

## Introduction

In January 1997, two *Sydney Morning Herald* journalists produced a brief account of what they perceived to be the most important rock and roll sites in Sydney.<sup>1</sup> Their sense of the city's rock histories extended to places of local mythology well beyond popular music's production and consumption: five star hotels as frantic sites of adoration of the Beatles ensconced within; psychiatric hospitals where career paths merged with psychosis; and migrant hostels as sites of cross-cultural ambitions. The article was a rare acknowledgement of the spaces and places of performers and fans' interaction. This thesis constitutes an extended response to the article's implicit desire to recognise alternative accounts of Australian popular music connected to broader city narratives. In analysing the rock music venues of Sydney as sites of interaction between musicians, fans and government, I am principally concerned with three interrelated themes:

- The social construction of live performance venues from 1955 amidst the parallel construction of the performer and fan as an 'unruly' subject;
- The industrial development of live performance: the live rock venue within commercial/economic structures; and
- The dialectical tension of the above in reconciling the state's desire for manageable 'cultural citizens' with broader cultural policy (support for live rock and roll within arts policies).

A more detailed explication of these strands is undertaken in Chapter One, in providing a theoretical overview of relations between popular culture and the state, and specific media/cultural/popular music studies approaches to cultural practice and policy.

My personal interest in the histories of live rock venues parallels an increased

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Casimir and Bruce Elder, 'Beat streets - a guide to Sydney's rock and roll history', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9th January, 1997, pp.29-30.

media and public fascination in the recording and performance histories of Australian rock and roll. At the time of writing, commercial and public television networks are involved in producing local histories, while there has been renewed interest by publishers in local musicians' biographies.<sup>2</sup> In April 1994 the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney opened its *Real Wild Child* exhibition documenting a social history of Australian rock music. The combination of stage and recording artefacts (album covers, stage costumes, instruments) and interactive technology (a mixing desk, drum kit and guitar which visitors could play) has made it one of the more successful exhibitions (in terms of Museum attendance) since the Powerhouse opened in 1988. Its success revealed the belief that the assortment of managers, promoters, performers, venue owners and audiences and their development constituted a (more or less) coherent popular music industry narrative which offered a series of insights into the development of Australian rock music.<sup>3</sup> The assembly of such popular culture artefacts within spaces usually reserved for more 'traditional' histories of commerce and nationhood signified to some conclusive evidence of the death of an industry and associated cultural practices. In opening the exhibition, Midnight Oil singer Peter Garrett referred to those industry analysts who viewed the exhibition as "the final nail in the coffin of the dead beast called rock and roll" (while refuting such an overview himself).<sup>4</sup> By mid-1994 the dual economic foundations of the local industry (solid recording revenue and the proliferation of live music venues) could no longer be taken for granted.<sup>5</sup> The exhibition was established in a period of rare reflection within the industry and heightened differences between past and present. The celebration of past glories served to highlight present concerns and failures.

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<sup>2</sup> The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) has commissioned a 4-part rock history series; the Channel Nine network has commissioned 1960s performer/songwriter Johnny Young to produce a reflection on the period.

<sup>3</sup> The curator of the exhibition, Peter Cox has also produced a CD-ROM of Australian rock/pop history. Cox's ability to gain Federal government funding for the project, I believe, marked an important moment in the recognition of rock and roll as part of social memories.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Garrett, Opening speech for *Real Wild Child* exhibition, reprinted in Report on the Contemporary Ausmusic Summit for the Minister for Communications and Arts, 1994, p.6.

## I. Research Orientation

It has been acknowledged that documenting “what actually happened to names and bodies once *through* the door(s)”<sup>6</sup> of Australian rock venues is a process yet to be attempted. This highlights the difficulties in researching an inherently unstable field of sites, where the constant birth and re-birth of venues, clientele and styles negates an easy location of practices. The thesis draws extensively on interviews with those involved in local live rock performance since 1957, as *one* means of mapping the patchwork of overlapping developments and scenes. In interviewing local musicians, promoters and venue managers over a four year period, I began to realise that such a methodology remained dependent upon (often jaded) memories. In the recording and interpretation of ‘unofficial’ oral histories, one is equally reliant upon various interpretations that may distort, negate or unduly enhance the importance of specific events. At the same time, nearly everyone I approached to share their recollections of specific venue conditions and industrial contexts to performance were enthusiastic about participating. This, I believe, stemmed not only from their investment in live venues as significant sites of their livelihood, but in the connective social memories of fans, friends and fellow performers. Also, the musicians I interviewed seemed willing to tolerate discussions which moved beyond the usual emphases upon musical influences and current (touring, recording) pre-occupations, to less discernible industrial frameworks. The interviews were invaluable in gaining a repository of different perspectives to those of public authorities and venue managers. Equally, this thesis provided an opportunity for them to speak for themselves, providing individual memories at the intersection of local mythologies and industry practices. The interview process also extended to discussions with those governing the ability of performers to take the stage within various periods: local council and state government workers, building authorities, police, venue owners and venue managers. Where possible, I interviewed members of relevant government departments (at the local and State level) in attempting to understand the development of particular modes of governance and shifts in articulating

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<sup>5</sup> In defining ‘the local rock industry’ I am excluding for the moment other facets which do not constitute live performance - for example, dance music scenes and their associated recordings and venues.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Murphie, Review of Tracee Hutchison, *Your Name's On The Door: 10 Years of Australian Music*, ABC Enterprises, Sydney in *Perfect Beat*, vol. 1, no. 3, July, 1992, p.102.

authority in different periods. While a valuable undertaking, this also revealed the reluctance of officialdom to explain broader historical shifts, and in particular the governance of individual venues, often for sound legal reasons. Other developments obstructed a clearer picture: for example, the recent desire by the current State Labor Government to 'clean up' the NSW police service resulted in several licensing police withdrawing their offer to reflect upon their duties in relation to the State's licensed venues. Understandably, venue owners and managers were also reluctant to engage in discussion of profits and practices consistently operating on the fringes of the law.

The views of individual musicians, venue managers and government authorities were reconciled with my own research into legislation at the Federal, State and local government level. This entailed the construction of policy narratives in a range of regulatory fields, encompassing liquor, building, noise and zoning laws as they intersect with venue practices. Throughout the thesis I have undertaken specific case studies of particular venues in the manner of representing broader historical commercial and governmental environments. This has produced methodological problems of a varying nature. The predominant silence of venue operators and government departments, for the reasons outlined above, often meant that local histories of venues could only be achieved through local council archives. This required the repeated use of State Freedom of Information laws in obtaining access to local government histories of many of the venues examined. Local and State authorities' sensitivity to scrutiny of commercial and government decisions was magnified at the times and places where venue conditions and events were subject to increased media attention. This produced situations where access to policy archives was contingent upon permission from court authorities and the venue owners themselves. To this end, my attempts to gain insight into legislative/commercial operations were constrained by the limits imposed from without. In all cases, this has also entailed judgements on my own part in presenting commercial and legislative information as matters of public importance within wider assessments of the ability to damage individual reputations.

The thesis also relies upon a variety of media resources: State and national newspapers, localised music street press, fanzines and national music magazines.

Several documentary films revealing the nature of metropolitan scenes and individual venues were also useful in assessing musicians' conditions in Sydney and elsewhere. In constructing a historical narrative, media sources were crucial in placing the live music industry within wider societal contexts. As will be evident in each chapter discussing the discrete, yet interconnected periods of live Australian rock and roll, media networks did not merely reflect local processes. National music magazines and the smaller street press made important contributions in the production (and survival) of various scenes. Conversely, I have examined media sources within the context of moral panic episodes (the following chapter addresses and defines this term) connected to Australian rock at different times. The role of print and television media in constructing opposition to local rock and roll practices is an important one within the historical relationship between youth, the media and popular culture. My emphasis in this thesis is upon the varying impact of media portrayals of rock and roll on local live practices, particularly where networks of opposition were formed between local authorities, the press, residents and concerned parents. Such oppositional stances, it is argued, constituted a refusal to contemplate live rock as alternative career paths for Sydney youth.

## **II. Thesis Structure**

The principal research methodologies outlined above derive from my own work and leisure experiences. A brief period in local council administration (with Waverley Council in Sydney's eastern suburbs) alerted me to the critical role of local government in shaping live music's place within cityscapes, and councils' dual and conflicting duties to local residents and business. My interest in rock and roll as an enduring construct of nationalist mythology was heightened during short periods writing live music reviews for local music street press in the early 1980s, in a period of local and international success. I also gained intimate knowledge of live venue practices as a rock drummer with various (original and cover) bands from 1983 to 1989. This period, which entailed extensive touring of the country's eastern seaboard and exposure to the range of industry ethics, remains invaluable in reconciling broader theoretical interests with live performance realities. In attempting to incorporate my combined experiences (of

varying intensity and professionalism) as musician, fan, bureaucrat and journalist within this work, the thesis adopts a musician's perspective throughout. My own engagement with the music industry produced the desire to unravel the intersecting points of governance and commerce influencing live performance.

As a means of documenting the interdisciplinary nature of this project, the theoretical/historical themes evident in each chapter are presented below. Following this introductory chapter:

Chapter 1 outlines the development of leisure studies, popular music studies and cultural studies, with particular regard to their connective points of similarity and difference. The development of Cultural Studies is surveyed as an important break from traditional leisure studies, in emphasising popular cultural forms as explicit sites of regulatory intervention in the policing of leisure and the workplace. Howard Becker's notion of the musician as 'outsider' is employed in detailing the historical construction of live performance in relation to societal contexts, and subsequent theoretical strategies examining the governance of popular music sites and practices. The principal theoretical framework adopted throughout the thesis, Michel Foucault's notion of 'governmentality', is explored as a series of strategies of governance simultaneously internal and external to the state. The (economic and cultural) development of live rock and roll performance is narrated through the Foucauldian notion of the interplay between the state's need for manageable sites of consumption with sites denoting the construction of 'useful' citizens. Cultural policies in regard to youth, it is argued, have been shaped by the overlapping (and often contradictory) notions of consumer and citizen. The chapter also places the thesis within Cultural Studies' discussions of local agency and global influences pertaining to trade and cultural flows, and interconnecting problems of governance.

Chapter 2 documents live performance contexts preceding the local introduction of rock and roll in 1955. As a set of performance practices transplanted to Australian conditions, the history of the English music hall is briefly examined in detailing the similarities of local colony practices. The nature of theatre, vaudeville and hotel entertainment since colonial settlement is also briefly explored, in analysing the extent to which local regulatory structures derived from British

practice. This short history is also useful in documenting the rich history of performance sites (jazz, minstrel and theatre) as important points of demarcation of the 'popular' from state-sanctioned entertainments. A short history of NSW liquor laws is included as a means to understanding the prevailing societal attitudes to drinking since the colony's formation. In particular, the political history of events leading to the introduction of 6 p.m. closing in NSW hotels is discussed for its impact upon the State's leisure sites. This constitutes important background material to the regulation of rock and roll as a novel set of performance practices.

Chapter 3 begins the linear narrative of live rock and roll development within Sydney, commencing with initial media reports of touring North American performers in 1955. The first performances conducted within the city's town halls and ballrooms revealed the need to adapt existing leisure venues in the formation of a (highly imitative) local rock and roll subculture. The chapter reveals the development of rock and roll as a 'threat' within a series of societal contexts.<sup>7</sup> The emergence of moral panics concerning rock and roll dances were constructed upon broader concerns in the fracturing of 'rational' youth leisure patterns and (correct) perceptions of increased youth sexual activity, drinking and violence. The use of Police Boys' Clubs for rock and roll dances revealed authorities' need for alternative sites to reincorporate youth music practices within state supervision. The end of six o'clock closing in NSW hotels is also discussed as the crucial legislative reform enabling pub entertainment. The expansion of city and suburban hotels, through the construction of beer gardens and lounge bars, provided limited opportunities for rock and roll with regard to publicans' continued preference for vaudeville acts and male 'crooners'. The views of mainstream media and the state in attempted prohibition of youth rock dances is revealed as a determined refusal to contemplate changing modes of youth leisure consumption, and more significantly, the fragmented construction of a local industry.

Chapter 4 examines the shift from unlicensed venues to the gradual acceptance of rock and roll within hotels and licensed clubs from 1962. Minor deregulation of

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<sup>7</sup> Specifically, the amplification of guitars confirmed to jazz musicians and the media of the emergence of a popular form rupturing older contexts of big band performance.

liquor laws further improved hotels' ability to compete with registered clubs in entertainment and drinking facilities. The chapter discusses the compromised nature of rock and roll performance within the Millers' hotel circuit and licensed clubs, where musicians competed with gaming and cabaret as viable entertainment options. The emergence of 'safe' television representations of rock and roll forged a complementary nexus between sanitised club performances and televisual opportunities. The consolidation of the initial 1950s rockers within club circuits further highlighted the shift by 1960s youth to other sites. Youth dances within surf clubs are examined as spaces of contention between youth and established beach communities. Prefiguring the 'mods' and 'rockers' clashes in Britain, the local panic constructed between 'surfies' and 'rockers' in 1963 is examined as an exemplar of societal views of the 'place' of youth within leisure spaces. The use of the city's northern beaches and surf clubs dances by suburban youth invoked beachside appeals that such youth had not sufficiently invested in local community societal networks (that is, surf club duties of swimmers' protection and training). Such rhetorical frameworks constructed by local media and surf clubs, it is argued, betrayed underlying fears concerning 'appropriate' youth leisure in connection with prevailing work/community ethics. The chapter also outlines local desires to replicate the sophistication of licensed venues overseas. The proliferation of discotheques occurred in a period of conservative youth policies, mixed with the state's desire to profit from the thriving (largely unmonitored) club scene.

Chapter 5 highlights the gradual inclusion of women audiences and performers within the masculine contexts of NSW hotels, providing the commercial impetus for an expanded suburban pub circuit. The construction of the 'Oz Rock' tradition is explored through the emergence of local musicians who nonetheless continued the explicit male hegemony of stagecraft based upon a reconstituted blues tradition of local inflection. The introduction of liquor licences produced a revitalised town hall circuit in conjunction with basic pub sites. The importance of State and national media frameworks (increased public and commercial radio, television networks) enabled a more successful use of live performance in marketing recording product. The establishment of independent blues and punk scenes within Sydney are discussed as counterpoints to the growth of pub discos, which signalled the later successful formation of youth leisure with licensed clubs



and hotels. Foucault's notion of heterotopias is employed in explaining the rock pub as simultaneous site of deviance and normality, in sketching the ways which rock and roll distorted original spatial realities and functions. The destruction of the Star Hotel in Newcastle in 1979 is revealed as a precursor to later commercial and legislative decisions affecting the growth of licensed circuits from the late 1970s.

