaboration, while policy-makers can consider how legislation needs to reflect the reality of a music industry where intellectual property rights now reside more in an artist’s brand than in the creation of music recordings. Finally, these findings can form the basis for meeting one of the key aims of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), namely to ‘provide businesses and other users (and potential users) of HEI knowledge with another source of information’ (Research England, 2019), thereby increasing the visibility of university research while strengthening its real world applications.

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Appendix One

Questions for respondents

(1) The Music festival sector has gone through a period of continued growth. What would you put this growth down to?

(2) The music festival sector has seen many new events begin and some events close. What do you think makes a successful festival?

(3) Developments in technology have allowed for new ways of staging live performance. Which developments do you think have had the most impact on your own work?

(4) In what ways are you conscious of the location in which your event takes place?

(5) How would you characterise the audience for your event?
Are they local, national, or international?
Repeat attenders, demographic and age group etc?

(6) How closely does your festival feel part of the local community?

(7) How important is team work to managing your event?
Which roles are critical to your success and why?

(8) How do you go about programming or booking your event? Do you just work on the one festival at a time or are you already planning future festivals concurrently?

(9) Music festivals are events that often attract and/or rely on sponsorship. Do you see this as something that affects your own work?

(10) What do you see as the main challenges that you face in organising your event?

(11) How have these challenges changed over time?

(12) There are now many ways to gain training in event management. How did you develop your knowledge of event management?

(13) What do you think is the most creative aspect of your work?

Appendix Two

Information Sheet

The place of music festivals in an era of digital music abundance.

Researcher/Principal Investigator: Danny Hagan

Thank you for your interest in my research study. Please read the following information carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to participate.

The project and who I am

This project is part of my PhD study at the London College of Music, which is part of the University of West London. The PhD is an investigation into the place of music festivals in a time when access to digital music has never been greater.

While you are helping me to answer this question, the results may also help to inform your own professional practice.

What does participation involve?

I am looking for a number of practitioners who work in the music festival sector to answer a series of questions. All participants will be asked the same questions and the answers aggregated into a study that seeks to identify recurring themes. All of the interviews will last for around 60 minutes and be recorded in audio format for later transcription. The audio files will be deleted after the research project has been completed. These interviews are completely confidential and your anonymity is guaranteed at all times, including in the writing up and presentation of the findings.

What will happen to the collected data?

All the collected data will be kept confidential and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act. By signing the consent form, you allow me to use extracts from the recorded content when presenting my research findings at any conferences, or in any written publications.

Individual participants' responses and other information will not be accessible to anyone beyond the research team without the explicit permission of the participants in question. The decision to participate (or not to do so) is entirely at the discretion of the participants.

In addition:

- When I produce reports of the research for publication, I may wish to include quotations from individuals' data. All quotations will be anonymous, but if your data is to feature substantially in this way, I will consult with you to ensure that you are happy with its use.

If you change your mind

It is entirely your choice whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you are also free to change that decision at any time, and to withdraw your data from the study, without giving a reason.

Research Participant Consent

Title of Project: The place of music festivals in an era of digital music abundance.

Researcher/Principal Investigator: **Danny Hagan**

Study approved by School Research Ethics Committee: _____

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you and you should have read any accompanying Information Sheet before you complete this form.

If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to participate. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form and the Information Sheet to keep and refer to at any time.

- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researcher involved and withdraw from it immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to the point of publication.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be treated in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I give permission for the researcher to use extracts from the recorded content when presenting their research findings.
- I agree that the researcher may use my data for any future research, and I understand that any such use of identifiable data would be reviewed and approved by a research ethics committee. (In such cases, as with this project, data would not be identifiable in any report).

Participant's Statement:

I _____*(full name, please print*)

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the project. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research involves.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Use of audio-visual data for presentations

As researchers we sometimes make presentations of our work, for example at academic conferences. It is possible that I may wish to play audio of collected data to illustrate my findings. Please indicate whether you give your permission for me to use excerpts of your audio data:

- Yes ☐ / No ☐

Signed: _____ Date: _____