Chapter 6 outlines the growth in Sydney venues throughout the 1980s in a climate of increased international success for Australian bands. The mutual benefits of pub rock to musicians and venue owners were predicated upon minimal intervention by the state in the production of scenes and profits. Two case studies of pub rock sites indicate the fundamental shift from the early 1980s in incorporating unregulated scenes within state surveillance. The demise of the northern beaches' Manly Vale Hotel is examined as a means of understanding increased State and local governance upon rock pub behaviours. Specifically, amended fire safety codes in respect to public entertainment, and enforcement of noise codes prescribing the limits of venue noise in residential areas are revealed as effective dual state instruments of change. The decision of the inner city Harold Park Hotel to abandon rock in favour of comedy is examined as a study of decreasing local council tolerance to venues within the urban landscape. The displacement of working class tenants with higher income white collar workers in the inner city produced more intensive scrutiny of commercial leisure uses within residential areas. Gentrification of such housing areas, it is argued, produced a similar effect upon hotel uses. Residential pressure upon local councils to remove, or mute, the noisy rock pub reveal one form in which fractional interests invoke the notion of public interest in upholding private property values.

Chapter 7 explores the repercussions for one Sydney venue in its conversion as a dance party site. The Phoenician Club's decision to incorporate dance musics in co-existence with their live rock policy is examined as indicative of the decline in live rock within the cityscape. The death of schoolgirl Anna Wood after attending the Club in October 1995, and subsequent media coverage and policy directives, provides a recent construction of dance parties (raves) as the new folk devils of youth subcultures. The events before and after Wood's death present a recent moral panic episode concerning youth music and recreational drug practices. The

two year legal proceedings instigated against the Club by the State are placed within preceding contexts of panics concerning 'uncontrollable' youth constructed as local electoral strategies. The Cohen panic model is argued to be insufficient in mapping contemporary relationships between mainstream media, perceived moral threats and state responses. The Phoenician Club prosecution is also discussed as an example of the paradoxical effects of panic governance; the punitive strategies employed against the Phoenician Club obliterated State incentives for venues to embrace youth entertainment within licensed environments.

Chapter 8, in conclusion, reflects on the broader theoretical strands underlying the development of live rock and roll in Sydney. I return to the notion of governmentality in explaining the gradual, yet decisive shift in the regulation of venues. The state's previous emphasis upon 'rational' leisure directives was displaced by more complex methods of venue governance, in shifts to self-managed responsibilities by venue managers and rock audiences. The benefits and liabilities of 'Oz Rock' as a nationalist, mythological project are re-assessed within declining live performance structures.

In articulating a linear history of musicians' and venue owners' engagement with the state, I should here outline the theoretical and geographical boundaries of this work. Initial research of the city's leisure sites produced evidence that regulatory outcomes of specific legislation extended to other music and entertainment spaces: pinball parlors, rave sites and jazz venues. For reasons of (relative) brevity and coherence, I have limited this study to rock and roll venues, in particular its commercial spaces (with the exception of chapter seven, where the Phoenician Club study exemplifies shifting fears of youth music practices and control strategies). This has entailed a corollary emphasis upon the predominantly white, mainstream performance tradition within mainstream sites. For the most part, the construction of university campus circuits from the mid-1970s, the extent of Aboriginal discrimination by pub owners, and alternative hybrid scenes of varying ethnic and arts backgrounds are not covered in detail. While the significance of Sydney to other metropolitan scenes is discussed (particularly in relation to Melbourne and Brisbane venues), the thesis remains within the borders of NSW. The 'local' here is defined as the city's outlying suburbs within a forty

kilometre radius of the Sydney Central Business District. An exception is made in chapter five, with a case study in the northern NSW city of Newcastle, where the closure of a popular rock and roll venue is examined in foreshadowing legislative and commercial change in suburban Sydney scenes.

# Chapter 1

## Theoretical Frameworks

Music performances exist and are facilitated within several competing functions and pleasures within venues, where music often accompanies other leisure activities. This chapter surveys theoretical and empirical studies which place popular music within the various contexts of everyday life. The establishment and operation of venues is conditional upon a range of governmental, industrial and institutional policies and practices. It is therefore appropriate to examine those established methodologies that incorporate social contexts of music production and cultural policy within their projects. The final section examines the specificity of local practices in the production of mythologies related to popular music geographies. The sense of place engendered within particular 'scenes' remains influential, both within popular music practices and theorisations.

### I. Sociologies of Deviance

The subcultural emphasis to popular music studies — examining the consumption of music, its social effects and the formation of specific audiences — attempts to define and describe the various ways in which popular music is aligned to, against and within everyday life. Howard Becker's *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* remains an influential study in exploring the links between (marginalised) music practices and mainstream work values. In his study of jazz musicians' relationship to their audiences and venue owners, Becker outlined the ways in which the legal co-existed with the deviant, since dance musicians' lives were "sufficiently bizarre and unconventional" to be labelled outsiders in broader societal contexts.<sup>1</sup> Becker's

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*, Free Press, New York, 1963.

work also examined the ways which musicians adopted the 'outsider' label to their own uses; deviancy served to delineate the musicians from the 'squares' value systems.<sup>2</sup> In his use of the term 'moral entrepreneurship', Becker profiled the forces at work in defining acceptable (legal) practices and the boundaries of transgression, providing an effective link to later studies of 'respectable fears'. Given its associations with youth practices, popular music proved to be fertile ground for the evolving field of Cultural Studies in Britain in the 1970s. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham effectively combined youth and deviancy studies with the traditional Marxist approaches of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson. As a new set of investigative practices, Cultural Studies benefited from its disparate origins. As a connective dialogue among several disciplines — criminology, leisure studies, older culturalist approaches, history and youth studies — it placed deviancy in engagement with the 'popular' in differing contexts to Becker's North American methodology. Dick Hebdige's *Subculture: the meaning of style* presented an influential methodology in examining popular youth culture as spectacular working class subcultures located within dominant/familial structures. Culturally syncretic youth styles thus assumed significance in the creation of local physical/discursive spaces.

British Cultural Studies also reshaped notions of leisure studies; popular leisure practices came to be viewed not merely as sites of pleasure, but also as sites of state intervention. Histories of the regulation, policing and economic status of popular cultural practices produced detailed accounts of their formation: for example, soccer (Vamplew; Taylor; Pearson)<sup>3</sup> and the music hall (Bailey; Summerfield).<sup>4</sup> Robert Storch's work on the evolution of the British

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<sup>2</sup> The study is also interesting in the continual choices made by the musicians between pleasing the dance crowds (playing commercial music) and their own off-centre preferences. In the context of my work, such contestations are influential in the development of Australian rock and roll, particularly with the 1990s popularity of 'cover' bands.

<sup>3</sup> Wray Vamplew, 'Sports crowd disorders in Britain 1870-1914: Causes and controls', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1980; Ian Taylor, 'Soccer consciousness and soccer hooliganism' in Stan Cohen (ed.) *Images of Deviance*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1971; Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooliganism: A History of Respectable Fears*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> See: Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England 1830-1855*, Routledge and Kegan Paul London, 1978. Bailey, *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure*, Open University Press, Milton

police force complemented the critical evaluation of the supervision and disciplining of popular culture.<sup>5</sup> The critical re-evaluation of formerly unproblematic sites of leisure served several purposes. The former method of quantitative analysis of leisure patterns — what some have described as the “survey method”<sup>6</sup> — was replaced with a qualitative approach that did not avoid notions of social control and the effects of commodification. The pleasures of football and the music hall were shown to be subject to increasing attempts by the State to sanitise, monitor or censor the actions of performers, players and audiences. Also, leisure practices were no longer compartmentalised from the realities of industrial capitalism.

The development of Popular Music Studies reflects (indeed, mirrors) the emergence of Cultural Studies as an interdisciplinary association of overlapping concerns. Within the body of CCCS literature striving for a complete revision of leisure studies, Simon Frith provided a transitional text between sociology traditions and leisure studies in *The Sociology of Rock* (1978). With *Sound Effects* in 1983, Frith constructed the first real synthesis between leisure, work, youth and music. In acknowledging that “their work is everyone else’s leisure”<sup>7</sup>, the rock musician’s struggle to be heard was placed within the wider battle to ensure that leisure patterns do not disrupt the legitimacy of the workplace within daily lives:

Leisure is, on the one hand, a source of fun and freedom and pleasure, a necessary counter to alienating labour; but it must be on the other hand, constrained and controlled and made trivial so as not to interfere with the labour process. The most obvious expression of the work/leisure relationship is the weekend: Friday and Saturday nights are party times just because there’s no work to go to the next morning. Leisure, from this perspective, is not really free at all, but an organisation

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Keynes, 1986. Penny Summerfield, ‘The Effingham Arms and Empire’ in Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (eds) *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914*, Harvester Press, Sussex, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Storch, ‘The plague of the blue locusts: Police reform and popular resistance in northern England 1840-1857’ in Mike Fitzgerald (ed.) *Crime and Society*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Chris Rojek, *Capitalism and Leisure Theory*, Tavistock, London, 1985, p.6. Rojek refers to the social formalist approach of Stan Parker, Kenneth Roberts and others which emphasises the accumulation of data documenting the broader patterns of the choices and frequency of leisure participation within society. John Clarke and Chas Critcher’s *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure in Capitalist Britain*, Routledge, London, 1986, was important in directing leisure studies to assess the policing of leisure.

<sup>7</sup> Frith, 1983, p.77.

of non-work that is determined by the relations of capitalist production.<sup>8</sup>

As an integral part of the Friday and Saturday night release from work, live performance to music hall/pub/club audiences assumes ideological importance as (most often) a form of commodified leisure, while also constituting an implicit critique of work. Frith recognised that the politics of the consumption and production of popular music were inseparable from, and a threat to, the daily routines and spaces of everyday life.

Stanley Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers* remains an important text in defining the mechanisms by which subcultures can be presented as disruptive threats to societal processes. His concept of a "moral panic", where a "condition, episode, person, or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests"<sup>9</sup> has provided the methodological foundation for most popular music studies which analyse the oppositional stance of music. Cohen's study of the 'mods' and 'rockers' clashes in Britain in the 1960s depicted the judicial and administrative responses to the 'problem' of youth violence, amplified through dramatic media coverage and extensive editorial sermonising. The continuing usefulness of the term to popular music studies has been demonstrated in analyses of the media's initial responses to jazz, rock, heavy metal and rap<sup>10</sup>, particularly in the media's continual efforts to objectify performers and stigmatise audiences. The concept is useful to this thesis in attempting to describe the judicial and administrative responses to perceived threats from audience behaviour as constructed by the mainstream media, and the consequences for venue controls and conditions. In examining the formation of the term 'mugging' as a referential 'fix' for the panic generated around crime in Britain in the 1970s, the CCCS work *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*<sup>11</sup> reworked Cohen's model in

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.251.

<sup>9</sup> Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Martin and Robertson, Oxford, 1972/1980, p.28.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the historical connections between the media, moral lobby groups and the amplification of current concerns over lyrical content, see Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp.262-270.

<sup>11</sup> Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke and Brian Roberts, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1978.

significantly new areas. Stuart Hall et al revealed how a “professional ideology”<sup>12</sup> of news production conformed to, and constantly reaffirmed a moral consensus. In similar ways to which the mods and rockers labels connoted a supplementary range of subtexts, ‘mugging’ performed an associative effect within crime debates. The importance of media representations in not only reproducing societal consensus, but in influencing juridical process (judges citing incorrect media reports of increased incidences of mugging when sentencing violent offenders), provides a key text in the circularity of media-political-legal discourses.

The work of the Birmingham School has been vital in documenting and explaining the commercialisation of popular culture since the 1880s and the establishment of the sites of popular culture as contested areas of legitimacy and constraint, of consent and prohibition. This is important in avoiding simpler notions of social control which strictly divide the regulation of leisure practices between bourgeois authority and organic working class resistance. The tendency within the culturalist methods employed by the CCCS to formulate hegemonic<sup>13</sup> structures (‘Gramscianism’) to explain leisure relations has, of course, been criticised for a view of society as an expressive totality — “functionalism with a class terminology added”.<sup>14</sup> A Gramscian perspective is useful in attempting to analyse the broader ways in which government policy is constructed as ‘common sense’ and ‘in the public interest’. While Cohen proved that the ‘problem’ of youth and popular music has never been objectively based, his model has been criticised for not adequately explaining the conditions predetermining the panic or alternatively, ignoring the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>13</sup> Gramsci’s notion whereby the dominant economic/ruling classes construct through (law, media, religious and educational) institutions a ruling ideology against (but with the consent of) the working class.

<sup>14</sup> See Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of Leisure’ in Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull (eds) *Social Control and the State*, Martin and Robertson, Oxford, 1983. Also: David Harris, *From Class Struggle To The Politics Of Pleasure: the effects of gramscianism on cultural studies*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992.



outcomes for the issues and groups of the panic once it subsides.<sup>15</sup> As Michael Clarke argues, “in the case of some phenomena the panic may obliterate them; in the case of others, repressive legislation may strictly regulate them, and in the case of others still, political resistance may secure an accepted place for the phenomenon”.<sup>16</sup> Within the history of the regulation of live performance in Sydney, evidence exists of all three resolutions offered by Clarke (in terms of the second example, the moral panic identified around public drinking in Australia and consequent continued practice of early closing in hotels is a case in point). Similarly, Cohen’s model implies acute shifts in behaviour and immediate and overwhelming responses from the State. The CCCS body of work on panics and law and order campaigns emphasised the class subtexts of panics and the effectiveness of media and state campaigns in distinguishing working class youth practices as threats. However, more recent panic studies have revealed the difficulties in delineating class contexts to such an extent. Sarah Thornton’s 1995 exploration of British rave subcultures reveals the constitutive effects of media panics, where “mass media misunderstanding is often a goal, not just an effect of youth’s cultural pursuits”. As a result, “‘moral panic’ has become a routine way of marketing popular music to youth”.<sup>17</sup> Thornton also incorporates youth “micro-media” as an antidote to mass media panic formations, with an accompanying emphasis on youth’s desire for ‘outsider’ status.

The rave/drug panics within Britain throughout the 1990s provide a means to assess the usefulness of the classic panic model to contemporary praxis. The CCCS insistence on subcultural styles as inherently progressive instances of resistance fails to account for moments of wilful commercialisation, or hedonistic practices bereft of symbolic intent. As Mathew Collins’ *Altered State*:

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<sup>15</sup> Judith Bessant, ‘Eugenics, Youth Policy and Moral Panic in Victoria in the 1950s’ in Rob White and Bruce Wilson (eds) *For Your Own Good: Young People and State Intervention in Australia*, Journal of Australian Studies, La Trobe University Press, Bundoona, December, 1991, p.12.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Clarke, *The Politics of Pop Festivals*, Junction Books, London, 1982, p.176. Clarke also believes that the term is too narrowly focused on repressive social dynamics, and argues that “moral entrepreneurship can come from any direction” (p.181).

<sup>17</sup> Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Polity Press, Cambridge and Oxford, 1995, p.120

*the Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House* documented in the case of 1990s youth/music panics, the notion of 'outsider' becomes problematic when transgression is not confined to the working class. The ecstasy panic created after the death of Essex schoolgirl Leah Betts in November 1995 created difficulties for law and order tactics more familiar with the working class as Other. As a "daughter of Middle England"<sup>18</sup>, Betts came to symbolise the problems in elaborating punitive strategies upon *middle class* youth; the prospect of half a million youth consuming ecstasy on weekends presented the need to construct more fluid boundaries between the legal and criminalised margins. Partly in relation to such new contingencies, a more flexible panic model could incorporate the multiple forms of regulatory response and effects. In the particular case study of the 1995 panic concerning the death of a Sydney schoolgirl after taking ecstasy outside an inner city nightclub, I wish to argue that mechanical panic responses (increased policing of troublesome activities, punitive legal processes as symbolic deterrent) can run counter to their intended ends. Both Thornton's and Collins' work reflects the need for specific accounts of localised events, with an equal emphasis upon the long term effects of state intervention.

## II. Australian Cultural Studies

In their work examining urban leisure, David Mercer and Elery Hamilton-Smith argue that leisure has historically been ignored in government policy development in Australia.<sup>19</sup> It could equally be argued that issues of policy formulation have been ignored within the history of Australian leisure studies. Much work has been done in documenting patterns of leisure practices (the 'survey' method influenced by Parker et al) and the dominant activities associated with Australian lifestyles — the pub/club, sport, gambling, home

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<sup>18</sup> Mathew Collin and John Godfrey, *Altered State: the Story of Ecstasy Culture and Acid House*, Serpent's Tail, New York, 1997, p.295.

<sup>19</sup> David Mercer and Elery Hamilton-Smith (eds), *Recreation, Planning and Social Change in Urban Australia*, Sorrett, Melbourne, 1980.

entertainment.<sup>20</sup> Yet little work had evolved in attempting to understand just why such leisure practices became popularised over other forms, and the significance of such practices within the broad category of popular culture.

Given its British precedents, the development of a distinctive field of Australian Cultural Studies has adopted (and adapted) the culturalist tradition of the Birmingham School for its own historic and site-specific ends. As in Britain, local cultural studies have been intent upon semiotic analysis of traditional Australian leisure activities, where the “whole world is your textual oyster”.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the definitive example of the textual analysis of Australian sites of popular culture and leisure can be found in *Myths of Oz*,<sup>22</sup> where the pub, the home, the garden, the beach, the shopping centre, tourism and monuments are all read as ‘lived’ texts bristling with a multiplicity of meanings, experiences and counter-hegemonic opportunities. As a set of case studies, it is relevant to this thesis, in examining the contradictory practices and meanings of the Australian pub in some detail, and the methodological pitfalls and strengths of such analyses.

As both the site of drinking and live music, the rock pub of the late 1970s-80s is considered, importantly, in terms of the activities of mutual dependency and opposites. Some of the more problematic mythologies<sup>23</sup> concerning Australian pub culture are challenged and deflated, while others are enhanced. Craig McGregor’s 1960s assertion that “there is no more classless place in Australia than a hotel bar”<sup>24</sup> was questionable at the time it was written, and is effectively discounted. Similarly, the legal and cultural discouragement of

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<sup>20</sup> For example, see: David Mercer (ed.) *Leisure and Recreation in Australia*; Sorrett Publications, Melbourne, 1977. Stan Parker and Robert Paddick, *Leisure in Australia: Themes and Issues*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1990.

<sup>21</sup> Dirk den Hartog, ‘Evaluation in Popular Culture Studies: Rhetoric and Semiology in Myths of Oz’ in Hartog and Stephen Alomes (eds), *Post Pop: Popular Culture, Nationalism and Postmodernism*, Footprint, University of Technology, Melbourne, 1991, p.89.

<sup>22</sup> John Fiske, Bob Hodge and Graeme Turner, *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Fiske, Hodge and Turner understand myths as “a systematic organisation of signifiers around a set of connotations and meanings” which act as “points of focus for that culture” (p.xi). The development of local performance mythologies is discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>24</sup> Craig McGregor, *Profile of Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1966, p.138.

Aboriginal drinkers further punctures the egalitarian discourses concerning the pub.<sup>25</sup> The masculine evolution of the pub is discussed (with the segregation of women into mixed lounge bars and ladies' lounges), and the myth of high beer consumption questioned.<sup>26</sup> The 1970s rock pub is upheld by Graeme Turner as a site of counter-hegemonic possibilities and resistance:

The sense of resistance to containment is made palpable in the rock 'n' roll pub. The politics of conflict and control are more ostensibly foregrounded here than has been the case in the public bar since the end of the six o'clock swill, but they are not at all unrelated images. In both cases, the dialectic is one of a contest for control of a domain in which dominant modes of behaviour are subject to attack, and in which the subcultural group struggles to resist the control of the larger culture in order to more accurately express its own interests. In the use of the pub by rock fans, we have a heady image of the strength of that resistance and of the continual imminence of social change.<sup>27</sup>

... the activities surrounding the performance of a band in a pub are less easily contained within that domain. Rather, they tend to spill out and confront the rest of the society.<sup>28</sup>

Australian rock and roll histories provide many instances where performances have confronted the very real constraints on performer and audience behaviour: Radio Birdman's performances at the Oxford Hotel in Sydney;<sup>29</sup> Cold Chisel at the Largs Pier Hotel in Adelaide; the Star Hotel riots in Newcastle; the closing of the Stagedoor Tavern in Sydney in 1980. In this sense the rock pub lends more than a "faint plausibility to analysis in these Gramscian terms"<sup>30</sup>; it exists as a credible site of subcultural resistance, and uneven signs of social transformations.

A history of the Australian pub sketched through semiological methods, as *The Myths of Oz* approach demonstrates, reveals how the production of ideologies and mythologies inform and address cultural practice. The effects of six o'clock closing in NSW hotels are discussed in explaining the contemporary

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<sup>25</sup> Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987, p.11. Aboriginal bands attempting to perform in Sydney pubs experienced the same forms of cultural discrimination in the 1970s.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp.11, 16.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>29</sup> See Vivien Johnson, *Radio Birdman*, Sheldon Booth, Rosanna, 1990.

<sup>30</sup> den Hartog, 1991, p.91.

habits and conditions in pubs — the tiled walls and long serving areas of the public bar, the rush to consume. While clearly not within the broader textual agenda of *Myths of Oz*, there has always existed a labyrinth of State and local government legislation regulating the hotel industry in its various entertainment and leisure contexts. *How* did the local music industry find “a relatively new use of the Australian pub”<sup>31</sup> in the 1970s? The answer lies not only in the structural changes within the local recording industry and the preparedness of local audiences to watch local bands. The long term adverse effects of six o’clock closing on the possibilities for live music (forcing patrons to go home for their meals and entertainment) ~~are~~ not discussed. Successive regulatory changes within the hotel industry prepared a suitable environment for a professional live circuit to develop: the introduction of ten o’clock closing (and subsequent extensions of trading hours) in 1955 provided publicans with a wide range of choices regarding patron entertainment. Later trading hours resulted in considerable investment in lounge bar extensions and the construction of beer gardens, partly eliminating the pubs’ traditional structural incompatibility with live performance.

Turner also rightly observes that noise complaints from residents about pub performances “are evidence of ‘respectable’ society’s (largely ineffectual) attempts to reassert its right to set the norms of social behaviour”.<sup>32</sup> Noise control legislation, as Jacques Attali has shown, remains a particularly insightful form of governance, where noise is both an attribute of power and marker of resistance.<sup>33</sup> In this thesis, the history of noise control legislation is central to live rock and roll’s place within broader societal constructs at varying times. Documenting the codification of particular musics as ‘acceptable’ or ‘offensive’ (pollution) provides parallel stories of the changing degrees of tolerance to local rock in different periods. Their history can explain the growth and demise of different venue structures over different periods, and how localised coalitions of residents are often very effective in reasserting

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<sup>31</sup> Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987, p.17.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, pp.18-19.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985.

'respectable' societal norms of behaviour. As such, the playing of an electric guitar (or bass, drums or the amplified voice) in a hotel immediately brings into play a host of interconnected social and regulatory codes. What is acceptable to the musician, audience, venue owner is negotiated and prescribed through various means: a shared understanding of performance content, decibel limits set at the mixing desk, playing times etc. Such calculations are not only derived from commercial considerations; regulation can also be seen to influence the various meeting points between live music audiences, performers and venue owners' desires. The rock band's (negotiated) right to publicly perform versus nearby residents' right to private, domestic leisure provides one instance where "culture ceases to be the privilege and prerogative of the cultivation of private individuals and begins to be a matter for which the state takes public responsibility".<sup>34</sup> In this sense, while histories of Australian popular music can be obviously identified with (and placed in) popular leisure sites of nationalist mythologies, policy considerations also produce their own effects in governing material conditions. Stuart Hall's description of the state as "both *of* and *over* society"<sup>35</sup> explains the difficulty in establishing at times who the state is legislating for. It remains important to construct popular culture histories as a dialectic of power relations between regulatory institutions and lived experience.

Policy considerations within Australian Cultural Studies began in the late 1980s with the establishment of centres devoted to policy analysis and research: the Institute for Cultural Policy Studies (ICPS) at Griffith University; the Communication Law Centre at the University of New South Wales; and the Centre for International Research in Communication and Information Technologies in Melbourne. This provided a burgeoning field of studies focusing upon cultural industries policy. Tony Bennett's work on the discursive uses of museums; Liz Jacka and Susan Dermody's examination of local infrastructure policy within film; and Stuart Cunningham's and Tom

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<sup>34</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Popular culture and the state' in Tony Bennet, Colin Mercer, Janet Woollacott (eds) *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes and Philadelphia, 1986, p.27.

O'Regan's perspectives on television, remain important earlier formations of a distinctive turn to government.<sup>36</sup> Tim Rowse's examination of arts policy agendas, and Ian Hunter's detailed documentation of colonial education policy also provide examples of localised studies of state intervention in cultural frameworks.<sup>37</sup>

Such research viewed the histories of government mechanisms of cultural regulation as not an "optional add-on"<sup>38</sup> to cultural studies, but of central concern in shaping cultural forms and enterprises. Focusing on regulatory practices as a central tenet to cultural analysis, policy researchers have been subjected to fierce criticism by academics on a number of fronts. A prominent concern is that any attempts to analyse policy ultimately lead to the negation of traditional cultural studies themes. It has been argued that the recent emphases on policy have effectively displaced the broader issues of resistance, and histories of discontent as focal points for political activism. Policy analysts as such can "no longer identify, or maintain solidarity, with a broad political front operating on behalf of disorganised agencies and individuals".<sup>39</sup> In a similar vein, the notion of the properly accepted critical distance between government and cultural critic is seen to be shattered, and in the transformation to cultural technician, the policy analyst is in some form appropriated by the policy makers. This has also implied cultural policy studies to be an inherently pragmatic field, monopolising academic interest at the expense of critical theorisations, "becoming ruthlessly practical and empirical

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>36</sup> Tony Bennett, *Out of Which Past? Critical Reflections on Australian Museum and Heritage Policy*, ICPS, Brisbane, 1988; Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka (eds), *The Imaginary Industry: Australian Film in the Late '80s*, AFTRS, North Ryde, 1988; Tom O'Regan, 'Towards a High Communication Policy: Assessing Recent Changes within Australian Broadcasting', *Continuum*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1988; Stuart Cunningham, *Framing Culture: Criticism and Policy in Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The Funding of the Arts in Australia*, Penguin, Victoria, 1985; Ian Hunter, *Culture and Government: The Emergence of Literary Education*, Basingstoke Macmillan, 1988.

<sup>38</sup> Tony Bennett, 'Useful Culture', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1992, p.397.

<sup>39</sup> Tom O'Regan, '(Mis)Taking Policy: Notes on the Cultural Policy Debate', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1992, p.413.

in order to at least be relevant"<sup>40</sup> in terms of both vocational and funding priorities, particularly within the reshaped higher education agenda undertaken by the Federal Hawke Labor Government from the late 1980s.

Yet as Tom O'Regan notes, much of the theory/policy debate within Australia has been unproductive and based on rigid binary distinctions between context and text, criticism and practice.<sup>41</sup> O'Regan does not see productive work developing within the context of a divided field, separated by supposedly critical theoretical/textual analysis on the one hand, and the compromised agendas of policy analysis on the other. Instead he suggests the mutual benefits of criticism and policy, where policy is an important area of analysis, alongside a wide range of other activities and processes, sharing "discursive resources and reasoning procedures ... in different ways".<sup>42</sup> Perhaps in response to previous criticisms concerning the directions and agendas of policy analysis, Stuart Cunningham states that it consists of a dual focus "*of* policy and analysis *for* policy".<sup>43</sup> This suggests a closer acknowledgment of the variety of discursive practices paralleling and impinging upon policy considerations, and the possibilities for policy analysis to remain critical of its subject. Like television and film, popular music studies is a rich area in which to examine the construction of the local and the nation within global contingencies. The notion of locality will be explored later in this chapter in respect to specific music studies approaches, in affirming an emphasis upon the integration of policy, institutions and industrial practices of a live music history.

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<sup>40</sup> Liz Jacka cited in Helen Grace, 'Eating the Curate's Egg: Cultural Studies for the Nineties', *West*, vol. 3, no. 1, University of Western Sydney, Nepean, 1991, p.49.

<sup>41</sup> O'Regan, 1992, p.413.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.417.

<sup>43</sup> Cunningham, 1992, p.4.



### III. Foucault: Disciplining the Government Body

In formulating his ideas concerning the relations between governance and the governed, the work of Michel Foucault has provided much of the theoretical foundations for the cultural policy studies of Bennett, Mercer, Cunningham et al. In histories of the prison, sexuality, the asylum and the hospital, Foucault's work has employed a tactical use of historical knowledges evident in his use of the terms 'genealogy' and 'archeology'. In working from current problems to formulate a 'history of the present', genealogy can best be stated as "descriptions of beginnings and sequences".<sup>44</sup> This principal method is entwined with his notion of archaeology in emphasising discontinuity, "dispersed events — decisions, accidents, initiatives, discoveries".<sup>45</sup> Rather than the objective grand narratives of 'traditional' history, there is here the writing of history as a discursive project in itself, aware of the various fabrications (mythology plays an important role in this instance). It is this perspective which has enabled cultural historians to employ a Foucauldian methodology in connection with the undisciplined 'tradition' of Cultural Studies. The importance of mythology and nationalism is not juxtaposed to history, but incorporated as effective agents in "the political history of the production of truth".<sup>46</sup> Foucault's notion of archaeology shares Cultural Studies' interest in recuperating subjugated knowledges and popular cultural forms eliminated or marginalised in history.

Foucault's notion of "governmentality" is critical to the scope of this thesis in exemplifying the central issues of governance of the cultural-capitalist state. In a 1978 lecture Foucault outlined the shift (as he saw it) from government as the exercise of sovereignty, to the regulation and management of the population in a broader economic sense: "men in their relations, their links, their imbrications with those other things which are wealth, resources, means

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<sup>44</sup> Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966-84)*, Semiotext, New York, 1989.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M. Sheridan-Smith, Routledge, London, 1972, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> Foucault cited in L.D. Kritzman (ed.) *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-84*, Routledge, London, 1988, p.112.

of subsistence ... customs, habits, ways of doing and thinking".<sup>47</sup> This corresponded with a "range of multiform tactics",<sup>48</sup> rather than laws, as the instruments of government, along with the knowledges and processes of government (political economy). This resulted in the development of specific forms of rationality, to the formation of an administrative state and the formation of a range of specific state apparatuses. The historical process of governmentality is indirect and explicitly avoids the reductionist or "rigorous functionality"<sup>49</sup> approaches of neo-Marxist state theories. Governmentality is "at once internal and external to the state",<sup>50</sup> a form of power both individualising and totalising. Such a process leaves open the possibilities of the various tactics and techniques employed by, for and against the state. Importantly, Foucault believes that any notion of resistance complements governing; resistance is always to be found "right at the point where relations of power are exercised".<sup>51</sup> At the same time, power is never simply repressive, but constitutive; repression constitutes only one of a number of effects within the network of power relations. Power 'circulates' within the multiplicity of relations and effects. As such, attention needs to be concentrated upon the "new micro-physics of power"<sup>52</sup> which may not be evident within macro-structures of power relations.

The other central component within the notion of governmentality concerns the complex forms by which subjectivity is a constant work-in-progress. The formation of the governed subject involves not the order of immanent rule, but a "sovereignty that one exercises over oneself".<sup>53</sup> This requires an interlocking structure of technologies of governance with "technologies of the self", which Toby Miller has aptly summarised as "a

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<sup>47</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality' in *I&C: Governing the Present; Ideology and Consciousness*, Autumn, 1979a, p.11.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>51</sup> Foucault cited in Colin Gordon (ed.) *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1980, p.142.

<sup>52</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage Books, New York, trans. Alan Sheridan, 1979b, p.139.

means of managing the public by having it manage itself".<sup>54</sup> The productive subject is attained through self-realised governance proscribing "the possible field of action of others" without resorting to material intervention.<sup>55</sup> This is intimately related to governing mechanisms inherent to the devolution of power among disparate networks: "nothing weakens the machinery of the law than the hope of going unpunished ... rather than be more severe, one must be more vigilant".<sup>56</sup> The now familiar adoption of Bentham's panopticon to a Foucauldian dominatory gaze (first introduced in *The Birth of the Clinic*) is the ideal mechanism to provide "the rule of perfect certainty"<sup>57</sup> in distinguishing productive and unproductive (criminal) behaviours. The Benthamite proposition of the subject never knowing when he is being examined and thereby producing order, is the negative co-efficient of subtle shifts to self-actualised governance. In this sense, power relations constitute a never-ending process of enabling governed subjects to define themselves in specific ways at once inside and outside governmental relations. For Miller, the usefulness of Foucault's methodology — contradictory and purposely disparate as it seems — lies in the notion of "finding a goal of becoming", the forms by which the people (and the state) identify the governed subject's "ethical incompleteness".<sup>58</sup> This implies a radical change in theorising the subject, in realising that subjectivity is only produced through governance of the subject; governments (and citizens) come to identify — and know — citizens through administration.

Before turning to the ways which a Foucauldian methodology is appropriate to histories of popular music, some reservations/adjustments should be expressed in utilising the work of Foucault as a predominant theoretical referent. In outlining the theoretical shifts of the histories of

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, 'The Care of the Self', *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, Vintage Books, New York, trans. Robert Hurley, 1986, p.85.

<sup>54</sup> Toby Miller, *The Well Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1993, p.xiii

<sup>55</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Subject and Power', *Critical Inquiry*, trans. Leslie Sawyer, vol. 8, no. 4, 1982, p.790.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, 1979b, p.96.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, 1979b, p.95.

economic government, Colin Gordon states that

It is in fact vain to look for the hand of the state everywhere pulling the strings of micro-disciplinary power ... But, on the other hand, these largely privatised micro-power structures none the less participate, from the viewpoint of government, in a coherent general policy of order.<sup>59</sup>

Gordon recognises the dialectical problems in ascertaining the possibilities of resistance and the accumulated extent of centralised power at any given time. There is a grudging acceptance that the private micro-structures of power can originate from and within wider public sources. Foucault does not readily acknowledge that everyday power is derived from the “massive institutional presence of state, legal, military and economic apparatus[es]”.<sup>60</sup> This is partly due to his desire to avoid problematic Marxist notions of the state as inextricably bound<sup>↗</sup> with class repression. More significantly, Foucault’s marginalisation of the law as a supplement to centralised power undervalues, in Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham’s terms,

... a persistent increase in the range, scope and detail of legal intervention that produces a general movement towards an expanding legalisation and juridification of social life. It is within this framework that the issue of the role of law, of its advances and retreats and the changes in its active forms, can be more rigorously posed than is allowed by Foucault’s counterposing of law and discipline.<sup>61</sup>

Such critiques, I believe, inadvertently allow the fractured body of Foucault’s work to be placed somewhat closer to the Marxist traditions of a ‘culturalist’ cultural studies. Frith’s early constructions of a Popular Music Studies, sharing cultural studies’ Marxist foundations, also marked a departure from Theodore Adorno’s concept of popular music as standardised commodification, as a “formula consensus”. Frith’s work has always contained an acceptance of the industrialised contexts of music production, with an intention to study popular music forms beyond the pessimistic modernist frameworks constructed by the Frankfurt School:

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<sup>58</sup> Miller, 1993, p.xiii.

<sup>59</sup> Colin Gordon, ‘Governmental Rationality: An Introduction’ in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1991, p.27.

<sup>60</sup> Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham, *Foucault and Law: Towards a Sociology of Law as Governance*, Pluto Press, London and Boulder, 1994, p.31.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*, p.66.

The contrast between music as expression and music as commodity defines twentieth-century pop experience and means that however much we may use and enjoy its products, we retain a sense that the music industry is a bad thing — bad for music, bad for us. Read any pop history ... whatever the author's politics, the industrialisation of music means a shift from active musical production to passive pop consumption, the decline of folk or community or subcultural traditions, and a general musical deskilling ...<sup>62</sup>

Frith's body of work is an explicit rejoinder to Adorno that "the utopian impulse, the negation of everyday life, the aesthetic impulse that [he] recognised in high art, must be part of low art too".<sup>63</sup> The different starting points (and, equally, value judgements) in conceptualising the popular seem insurmountable. Yet useful connections can be made between the current emphases of a Foucauldian cultural policy studies field and an earlier Frankfurt School methodology. Adorno's 'Culture and Administration' essay provides a broader conceptualisation of culture that, importantly, incorporates its governance: "whoever speaks of culture speaks about administration as well".<sup>64</sup> Culture comes to mean something positioned simultaneously within and outside societal relations; 'high' culture strives to remain opposed to administrative restraints, as "something higher and more pure, something untouchable which cannot be tailored according to any tactical or technical considerations".<sup>65</sup> The significant point made by Adorno in discussing the arrangement of culture within various technical regimes, however, is made in distinguishing between the *useful* and *useless* within society. The "useful" is "that within the total system which has its eye directed towards profit", with demonstrative consumer functions.<sup>66</sup> Culture is thus constructed in a negative binarism to commodity relations, "separated from material production ...[and] looked upon as thoroughly useless".<sup>67</sup> The non-conformist tendencies of cultural production are nonetheless involved in state attempts to be reconciled

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<sup>62</sup> Simon Frith, 'The Industrialisation of Popular Music' in James Lull (ed.) *Popular Music and Communication*, Sage, California, 1992a, p.50.

<sup>63</sup> Frith, *Performing Rites: On The Value of Popular Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1996, p.20.

<sup>64</sup> Theodore Adorno, 'Culture and Administration' in Dennis Crow (ed.) *Philosophical Streets: New Approaches to Urbanism*, trans. Wes Blomster, Maisonneuve Press, Washington, 1978/1990, p.27.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, pp.27-28.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

within bureaucratic procedures. Culture's "critical impulse" is thus set up against commodity capital's administrative impulses, in attempts to render cultural production useful. This represents an important connective acknowledgement of the theoretical possibilities in examining the tactical practices of administrative culture/cultural administration. Viewed in the context of the larger body of Adorno's work, his admission of the "demand made by administration upon culture" can be incorporated in his articulation of the autonomous high art/commodified popular culture split. Yet there does remain the embedded acknowledgement that administration and culture forms are entwined in influence of each other.

The dialectical relationship of administrative-cultural forms provides a Foucauldian emphasis upon a broader notion of cultural policy as all-inclusive, incorporating government instruments which define the ethics of creative/market conduct. Broadening the administrative/culture split in a more inclusive meaning leads to examining, in Toby Miller's words, "the dialectical interplay between the rationally selfish consumer and the rationally selfless citizen".<sup>68</sup> This means exploring not just the ways in which cultural production is called upon to serve material production, but the means by which culture comes to be a threat or aid to the construction of citizenship. It represents a crucial shift in linking the administrative with the cultural as ways in which the artistic become institutional instruments within governance; 'cultural policy', as Miller has argued, thus derives as much from relations of government as it does from its older aesthetic meanings. In this respect Foucauldian practitioners share with Adorno a pre-occupation with the administration of culture within the domains of moral regulation. Adorno's proclamation that "whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well" remains a particularly Foucauldian insight buried within his broader project which assumes an oppositional context between governance and artistic endeavour.

In examining the means by which policy informs and produces culture, the

Foucauldian and Frankfurt School methodologies share a concern in relating cultural judgements to material conditions. Adorno states that “culture — no matter what form it takes — is to be measured by norms not inherent to it and which have nothing to do with the quality of the object, but rather with some type of abstract standards imposed from without.”<sup>69</sup> Similarly, for Foucault the (governed) subject is in turn influenced by a range of subjective decisions masquerading as objective policy; maintenance of the state must involve subjective criteria of contemporary taste and ‘usefulness’. The specific difference in examining value systems between the Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools lies in *where* to examine value judgements. In terms of popular culture, Hebdige, Frith et al’s work incorporated not only Marxist perspectives of the inadequacy of commodity production, but the inherent values of consumption, specifically how “the value of cultural goods could therefore be equated with the value of the groups consuming them — youth, the working class, women”.<sup>70</sup> Certainly, there is disagreement from Marxist theorists in Foucault’s perception of the subject. For Foucault, there is no pre-existing subject in contrast to the governed subject; rather, subjectivity is only produced and shaped through governance. As Miller states, “there is no primal scene to be found”; instead the subject “comes to be known ...as the subject of governance itself via knowledge and administration; via policy”.<sup>71</sup> Foucault is also interested in Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of value systems. Much of his earlier work documents the forms in which governance does not merely govern, but where “other types of assessment have slipped in”.<sup>72</sup> “Judgements of normality”<sup>73</sup> operate as ‘objective’ strategies of governance through the power of the norm.

In this thesis examining a city’s history of incorporating rock and roll within its geographic and ethical landscapes, I wish to examine the points

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<sup>68</sup> Miller, 1993, p.xvi.

<sup>69</sup> Adorno, 1978/1990, p.33.

<sup>70</sup> Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Oxford University Press, 1996, p.13.

<sup>71</sup> Miller, 1993, p.xvii.

<sup>72</sup> Foucault, 1979b, pp.20-21.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*

where such a broader notion of cultural policy (the various instruments of governing/constructing the citizen-subject) intersect with a narrower cultural policy definition (the production of an aesthetic cultural purity at one remove from the market-state). Popular music presents an historical and ongoing area concerning the assembly of these mutual roles of governance. The rock and roll fan/performer/venue represent discursive locations of tension as unruly subjects within more orderly spheres of autonomous discipline. Indeed, the construction of the teenager as a dialectical subject (unruly delinquent/good citizen) exemplifies youth as always a subject-in-information, their value to the state as a new (and lucrative) consumer demographic always inscribed within the associative hallmarks of such consumerism's capacity to undo its commodified advantages (delinquency). Again, I believe links can be made to a previous Marxist Birmingham framework. Dick Hebdige employs a Foucauldian strategy in stating that

Youth is present only when its presence is a problem, or rather when its presence is regarded as a problem. The category youth only gets activated, is only mobilised in official documentary discourse in the form of editorials, magazine articles ... They get arrested, harrassed, arraigned before the courts. They get interrogated, interviewed, photographed, admonished, disciplined, incarcerated, applauded, punished, vilified, emulated, listened to ... They get noticed.<sup>74</sup>

The above serves as a brief example of how categories exist as unending circular formations, where definitive judgements of particular groups are formed only through governance. Youth, particularly youth subcultures, seem to be only 'present' at the times requiring their governance, at the instances of transgression. Thus the *rock and roll* teenager (assumed as the predominant consumer of the music form since its inception) constitutes a particularly rich subject of cultural policy. As a transitory site overlapping the end of formal education and introduction to the workplace, the teenager's enthusiasm for rock and roll provides several discursive sites of evaluation between the "useless" and the "useful". The rock and roll fan and/or musician neatly fits within Miller's category where "some subjects are outside sweet reason".<sup>75</sup> As

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<sup>74</sup> Dick Hebdige, 'Posing ... Threats, Striking ... Poses: youth, surveillance and display' in Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (eds) *The Subcultural Reader*, Routledge, London and New York, 1983/1997, p.402.

<sup>75</sup> Miller, 1993, p.x.



unruly/'unreasonable' subjects, the rock and roll enthusiast seems in need of coercive or 'passive' correction through administrative means. The youthful *body* (cf. Bourdieu) becomes important in examining the 'rational' body of leisure, and sanctioned ruptures of rationality through leisure, as co-efficients of public economies. The youthful body presents another series of problems in reconciling individual pleasures with collective responsibilities.

The construction of the rock and roll performer or fan remains a site of contestation in the potential unhinging of what Miller describes as the "consumer-citizen couplet".<sup>76</sup> The 'problem' of rock and roll for the state, however, becomes more apparent upon considering its related practices and industries within governmental relations, particularly if examined through the broader Foucauldian notion of welfare. Entertainment industries incorporate a range of associated tolerated behaviours (drinking, smoking, gambling) which highlight tensions in governance between the health and wellbeing of the population and political economy. Within an Australian context, Milton Lewis has discussed "the growing difficulty the state has in reconciling containment of the negative effects of alcohol use with support for the economic wellbeing of the alcoholic beverages industry".<sup>77</sup> The negative effects of commercial live music venues — for example noise, alcohol and other drug use — can be juxtaposed with the obvious fiscal advantages of such industries in tax revenue and employment opportunities. Concern with the 'welfare' of the population is often readily displaced by more immediate budgetary concerns. As becomes apparent in later chapters, governance of leisure practices often produces paradoxical effects in attempting to simultaneously accommodate budgetary/consumer concerns with the formation of ethical citizens. The rich history of Australian drinking laws presents one example of this. The combination of intense liquor trade lobbying and beneficial effects of increased state revenue has resulted in the liberalisation of liquor trading hours, to the extent where 24 hour hotel and

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<sup>76</sup> Toby Miller, *Cultural Citizenship and the Popular Media*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1998, p.17.

club licences can be attained. Such directives, which have emerged in the name of consumer choice, have also been accompanied by liquor laws ensuring such 'choices' are prescribed within normative behaviours. The introduction (at various times) of random breath testing, reduced taxes for low alcohol beer, and an increased emphasis on 'responsible' serving of alcohol have co-existed with increased hours of consumption (and, more recently, debates regarding increasing the sites of consumption). Legislative response to popular drinking practices thus represents how drinking/music venues and their "excesses [are] equally the bounty of capital and its sovereign threat".<sup>78</sup>

The structural nature of entertainment venues also requires recognition as specific "functional sites"<sup>79</sup> where particular activities are confined to particular spaces. The hotel/club/entertainment centre has been subject to a long legislative history designed to limit and direct the uses and activities of such spaces. Similarly, the strategies of "enclosure" and "partitioning" in which "each individual is designated their own place to eliminate their imprecise circulation and possible disappearance"<sup>80</sup> is an ongoing process where entertainment audiences are segregated and confined from other entertainment spaces for reasons of state and market efficacy. Derived from Foucault's work on the panoptical rationales of prisons, they can be observed within different contexts and strategies which equate entertainment with containment. The governmental structure of venues preconditions, and is the catalyst of resistance to the power of the norm, where invoking a set of standards and 'community values' is preferred to overt repression as a set of regulatory tactics. At the same time, it is important to recognise that such modes of venue regulation can provide their own possibilities of pleasure. Strict conditions limiting the spaces and extent of audience behaviour, for example, are capable of instigating a new set of audience tactics (and pleasures)

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<sup>77</sup> Milton Lewis, *A Rum State: Alcohol and State Policy in Australia 1788-1988*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p.1.

<sup>78</sup> Miller, 1998, p.266.

<sup>79</sup> Foucault, 1979b, pp.141-149.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

in accommodating or combating such restrictions.<sup>81</sup>

An analysis of the “regime of practices”<sup>82</sup> governing venues shifts to a proper emphasis on the very localised and practical legislation and industry practices which affect the everyday management of live performance in the city and suburbs. This recognises that while the local live music industry can be regarded as a cultural ‘institution’ in a mythical sense (“we have the best pub and club scene in the world”<sup>83</sup>), it is mainly a loose network of competing corporate bodies and forces. As this project will reveal, the traditional sites of leisure practices in Australia (the pub, club, the beach, the town square) are subject to increasing measures of supervision and regulation. Rather than dispense with Foucault’s broader methodology regarding the discourses of power, I want to reinsert the essence of legal structures and specific regulations in influencing cultural life. For example, the extent of State intervention into hotels through legislation (constant amendments to the Liquor Act) and its associated statutory authorities (supervision and enforcement of the Liquor Act through the Licensing Court) has increased markedly this century. The relations between material musical practices within such leisure sites cannot be disassociated from wider discursive formations. Yet it is also important to describe and assess the impact of the myriad regulatory forms — specific laws of the routine practice of everyday life — which underline such musical practices.

A valid method of incorporating Foucault’s notion that power is constitutive, while retaining the fundamental influence of specific state apparatuses, can be found in Alan Hunt and Gary Wickham’s *Foucault and Law*. Their key principle of governance provides a complementary response to

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<sup>81</sup> The introduction of six o’clock closing in NSW hotels in 1916 provides one example of this. The limitations imposed upon drinking hours provided drinkers with a perverse pleasure in excessive drinking within a shorter period; equally, drinkers adopted tactics to counter the loss of the number of beers consumed (for example, tripling orders at the bar), which were duly immersed within local drinking folklore.

<sup>82</sup> Foucault, ‘Questions of Method’ in Burchell, Gordon and Miller (eds), 1992, p.75

<sup>83</sup> Singer Jimmy Barnes cited in Glenn A. Baker, ‘The Wizards of Oz’ in *Australian Recording Industry Association Yearbook*, ARIA, Sydney, 1992, p.13.

the Foucauldian notion of the incomplete subject: that “all instances of law as governance contains elements of attempt and elements of incompleteness (which at times may be seen as failure)”.<sup>84</sup> Legal directives thus mirror the teleological functions of subject formation, as incomplete formations of the productive citizen: the “failure of policing as legal governance leads to more policing as legal governance”.<sup>85</sup> For example, the basic failure of police forces to eliminate crime results in an increased number of policing tactics to combat crime. To incorporate the notion for my purposes, one could again examine the history of liquor reform in NSW. The inability of legislation to enforce six o’clock closing (and the myriad number of ways in which publicans and drinkers flouted it) in NSW hotels resulted in increased amendments to the Liquor Act, until the 1955 Act (introducing ten o’clock closing) acknowledged its failure. Thus the incompleteness of law, and subsequent attempts at completeness through increased legal procedures, underlines the importance of daily legal operations.

Concerned as it is with the accumulation of knowledges in the management of the entire social body, the dual focus of governmentality upon ‘welfare’ and specific economies provides for the redefinition of public/private realms. This remains an important parallel development throughout this thesis, in terms of the development of strategies to deal with the many by-products of a local live music industry. As briefly noted above, public drinking practices present various problems in citizen management beyond their obvious fiscal benefits. Similarly, hotels and clubs (particularly as entertainment sites) embody distinct problems in reconciling public leisure industries with their historical antithesis, the home. As revealed in following chapters, the gradual shift by State governments in accommodating the interests of the liquor trades has always been performed within the historically powerful alliance of interests defending the sanction of the home. The development of a healthy live music sector has also brought into play a further set of industrial factors threatening private family life: the ‘noise’ of the music

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<sup>84</sup> Hunt and Wickham, 1994, p.102.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

itself; the noise of public behaviours inside and outside the venue, increased traffic from entertainment sites, etc. Thus the encouragement of enterprise through favourable state directives is always circumscribed within the central governmental “imperative of health: at once the duty of each and the objective of all”.<sup>86</sup> This discursive balancing act of home-economy management is played out in a range of micro-political decisions: whether a local council should extend the trading hours of a hotel situated near suburban houses; whether State legislation decreeing the acceptable decibel level of live music should be increased, and so on. In these ways management of the population becomes fractured by the series of private-public discourses involved in the production of effective consumers/citizens. As argued later in the thesis, governments attempt to resolve such tensions through a double structure of public welfare policies largely administered through the targeting of various micro-behaviours. This involves correcting specific forms of individual behaviours in the name of collective responsibility. The interplay of such discourses within regional-national contexts is discussed later in this chapter.

One further Foucauldian insight of importance concerns the status of mythology in the formation of historical discourses. Rather than seeking to deconstruct national mythologies, Foucault argues that they be incorporated and acknowledged as part of “the political history of the production of ‘truth’”<sup>87</sup>. In documenting the development of an Australian rock and roll industry, I am keenly aware of documenting the parallel development of a series of mythologies surrounding its industrial contexts. Myths in this sense are defined by statements or meanings which function as truths, whether valid historical facts or not. This certainly became evident upon interviewing ‘legendary’ Australian performers, where discerning between fictitious mythic narratives and historical fact remained a difficult exercise for myself and the musicians concerned. In certain circumstances and periods, it becomes apparent that local rock and roll mythologies perform several discursive and practical functions. Firstly, as argued most strongly in the Conclusion to this

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<sup>86</sup> Foucault cited in Miller, 1998, p.15.

<sup>87</sup> Foucault cited in Kritzman (ed.) 1988, p.112.

thesis, the development of a set of distinctive local characteristics of rock consumption and performance — the ‘Oz Rock’ tradition — was a binding mythology of undoubted benefit in ensuring the growth of an ‘imported’ cultural form. Secondly, within international industrial contexts, Australian rock and roll myths were commandeered in the service of global recognition; the renowned ferocity of pub rock performers and audiences provided a distinctive regional characteristic. Thirdly, local mythologies have an impact upon policy development, coaxing governments to view industrial contexts as historical givens, as cultural practices which ‘have always been’. The powerful nationalist pub rock mythology enabled both regulators and the industry to come to view the licensed venue as rock’s ‘natural’ home; this seemingly ‘historical fact’ effectively papers over the *constructed* nature of pub rock development. In this way, as Roland Barthes has observed, the nationalist myth performs “the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification”.<sup>88</sup> In these respects recovering the ‘true’ developmental narrative of live rock and roll becomes more a matter of acknowledging the forms in which mythologies actively contribute to lived experiences. The shift to dance cultures in Sydney in the 1990s provides an acute example of the extent to which the live rock tradition’s mythic formations had outlived their contemporary uses. Greil Marcus has observed that “history without myths is surely a wasteland; but myths are compelling only when they are at odds with history. When they replace the need to make history, they too are a dead end, and merely smug”.<sup>89</sup>

#### **IV. Towards A Politics of Performance: the Law and Popular Music**

A growing number of cultural and popular music studies have incorporated legal and policy frameworks within broader analyses of specific cultural industries. Cultural studies and cultural industry studies have increasingly drawn on the diverse body of film theory, political science, critical legal studies,

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<sup>88</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. A. Laves, Noonday, New York, 1957/1972, p.142.

<sup>89</sup> Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock ‘n’ Roll*, Penguin, London, 1991, p.123.

feminist theory and sociological studies. This section examines a select number of interdisciplinary studies of relevance to the regulation of popular music, which (to varying degrees and intent) examine the administrative-cultural axis of governance.

Jane M. Gaines' *Contested Culture: The Image, The Voice and the Law* examines the ways in which intellectual property law negotiates the public/private meanings and ownership of images and voices. In bringing a British Cultural Studies approach to bear on American law and cultural practice, Gaines reveals the contradictions inherent in legal doctrine's attempts to accommodate late capitalism. Copyright law enables corporations to monopolise signs (the recording industry being a relevant example); similarly, intellectual property law has increasingly taken public images and signs into private ownership by individuals or multinational companies. Gaines does stress that such laws can also be in the public or individual's interest. Contracts involving film stars for example, protect the star's image and referential meanings as much as the studio's; as the origin of meanings and product, contract law attempts to serve both. Gaines' methodology attempts to explain how external changes in material production are reflected within internal structures of law and culture. She dismisses problematic Marxist notions of cause and effect between base and superstructure, and the consequent "explanation of all cultural phenomena in terms of economic arrangements".<sup>90</sup> A more complex solution is proposed in attempting to represent "political, social, economic, legal and cultural forms as connected and yet disconnected".<sup>91</sup> Viewing legal process as upholding ruling class interests does not allow for the possibility that the law could serve oppositional interests. Rather, one should search for the imbalances and uneven application of the law between conflicting groups and classes, where "significant differences in application stem from the structures of institutional access and

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<sup>90</sup> Jane M. Gaines, *Contested Culture: The Image, The Voice and the Law*, British Film Institute, London, 1992, p.16.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, p.17.

implementation".<sup>92</sup> Such imbalances lead Gaines to work within a dichotomy of "circulation-restriction", where the monopoly of capital, meanings, images and signs remains in contest with the doctrine of free enterprise within law.<sup>93</sup>

William Kenney's history of the evolution of Chicago jazz provides a detailed account of the mixture of council regulations, licensing law, moral safeguard associations and police practices influencing the development of the Chicago form.<sup>94</sup> Segregationist policies ensured parallel, yet different styles between white and black musicians, while protectors of morals (the Juvenile Protection Association, the American Social Hygiene Association) attempted to ensure that most dance halls and nightclubs had appropriately demure dance steps, and were free of prostitution.<sup>95</sup> Venue regulations shaped audience and performer behaviour, with entertainment licence fees keyed to the size of the dance floor, strictly demarcated areas between musicians and dancers, and the encouragement of instrumental groups.<sup>96</sup> Through the maze of restrictive laws within the dance halls and clubs, Kenney makes the observation that prohibitive regulation produced its own subversive pleasures and excitement: "the thrill of illegal drinking in public places that were likely to be raided by the police added another touch of daring to the cabaret experience."<sup>97</sup> The willingness of venue managers to comply with moral groups had a direct impact upon developmental jazz styles. In 1921 the National Association of Ball Room Proprietors asked the Juvenile Protective Association (JPA) what changes were necessary to ensure an air of dance hall respectability. The JPA's reply was "speed up your music" and "within twenty four hours, every orchestra in the ballroom group had doubled the tempo of its melodies ... and the managers found most of the bad dancing eliminated".<sup>98</sup> This increased the commercialisation and acceptance of the hotter jazz within more respectable

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<sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 1993.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>96</sup> *ibid.*, pp.65-66. The period of these reforms was 1916-1917. Instrumental music was thought to be safer than possible crowd interactions with excited male or female vocalists.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*, p.22.



venues.

Another project similar to Kenney's and invaluable in reflecting Gaines' observation that "legal doctrine promises science and gives us ideology instead"<sup>99</sup> is Paul Chevigny's *Gigs: Jazz and the Cabaret Laws in New York City*. Chevigny portrays a twentieth century equivalent of relations between British local councils and the music halls of the 1850s. In this instance, successive New York City councils applied a web of zoning, fire, building and licensing regulations to discipline the forms and venues of jazz within the city. With the exception of hotels, all jazz venues were the jurisdiction of the city's cabaret laws which, through fingerprinting of club employees and musicians and the granting of identity cards, regulated the type and number of venues, effectively forcing many clubs without cabaret licences to end live entertainment.<sup>100</sup> While identification cards were abolished in 1967, the restriction of most clubs to hiring 'incidental' musical entertainment (trios or duos of keyboard and strings) meant that "the restriction had shaped the music".<sup>101</sup> The 'three-musician' rule as it came to be known, was administered within the licensing and zoning laws of the City Council. In recognition that such ordinances betrayed a larger agenda, Chevigny and the local musicians' union had the 'incidental musical entertainment' code ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1988, forcing the City Council to redraft the laws within a wider definition of live entertainment.<sup>102</sup>

For Chevigny, the subtle double process of "circulation and restriction" between the law and popular culture proposed by Gaines is implausible when confronted by the blunt regulation of New York administrations which branded jazz performance a blight on the character of local neighbourhoods.

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<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p.71.

<sup>99</sup> Gaines, 1992, p.15.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Chevigny, *Gigs: Jazz and the Cabaret Laws in New York City*, Routledge, New York, 1991, pp.55-80.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p.82.

<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, pp.127-131. The judge found that the 'three musician' rule affected the composition and performance of the music, and was a restriction within constitutional notions of freedom of expression.

Draconian cabaret laws reflected the symbolic values of the State “rooted ultimately in racism as well as fear of bohemian mores — that vernacular music was not entitled to be treated with respect”.<sup>103</sup> While avoiding an explicit theorisation of ruling class hegemony, Chevigny clearly proposes a socio-legal framework of marginalisation and direct bias: “a change in the law to help musicians, or anyone else, occurs only when it is in the interests of dominant forces in society that change should occur”.<sup>104</sup> In referring only briefly to Foucault, Chevigny’s history nonetheless reveals a neo-Foucauldian approach which is site-specific and places an emphasis on micro-politics. The interplay between city governance and its leisure structures is given an immediacy in examining their impact on local musicians and venues. Changes to zoning or licensing laws are seen to have a direct and often immediate effect on the health of the live jazz circuit. The live music venue is revealed to be the interlocutory site of complex regulatory and cultural forces that are capable of inflicting a lengthy hegemony (the restrictive ‘cabaret’ and associated zoning laws existed for 64 years) on musicians’ styles and careers, and club owners’ livelihoods, despite changing social attitudes. The “relative autonomy” of the law<sup>105</sup> can be appropriated in the fight against (black) bohemianism. Equally, Chevigny (and to a lesser extent, Kenney) encompass debates concerning planning and the uses of urban space placing music venues as central, rather than peripheral objects of study within the city landscape. Both highlight the cultural and economic value of live entertainment to residents’ and tourists’ view of cities (jazz music as an important tourist attraction in Chicago and New York City) and in contributing to the diversity and richness of urban life. Both studies counter the notion of regulatory narratives as banal, instead placing bureaucracy at the heart of production/consumption meanings.

Within a different context, Michael Clarke’s political history of English pop festivals from 1956 provides similar connections between political expediency and seemingly ‘disinterested’ regulation. Concerns about audience and

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<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>105</sup> Gaines, 1992, p.16.

performer behaviour, noise control and safety are amplified with large assemblies of youth in outdoor settings. Again, there can be discerned a neo-Foucauldian approach in mapping the disciplining of recreational youth. Outdoor music sites present different problems to the licensed indoor venue. As part of its attraction, the pop festival is harder to police, with often no fixed point of entry or exit, little control over noise limits, and often no useful methods of directing patrons to specific areas for specific activities (eating, sleeping, washing, dancing etc).<sup>106</sup> As with Chevigny's court battles, Clarke observes festival organisers confronted with a number of legislative obstructions which masked other concerns: "technical arguments about the feasibility of festivals in regard to siting ...constantly spill[ed] over into moral debates about drugs, sex, disorder and degeneracy".<sup>107</sup> While some festivals became symbolic focuses of moral entrepreneurship by government authorities, the media and local residents, Clarke documents an uneven and contradictory legislative landscape. A festival's relative success was dependent upon the attitudes of local councils and residents, and the organisational capacities of festival organisers. The state's response to their staging (with or without permission) was never fixed, and often rested on the personal views (and hopefully liberal tendencies) of Home Office Ministers and Secretaries of State.<sup>108</sup> Despite the mobilisation of local residents and councils in attempting to prohibit them, Britain then stood as "the only country in which it is legal to hold a festival without the prior agreement of the local authority or police".<sup>109</sup> Local contingencies have since become meaningless in the face of the 1988 Criminal Justice Act and the 1990 Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill which prohibited mass countryside gatherings in order to combat the rising popularity of a variant on youth-music pop festivals: the rave party.

Clarke and Chevigny's studies offer more contemporary perspectives

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<sup>106</sup> At one point Clarke (p.31) reflects on the unstructured nature of festival sites with the "highly structured nature" of the racetrack as a comparative implication for the policing of activities.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*, p.186. In Chevigny's case, it is implied that the Supreme Court ruling was the result of one judge's liberal views on licensing and free trade (p.130).

regarding the role of the media in contrast to the Cohen and *Policing the Crisis* models. Both challenge the usual assumption of the power and force of the media in providing a supportive outlet for restrictive practices. In the case of the history of English festivals, the media were not a decisive influence in the political process. In the jazz clubs' fight against New York City Council, the local newspapers played an active role in overturning the 'three musician' rule, in articles and editorials stating the musicians' case.<sup>110</sup> Parallel to the distinctive features of each legislative turn in regulating live performance are the wider sociological contexts, which need to be considered. The media's ability to reflect or disagree with public opinion produces varying degrees of influence, and cannot always be assumed to be counter-productive.

As valuable case studies of considerable empirical detail, the historical accounts briefly outlined above all constitute the policing of music across a range of different musical styles, venues and regulatory tactics. Where direct appeals for popular music to co-exist within the broader moral discourses of society failed to harness live performance, government intervention succeeded. Each of the studies constitute a loosely defined field of a 'politics of performance'. The beginnings of an explicit theorisation of such concerns can be found in Steve Redhead's *The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop Towards 2000*. Redhead cites the need for a methodology which firmly places the field of popular music culture as the subjects of modes of regulation. He argues the need for a "cultural practice" of performance, where the material conditions of the performance and of the audience are

... crucial for understanding the meaning of rock and pop texts — in other words, it is necessary to explain the background context of the music industry, the club, the concert hall and so on to grasp the meaning of any musical performance.<sup>111</sup>

The circularity of popular music development identified by Redhead<sup>112</sup> also mirrors states' disciplinary techniques of its forms. The long list of moral

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<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*, p.187.

<sup>110</sup> Chevigny, 1991, pp.133-134.

<sup>111</sup> Steve Redhead, *The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop Towards 2000*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1990, p.100.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

arguments used against 1920s jazz music and the various forms of jazz dancing outlined by Kenney reappeared in Chevigny's narrative. Similar moral arguments became entrenched with the development of rock and roll, and continue to present themselves in the ideological fight against current forms of grunge, rap and acid house musics. Similarly, Redhead's assertion that 'deviant' subcultures existed before rock and roll has been emphasised in a number of other studies, and is a warning against any treatment of periodic moral outrages as entirely new.<sup>113</sup> The same cautions should be applied to public management of public behaviours. Governmental practices have traditionally relied upon the often blunt instrument of licensing law — licensing of alcohol, trading hours, entertainment licences specifying forms of performance — which have adopted a similarity in tactics historically, irrespective of music or venue style. Regulation has also been a prerogative of venue owners, in terms of specific dress codes for musicians and audiences, seating and dance floor arrangements etc which are often the result of government 'encouragement' to attract a particular clientele and musician.

Redhead expands his "cultural practice" method in *Unpopular Cultures: the birth of law and popular culture*. Combining cultural studies, sociology, critical legal studies and criminology, Redhead effectively heralds the establishment of a new field of legal studies of popular culture: "unpopular cultural studies".<sup>114</sup> The list of recent European laws as responses to moral concerns of popular leisure practices are catalogued — football hooliganism, acid house parties, rave parties and dance nightclubs.<sup>115</sup> This represents a significant shift to new sites of youth-government relations in the policing of leisure, notably evident in the declining influence of rock and the growth of dance musics. For Redhead, the transfer of emphasis from "subculture to

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<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*, p.25. See also Redhead, 'Don't Go Back To Rocksville', *Leisure Studies*, no. 8, London, 1989, pp.173-188.

<sup>114</sup> Steve Redhead, *Unpopular Cultures: the birth of law and popular culture*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1995, p.108.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, pp.7-8. The aforementioned Entertainment (Increased Penalties) Act 1990 and the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill (1993) legislated against illegal rave parties and the public assembly of youth; the Football Spectators Act (1989) and the Football Offences Act (1991) were introduced to prevent football hooliganism. Changes to the Licensing Act (1988) targeted certain nightclubs and resulted in the closure of others.

clubculture” marks the need for recognition of the changing limits of the popular, the legal and the illegal.

In *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*, Sarah Thornton attempts to map this shift from rock to dance subcultures in Britain. The study marks a shift in influence to a “post-Birmingham” model, in which subcultural styles and meanings are diffused and invested in more fluid ways, and are not always motivated by resistance or class structures. Instead, “ad hoc” communities circulate within a range of “taste cultures”.<sup>116</sup> As the title suggests, a central tenet to Thornton’s approach is her adaptation of Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” notion to formulate youthful articulations of difference, or “subcultural capital”.<sup>117</sup> This amounts to a broad positioning of “underground” practices and communities which owes a theoretical debt to the work of Howard Becker. Thornton’s is a valuable study in outlining a localised transfer of affectivity (from rock to dance cultures), and particularly in tracing the more complex relationships of class in subcultural practices and intent. However, there is the distinct feel of an outsider methodology; Thornton’s work remains vulnerable to the critiques she reserves for the Birmingham School, in that the “ad hoc” communities she observes do not speak for themselves. The emphasis upon the fluidity of “taste cultures” is accompanied by the appeal to invest subcultural communities with equally valid powers-of-being to governmental procedures. Here the “micro-media” of fans and performers themselves form a powerful (and underestimated) function in justifying practices and ideologies both within and outside subcultures.<sup>118</sup> The belief in youth leisure formations to appropriate — even desire — mainstream media condemnation to their own ends, I believe, significantly overstates the pedagogical abilities of “micro-media” in countering mainstream misperceptions. The limitations of Thornton’s arguments, particularly where the mobilisation of administrative-cultural mechanisms come to be regarded as threats to subcultural practice, are

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<sup>116</sup> Thornton, 1995, p.3.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, pp.11-14.

<sup>118</sup> *ibid.*, pp.137-151.

discussed more extensively in chapters seven and eight.

In sharing Redhead's pre-occupation in engaging with the field of the "unpopular popular", Simon Frith returns music studies to its fundamental meanings as value systems in *Performing Rites*.<sup>119</sup> In one sense this means incorporating all cultural practice as value judgements, whether routine or oppositional. Frith's recent comprehensive mapping of how certain discourses of value are made upon all popular music discussions and practices is timely. It provides a more realistic model in emphasising the (unequal) social contexts of value judgements. Further, there is a call to re-examine *who* is making judgements in particular circumstances, and where discursive authority effectively lies. While a seemingly innate re-statement of cultural studies' methodology, it recovers popular music studies from the relativism of Thornton's work, where evaluations circulate according to tactical investment in experiences. A re-emphasis of value judgements as a key framing mechanism of popular meanings properly leads to re-examining the forms in which the mainstream come to be regarded as the mainstream, as 'natural' discourse.

## V. The Ritual of Live Performance

Live performance has been viewed by performers, fans and popular music scholars as the central ritual of rock and roll, although the recent resurgence of dance music practices might be more appropriate to Frith's assertion of live rock as "a special setting for music for which the audience is as important as the performers".<sup>120</sup> The nature of live music is ritualistic in the definition employed by Ruth Finnegan in her study of music activity in Milton Keynes; live performance embodies

... some quality of being an end in itself rather than utilitarian or technological; somehow set apart from everyday routines; in some sense obligatory or repeated, with some kind of set or expected programme; a collective or jointly stated

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<sup>119</sup> Frith, 1996, p.20.

<sup>120</sup> Frith, 'The Cultural Study of Popular Music' in Lawrence Grossberg, Brian Nelson and Paula Treichler (eds) *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, New York, 1992b, p.175.

enactment; and some symbolic, religious or at any rate deeply evaluative or in some sense externally validated meaning.<sup>121</sup>

It is within such contexts that playing live contains values and experiences which are contradictory and complementary. The celebratory sense of occasion of the gig is also accompanied by a wider sense of knowing what to expect — that certain unspoken rules and structures will be observed, part of the industry's formalised set of accepted performance practices which include playing times, encores, clichéd banter with the crowd, the fixed nature of song lists to accommodate audience expectations. While every performance is different and dependent upon other influences (different audience reactions, venue structures), professional touring musicians are bound by fixed conditions which often remain unchanged to ensure their popularity with audiences and venue managers. The conventional nature of the live rock industry's performance characteristics are only evident when they are inverted or challenged by performers and audiences.

Finnegan's and Sara Cohen's<sup>122</sup> studies of Milton Keynes and Liverpool respectively, offer practical micro-sociological detail concerning the struggles of musicians to practise and perform in amateur and professional contexts. Cohen in particular emphasises the social benefits to the musicians and their friends of performance — increased self-esteem, and the opportunity to leave the cycle of poverty and unemployment. As Frith notes, such analysis debunks notions of rock music making as spontaneous, unskilled and accompanied by little collective planning.<sup>123</sup> Both studies also emphasise the value of a close examination of local practices, and the ways in which local musicians are rejected or accommodated within regional/national industry practices. Finnegan documents thoroughly the minutiae surrounding musicians' lives in stressing the "framing conventions" of live performance.<sup>124</sup> Excepting a brief note about a publican's concerns regarding noise, an explanation of the

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<sup>121</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English town*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p.352.

<sup>122</sup> Sara Cohen, *Rock Culture in Liverpool: Popular Music in the Making*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991.

<sup>123</sup> Frith, 1992b, pp.174-176.



conditions 'framing' the venues is absent. Finnegan's constant emphasis on the ritual nature of performance suffers in not acknowledging that many of the rituals are the result of unseen regulatory practices. Cohen acknowledges that "the structure and context of a gig and the social relationships involved were thus interrelated with the artistic factors of the performance".<sup>125</sup> One does get a sense of the impact of the decreasing number of live venues in Liverpool on local musicians. There is however, little empirical work in attempting to explain the demise of venues, although this is clearly against the ethnographic understanding of her project. For a study which places so much emphasis on public performance, a history of Liverpool's venues is noticeable by its absence. The mundane mixture of regulatory and economic contexts have no less an impact upon music making opportunities, whether they be Finnegan's self-professed amateur musicians seeking to rehearse in the local town hall, or Cohen's more ambitious rock musicians attempting to join the professional live circuit.

The case studies in Avron Levine White's *Lost in Music: Culture, Style and the Music Event* do highlight more directly the ways in which legal conventions frame music-making, in examining the difficulties of rehearsal and performance.<sup>126</sup> White's own study of a man's legal action against his 'noisy' music teacher neighbours emphasised the wider society's views of 'authentic' music making and training and the definition of noise.<sup>127</sup> As a professional drummer, White also details his experiences in a jazz group and provides insight into the relationship between venue manager and performer.<sup>128</sup> To return to the notion of ritual, Christopher Small's analysis of a symphony concert should be explored briefly in determining just what a rock performance is not.<sup>129</sup> The essential characteristics of a symphony concert

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<sup>124</sup> Finnegan, 1989, p.152.

<sup>125</sup> Cohen, 1991, p.101.

<sup>126</sup> Avron Levine White (ed.) *Lost in Music: Culture, Style and the Music Event*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1987.

<sup>127</sup> White, 'Popular Music and the law — who owns the song?' in *ibid*.

<sup>128</sup> 'A Professional jazz group', *ibid*.

<sup>129</sup> Christopher Small, 'Performance as ritual: sketch for an enquiry into the true nature of a symphony concert' in White (ed.) 1987.

described by Small (performance within purpose-built venues, the fixed nature of audience, performer behaviours and texts etc) provides a useful starting point in determining the class-based differences to popular music performance (relative informality, aversion to hierarchical positioning of performers, the reliance on impulse rather than fixed canons, etc).<sup>130</sup> Such binary distinctions are easily made, while becoming increasingly blurred (for example, the success of classical music in popular music charts, and performances by opera singers at rock concerts).

Fundamental oppositions remain, however, centred on the body as the strategic site of pleasure or constraint. Pierre Bourdieu's exploration of the body as a tactical site provides a means to understanding the vigorous responses to 'popular' entertainment defined against the measured distance of 'bourgeois' enjoyment (and shares with the 'productive' Foucault the importance of discourses encircling bodily pleasure).<sup>131</sup> The historic differences in the type and extent of public participation have undoubtedly affected the types and planning of venues for popular entertainment. This is especially evident in the development of rock and roll, where initial aesthetic judgements were based not solely on musical forms, but on the central importance of dance styles to its enjoyment. Initially at least, bodily reactions to rock were as important as musicians' performance in defining its essential qualities. New dance styles presented to authorities the problem of certain popular practices allowing the youthful subject to erase his/her objective responsibilities of 'good' citizenship. As revealed in chapter 3, the incorporation of jiving and jitterbugging styles into faster rock and roll dancing techniques was deemed a factor in the regulation and prohibition of early rock performances. In related fashion, the rave/dance party phenomenon has evoked similar fears of a new re-engagement with bodily enjoyment, where the shift to dance floor (and not stage) priorities certainly does not provide the 'disinterested' political aesthetic it assumes.

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<sup>130</sup> See Shuker, 1994, pp.205-207 for a brief juxtaposing of rock concert characteristics with Small's analysis.

## VI. Industrial Contexts

In analysing why few socio-economic studies of the phonogram industry existed before the 1970s, Krister Malm and Roger Wallis cite three reasons: the difficulties in choosing analytical methods; the reluctance of music companies to surrender corporate secrets; and a lack of academic interest among music and media researchers.<sup>132</sup> The same difficulties arise in attempting an historical study of the local live music industry, and partly explains why few studies of an industrial (or sociological or ethnographic) nature exist that present comprehensive analyses of Australian popular music. Popular journalistic styles emerged in the early 1980s, notably Clinton Walker's *Inner City Sound* (1981) and *The Next Thing* (1984), exploring local Australian performers and approaches. Marcus Breen's collection of essays, *Missing In Action* (1987), and *Our Place, Our Music* (1989) represent the formation of Australian popular music studies. The growth of the Australia-New Zealand branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) has provided a more recent resurgence in activity, with influential work emerging from its primary participants: Tony Mitchell, Philip Hayward, Marcus Breen, Roy Shuker, John Whiteoak and Bruce Johnson. The establishment of *Perfect Beat* (the 'Pacific Journal of Research into Contemporary Music and Popular Culture') by Macquarie University's Philip Hayward in 1992 has also provided an important incentive for studies of Australian contexts.

In terms of Australian production and consumption, several studies offer local policy/industry methodologies. In adopting Redhead's notion of the "cultural practice" of live performance, Graeme Turner has subsequently embraced a more practical methodology than was evident in his *Myths of Oz*

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<sup>131</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Harvard University Press, trans. Richard Nice, 1984.

<sup>132</sup> Krister Malm and Roger Wallis, *Media Policy and Music Activity*, Routledge, New York, 1992, p.15.

analysis.<sup>133</sup> Turner notes Redhead's concern with the "signifying practice" of most cultural studies (an approach which arguably describes the *Myths of Oz* analysis of the Australian pub). He also briefly canvasses issues of an industrial nature which help explain many taken-for-granted industry practices: the inequitable nature of venue-performer relationships, the content dilemma ('should we play covers or original songs?') and so on. Of particular use is his examination of the larger entertainment centres, how spatial constructs assist in legitimating audience/performer behaviour and control.<sup>134</sup> However, Turner again neglects to discuss the specific and explicit forms of regulatory control of venues. For example, in examining the mutual economic advantages to the venue and musician of pub performances, he states that "low overheads for the pub owner has meant that they could provide regular employment for musicians".<sup>135</sup> Such statements may have described the economic contexts of the industry in the 1970s. Publicans and venue managers now argue that band fees have risen disproportionately to venues' capacity to pay. Similarly, a range of State and local council legislation has increased the cost of having live music: tighter noise controls, and various changes to entertainment licence conditions have compromised the viability of live music.

In presenting the case for a study of the Australian recording industry, Marcus Breen outlines the theoretical means whereby "the case for selective use of industrial and cultural studies material is considerable".<sup>136</sup> Breen favours a loose synthesis of empiricist industrial organisation theory with the Birmingham School approach. The industrial organisation theory ("production of culture"<sup>137</sup>) approach has been applied to music industry contexts. Paul DiMaggio and Paul M. Hirsch attempted a systems analysis of music industry structures where the discrete sections of the industry are identified on three broad levels: functions, roles and careers;

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<sup>133</sup> Graeme Turner, 'Australian popular music and its contexts' in Philip Hayward (ed.) *From Pop To Punk To Postmodernism*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1992.

<sup>134</sup> *ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>136</sup> Breen, 1992b, in Philip Hayward (ed.) p.70.

interorganisational; and as a total system (the interrelations within the cultural apparatus itself).<sup>138</sup> Means of entrepreneurship and patronage are raised within the basic industry structure, determining the provision of capital, the chain of leadership and the attraction of talent.<sup>139</sup> Industry and governmental gatekeepers, pressure groups and “output-border specialists” in deciding the means (or if) cultural products reach the public are also important.<sup>140</sup> Due to the high cost of popular cultural production, they also observe that cultural industries tend to be highly self regulated, conservative and “most sensitive to the threat of objections from organised pressure groups”.<sup>141</sup>

The systems analysis of cultural production is flawed in many respects. The ‘closed’ system acknowledges few external influences (for example fans, or technology) on production, and the possibilities of interaction with other environments.<sup>142</sup> An application of a chain-like systems analogy to the music industry also seems simplistic, given that the “sounds and images of pop can have multiple points of origin” and that production also contains symbolic qualities.<sup>143</sup> DiMaggio and Hirsch seem to ignore the symbolic factors of cultural production in stating that an organisational perspective “bypasses the debate ... over the relative merits of high art and low”.<sup>144</sup> Yet governmental intervention and formulation of policy (regulation, funding), as external factors, are often based on symbolic distinctions of the popular and the bourgeois. In reflecting the more fluid nature of the music industry, Keith Negus resurrects Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural intermediaries” to describe

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<sup>137</sup> Malm and Wallis, 1992, p.16.

<sup>138</sup> Paul DiMaggio and Paul M. Hirsch, ‘Production Organisation in the Arts’ in Richard A. Peterson (ed.) *The Production of Culture*, Sage, California, 1976. See also Hirsch, ‘Processing Fads and Fashions: An Organisation-Set Analysis of Cultural Industry Systems’ in Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (eds) *On Record: Rock, Pop and the Written Word*, Routledge, London, 1990.

<sup>139</sup> DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976, p.76.

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*, p.77. ‘Gatekeepers’ admit or exclude artists or products; ‘output-border specialists’ exist to fix potentially threatening situations.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>142</sup> Malm and Wallis, 1992, pp.16-20.

<sup>143</sup> Keith Negus, *Producing Pop: Culture and Conflict in the Popular Music Industry*, Edward Arnold, London, 1992, pp.45-46.

<sup>144</sup> DiMaggio and Hirsch, 1976, p.74.

industry relationships.<sup>145</sup> The uses of industrial organisation theory have been confined to analysis of the recording industries. The local live music industry remains subject to other legal, financial and social characteristics unique to its production. Many of the shared features of the recording and live industries are heightened within live production — the impacts of censorship, regulation and audience response on the product are immediate and felt more directly at the micro-level of the industry. In this respect, the DiMaggio and Hirsch model cannot be dispensed with entirely. Within the Sydney live music industry, a number of government and industry gatekeepers, pressure groups and output-border specialists can be discerned, each with varying levels of influence and power. Hirsch previously identified the societal constraints on cultural industries, which are “assumed to act under norms of rationality”.<sup>146</sup> Identifying such constraints within a local context is crucial if the influence of the various gatekeepers is not to be overly emphasised. The Negus study of the British recording industry is an example of the ways in which the “cultural intermediaries” approach can be developed (even while the origins of authoritative power to implement the “norms of rationality” are absent in Negus’ thesis).

An area of study only briefly acknowledged, yet important in any examination of live music venues, is the changing face of youth policy. Live music has become an important part of local youth policies in Britain, with increased funding for live performance and training initiatives.<sup>147</sup> Similar funding has occurred at State and local council levels in Australia. The Push in Victoria, and the Bondi Youth Wave organised by Waverley Council in Sydney are two initiatives which complement national arts and leisure policies. This study, however, is more concerned with the (often negative) youth policies aimed at regulating and policing youth leisure on a daily basis, and the ways in which venue conditions are affected. Many youth activities are

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<sup>145</sup> Negus, 1992, p.46.

<sup>146</sup> Hirsch, 1972, p.128.

<sup>147</sup> See Simon Frith, ‘Popular Music and the Local State’ in Bennett, Frith, Grossberg, Shepherd and Turner (eds) *Rock and Popular Music: Politics, Policies, Institutions*, Routledge, London, 1993.

focused in, or near, live music venues: drinking and seeing bands at the local pub, club or entertainment centre; 'hanging out' in the town square or shopping centres. In documenting the regulatory history of live music, a sense of the changing attitudes to youth leisure can also be discerned.

Given the scarcity of local empiricist studies, a history of Sydney's live music legislation also reveals the dialectical tensions within the local industry, and the wider stories of moral change and the state's perceptions of music-as-leisure. The local live music venue operates literally as the site of intersection of music industry, youth, alcohol and drug policy, urban planning, gambling and law enforcement policies. The venue is the terrain upon which the internal dialogues between the industry and society are mapped out, where the relationship between leisure and work is contrasted and further defined. In this respect, Jacques Attali's *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* presents a useful synthesis of Adorno-like conclusions with neo-Foucauldian semantics. His "society of repetition" presents a variant on Adorno's standardisation theme; both equate music with the paradigm of order: as he argues, "primordially, the production of music has as its function the creation, legitimation, and maintenance of order".<sup>148</sup> It thus contemplates music as not abstracted from the relations of capitalist production, but lying at its heart:

Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its ages, and at the same time produces them ... The simultaneity of multiple codes, the variable overlapping between periods, styles and forms, prohibits any attempt at a genealogy of music ... What must be constructed then is more like a map, a structure of interferences between society and its music.<sup>149</sup>

The end point of Attali's four stages plotting the history of musical development is an Adornian desire for music production to free itself from the academy and the entertainment industries, for music to recover its "self-transcendent" properties. The enduring value of his uniquely historicist thesis is the belief in music's capacities as a bellwether of societal change. It raises

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For a detailed study of a council-funded live venue, see John Street, 'Local differences? Popular music and the local state', *Popular Music*, vol. 12, no. 1, January, 1993.

<sup>148</sup> Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1985, p.30.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.*, p.19.

provocative questions as to the essential meaning of music, expounding a double structure of meaning to 'silencing'. Attali argues, paradoxically, that the silencing of music (its depoliticisation) may be occurring while its noise threatens to deafen us. The language is enticingly Foucauldian:

The musical ideal then almost becomes an ideal of health: quality, purity, the elimination of noises; silencing drives, deodorizing the body, emptying it of its needs and reducing it to silence. Make no mistake: if all of society agrees to address itself so loudly through this music, it is because it has nothing more to say ...<sup>150</sup>

Thus, at one level, noise legislation is important for its incorporation in everyday surveillance tactics; on a second level, music performance assumes a more profound meaning that "says much about the political order that is being established".<sup>151</sup> Fredric Jameson's attention to Attali's use of "auto-surveillance" is similar to Foucauldian techniques of the self, where "capital and the state no longer have to do anything to you, because you have learned to do it to yourself".<sup>152</sup> Attali's notion that music constitutes the "battlefield" between society and performers is not always relevant within such cultural histories. Rather, Colin Mercer's notion of consent (in being both legitimately coercive and accepted) is more appropriate, where the "points of persuasion, points of resistance and points of negotiation" between policy and practice become evident.<sup>153</sup> While it is crucial to identify the ways in which live music has been contained or silenced, of equal importance are the ways in which the industry has consented to forms of regulation and performance compromises. Nonetheless, Attali's discourse of 'silencing' is taken up in the latter stages of this thesis as one appropriate description of local developments. The political economy of Sydney's live performance spaces are influential in the development of various "interferences" within the local live rock industry. Particular discourses surrounding audience behaviour, for example, find their way into technical codes concerning public safety, which constitute effective silencing techniques of popular practices.

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<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Fredric Jameson, 1985, 'Foreword' in *ibid.*, p.xiii.

<sup>153</sup> Colin Mercer, 'Complicit Pleasures' in Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott (eds), *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1986, p.55.



Associated with such discourses is an implicit acknowledgment that all musical practices exist within the broader soundscapes of everyday life. Musicians have always been aware of the dependencies, the contaminated nature of live performance — competing with poker machines for audiences; playing later hours to accommodate the venue owner's need for higher bar takings; covering the snare drum to keep within prescribed decibel limits etc. Bruce Johnson has identified the usual response of musicians and audience to such undertakings — that the socio-politics of performance, and cultural politics in general, are above and somehow outside of their experiences.<sup>154</sup> It has taken a succession of venue closures and other assorted 'bad news' to persuade those within the local rock music industry that the production of cultural spaces for contemporary performance cannot be taken for granted, and remain conditional upon a range of conflicting everyday practices and urban interferences. In respect of an increased determination by the industry to confront other regulatory issues regarding copyright, employment and radio content, it is time to also investigate how such interferences have become part of the 'natural' soundscape of playing and listening. Such matters are not peripheral to performance, but constitute the basic realities of attempting to play, watch and listen to music within its urban contexts. When asked to discuss the collapse of functional tonality and common time in modern music, Frank Zappa typically inquired: "How can a person be concerned about atonality versus tonality when the real question is how do you get anything played?"<sup>155</sup>

## VII. From Space To Place

The studies of Kenney, Chevigny, Sarah Cohen and Finnegan all represent specific examinations of local musical practice in relative ignorance of international influences. To varying extents, the local (nightclub, pub, town

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<sup>154</sup> Bruce Johnson, Review of Chevigny 1993 in *Perfect Beat*, vol. 2, no. 2, January, 1995, p.100. Such attitudes have also hindered my research in respect of interviewing some performers who strive to remain distanced from industry issues.

hall, council) is seen to be crucial in helping to articulate knowledges and practices existing within their own 'reason'. The emerging field of cultural geography provides fruitful possibilities in examining spatial constructions of music practices, particularly how the 'local' operates within national and global frameworks. Colin McLeay's examination of the 'Dunedin Sound' — the emergence of a specific alternative rock culture perceived to be unique to the New Zealand city — is a useful example of a cultural geography approach to popular music studies. Despite the evidence of a number of national/global influences upon local music production, a perception of Dunedin's musicians as "a group of musicians working in cold isolation, playing music purely for the pleasure of it became dominant".<sup>156</sup> The city also became associated with the particular production aesthetic of the Flying Nun record label, in the construction of "melodic, guitar-driven music" as the Dunedin Sound.<sup>157</sup> McLeay's work reveals how popular music geographies are conflated within local music mythologies. Regional difference, no matter the truthfulness of its origins, is actively sought and played out within a variety of production/consumption contexts and (mis)perceptions. Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" thus remains a powerful concept for its 'intrusion' upon seemingly universal practices.<sup>158</sup>

Studies like McLeay's also engage with Arjun Appadurai's "concern with what locality might mean in a situation where the nation-state faces particular sorts of transnational destabilisation".<sup>159</sup> This entails popular music's role in the formation of Appadurai's notion of "mediascapes" which, "whether produced by private or state interests, tend to be image-centred, narrative based

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<sup>155</sup> Florindo Volpacchio, 'The Mother of All Interviews: Zappa on Music and Society', *Telos*, no. 87, Spring, 1991, p.125.

<sup>156</sup> Colin McLeay, 'The Dunedin Sound: New Zealand Rock and Cultural Geography', *Perfect Beat*, vol. 2, no. 1, July, 1994, p.39.

<sup>157</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983.

<sup>159</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'The Production of Locality' in *Modernity At Large*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1996, p.178.

accounts of strips of reality".<sup>160</sup> Will Straw's formulation of "scenes" traverses similar ground in depicting a complex of co-existing practices and cross-fertilisations.<sup>161</sup> This represents some theoretical distance from older notions of musical communities as simply the sum of contemporary musical practices informed by their musical heritage. The acknowledgement of the extent of internal (radio stations, record stores, venues, music press, record collecting) and external influences upon local scenes complicates the tendency to construct tightly bound metropolitan cultures. As Stuart Hall<sup>162</sup> has noted, the increasing migratory flows of Asian, African and Latin American peoples to the West means a significant fracturing of not just demographic formations of labour, but the cultural authenticities of the western metropolis. The spread of hip-hop within various scenes and regions is one instance of this, as a series of Afro-American/Caribbean practices finding voice within differing local contexts. Straw takes alternative rock as an example of the universality of certain music forms where

The aesthetic values which dominate local alternative terrains are for the most part those of a musical cosmopolitanism wherein the points of musical reference are likely to remain stable from one community to the other ... Each local space has evolved, to varying degrees, the range of musical vernaculars emergent within others, and the global culture of alternative rock music is one in which localism has been reproduced, in relatively uniform ways, on a continental and international level.<sup>163</sup>

This notion of cosmopolitanism is valuable where the fashionable is globally evident, and as markers of the local's 'usefulness' to international trends. However, I believe Straw overstates the means by which locality is produced through deferring to a global aesthetic. Within the scope of this thesis, the emergence of a 'Sydney Sound' is not proffered or viewed in a manner in which, for example, the cities of Nashville, New Orleans, Manchester or Chicago are perceived as distinct musical localities. Certainly, at different times,

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<sup>160</sup> *ibid.*, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 7, 1990, p.9.

<sup>161</sup> Will Straw, 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, October, 1991, p.373.

<sup>162</sup> Stuart Hall cited in John Tomlinson, 'Cultural Globalization and Cultural Imperialism' in Ali Mohammadi (ed.) *International Communication and Globalization*, Sage, London and New Delhi, 1997, p.183.

<sup>163</sup> Straw, 1991, p.373.

specific qualities have been attributed to specific places (Melbourne as the definitive centre of Australian blues in the early 1970s; Brisbane as the birthplace of local punk in the mid-1970s). Musical formations also can be traced within more general (shallow) analyses of cityscapes: Melbourne as 'serious' arts centre, Sydney as brash, hedonistic and most willing to adopt North American cultural forms, Brisbane as the 'dead' centre of political thought and leisure options. In this sense, evidence exists of a variety of imperialising tendencies *within* national/regional scenes, distinct from the external circulation of global pressures. Such brief depictions of the eastern seaboard's major cities evoke judgements derived from the rich mythologies of place, which I believe remain capable of over-riding the more general attachment of universal styles to particular scenes. This involves not only identifying the ways in which local scenes may or may not adopt international practices to their own ends, but the extent to which mythologies of difference become 'real' strategies of belief, synonymous with geographical location. As McLeay has demonstrated, the mythic identification of Dunedin as the definitive site of local creativity had tangible effects within Dunedin (the flow of labour, capital and symbolic marketing advantages to the city's music communities), and elsewhere (the parallel decline in the perceived importance of Auckland bands and recording studios).

In a similar manner, this thesis argues that mythologies of place have created powerful effects upon Sydney music practices and formations of Sydney-specific scenes. The emergence of Australian pub rock scenes is the obvious, tempting example here. Yet the connection of Sydney rock and roll to a specific place — the Sydney pub — did not emerge in the straightforward, homologous manner which local mythologies would suggest. Rather, it required a determined effort in perceiving one particular kind of leisure space as a more fundamental *place*. The 'selling' of pub rock (to its fans, local councils, State governments and the bands themselves) as the 'natural' site of local production/consumption is a vital example where place is *constructed*, even as it enters into local mythology as somehow 'always been there'. Appadurai argues that "the transformation of spaces into places requires a

conscious moment, which may subsequently be remembered as relatively routine".<sup>164</sup> The production of 'Oz Rock' through the primacy of the live pub scene remains a series of discursive acts where place operates in vital ways independent of global meanings and practices, not just a shared set of musical practices in providing internal maps of meaning, but an external spatial construct. In defining place, Dolores Hayden speaks of the "personality of a location" which incorporates both political and spatial meanings.<sup>165</sup> The social imaginary of place also involves the complex social history of buildings in their construction, with the "builder, owner, developer, zoning and building code writers, the building inspector, and ... a complex series of tenants".<sup>166</sup> This remains an undervalued sector of examination in the specific construction of spatial memories and subjectivities. The Sydney rock pub is part of the local "urban landscape as storehouse for social memories";<sup>167</sup> my textualisation of the development of Sydney rock and roll examines the stubborn forms of locality which operate in relative ignorance of international practices.

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<sup>164</sup> Appadurai, 1996, p.183.

<sup>165</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*, The MIT Press, London and Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995, pp.15-16.

<sup>166</sup> *ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid.*, p.9.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Sydney's Live Performance Traditions**

Before embarking on the development of rock and roll within Sydney in the 1950s, the rich variety of entertainment practices evident since the city's settlement should be acknowledged. As the birthplace of Australian settlement in 1788, the city's leisure options were predicated upon British traditions of the music hall and theatre. The later development of vaudeville circuits is also briefly documented; the vaudeville tradition overlapped rock and roll's initial foray into hotels, with both forms competing as viable entertainment. This chapter also serves to establish the nature of structures governing Sydney, with the eventual transition from colonial powers to an often unwieldy system of local (council), State (NSW) and Federal government after the colonial States agreed to Federation in 1901. The unique nature of the States' powers and rivalry before Federation prevented a local government system invested with similar powers to British local councils. However, this chapter reveals the extent to which public entertainment regulations have been established upon English models (with occasional local variations). As such, the English music hall provides the initial template of public, commercial entertainment governance. The second section of the chapter examines the development of a rudimentary theatre and vaudeville tradition within legal structures either replicated from British practice, or powers still wholly invested in London-based authorities. Regulation was effectively shaped by the colony's dual obligations to England, in providing a suitable outpost for the criminal residue of the motherland, and as a potentially fertile economic provider for the Empire. Within an environment of tense relations between convicts and government, the establishment of colonial entertainments was perceived as a further impediment to law and order. The third section contains a brief description of the growth of Sydney jazz venues since the 1920s. Between the 1930s and 1960s, a combination of dance halls and licensed clubs established reputations as influential music venues popular to both musicians and patrons. The growth in jazz venues after the Second World War also reflects the transfer in influence from English to North American music forms.

In the chapter's final section, an account of licensed venue regulations is offered for two reasons. Firstly, the city's live performance traditions have always been intimately connected with the population's drinking practices, providing commercial viability to entrepreneurs at times when public entertainments could not be considered sufficiently popular on their own terms. Secondly, the relationship between drinking and entertainment cultures has been an historic area of concern to State and local governments; the abundance of liquor laws since settlement testifies to the perceived influence of alcohol within daily life. In the period beyond the First World War, the draconian nature of liquor laws provide very direct effects upon Sydney's entertainment and drinking cultures. The post-war period of licensed premises' governance is examined in assessing the legislative climate existing prior to rock and roll's arrival in Australia.

## **I. The English Music Hall**

While it is generally acknowledged that their establishment occurred in the 1850s, the Beer Act of 1830 provided earlier impetus for the English music hall's growth.<sup>1</sup> The Act eased licensing restrictions (licences could be bought for £2 from the excise office instead of petitioning the magistrates), and established the popularity of drinking saloons with "half-organised singing as an integral part of their attraction".<sup>2</sup> This signified a change from the Disorderly Houses Act of 1751, which required all places of public entertainment to obtain a licence from local magistrates quarterly. The increasing popularity of singers, along with increasing bar profits, resulted in publicans promoting entertainment above alcohol. Many abolished the 'refreshment check' (or 'wet money') in favour of a straight admission charge, which further lessened the emphasis on liquor sales and provided a competitive alternative to the simpler beer houses.

By the mid-1860s, regulation of pubs and drinking saloons became more systematic, with standardised petition forms and annual police surveys of all venues licensed for music and dancing.<sup>3</sup> The rapid growth in the number of

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<sup>1</sup> John Clarke and Chas Crichton, 1985, p.66.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Summerfield, 1981, p.214.

drinking and entertainment venues required more comprehensive systems of surveillance to maintain public order. Licensing became the major instrument of reform in limiting the number of venues within each district. This was reinforced by the Licensing Act of 1872, which gave magistrates discretionary powers over licensing, reduced late trading and Sunday opening, and increased penalties for drunkenness, serving children and the adulteration of beer.<sup>4</sup> Legal sanction highlighted 'problem areas'—usually working class district venues thought to be corrupting youth (immigrant licensees were also believed to be a problem). As such, the notion of the *licence* — whether pertaining to public entertainment, or alcohol consumption, or both — is the chief instrument in defining acceptable and improper behaviours. The decision of magistrates to grant or revoke entertainment licences became a significant disciplinary technique in standardising behaviours. Repeated infringements of drinking laws ensured the removal of entertainment provisions.

The first specialist music hall, the Bolton Star, opened in 1840, and by 1866, thirty three halls existed in London with an average capitalisation of £10 000 and seating capacity of five hundred.<sup>5</sup> These larger halls co-existed with smaller establishments, drinking saloons (with or without entertainment licenses), and many unlicensed pub music halls. Selective licensing by magistrates, accompanied by police pressure upon existing licences, resulted in a general decline in the number of smaller venues after 1860. This trend accelerated with the Local Government Act of 1888. The Act placed the administration of licences within elective town and county councils, such as the recently established London County Council (LCC). The LCC acquired the magistrates' licensing powers and regulation of the Metropolitan Board of Works, which included supervision of the safety of public buildings under the Buildings Regulation Act.<sup>6</sup> The Board of Works policy had been one new pub for every three demolished;<sup>7</sup> the LCC went further. With strong support from the temperance movement, the LCC used their dual powers to prohibit, or strictly supervise the structure of places of entertainment and audience behaviour. The larger halls were favoured over

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<sup>4</sup> Clarke and Crichton, 1985, p.68.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Summerfield, 1981, p.217.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Girouard, *Victorian Pubs*, Studio Vista /Macmillan, London, 1975, p.56.



smaller saloons, as policing was easier and mixed attendance more common (proprietors encouraged women, believing them to be a positive effect in raising standards of audience behaviour). This reinforced the increasing economic dominance of the larger music halls, which benefited from partnerships with breweries, licensed victuallers and the formation of limited liability companies.<sup>8</sup> The shift to local council authority, important in itself, also necessitated a broader application of state powers to licensed entertainment. This is discerned in the incorporation of the Board of Works within council authority; the *type* of entertainment was now intimately tied to the *structure* of the building housing the entertainment. Dependent upon the contingencies of council attitudes, the moral obligations of venue owners could be further enforced through recourse to building code standards. The Board of Works' policy ('one new pub for every three lost') is also familiar to later Australian practice. The establishment of the NSW Licences Reductions Board in 1919 revealed governments' determination to reduce the number of hotels throughout the State. The stubborn belief, within different locations and periods, in the pressures of liquor reform upon mainly the *sites* of consumption, and not the times or nature of alcohol consumption, evolved as the means of effective social control.

In her study of licensing practices within England in the last century, Penelope Summerfield argues that restrictive licensing methods did not merely signify a more comprehensive regulation of 'appropriate' venues. The increased difficulty in securing and keeping alcohol and entertainment licences raised the value of the licence and the cost of entry into their management. Proprietors with large investments in licences became guardians of "moral and dignified" entertainment to ensure continued support from the state:

It was worth capitulating to the demands of the licensing authority that the behaviour of the audience should be beyond approach and that the entertainment should be inoffensive, rather than lose a licence. The responsibility placed on the proprietor for what went on in his hall, under penalty of losing his capital, meant that direct state intervention, such as censorship of music hall entertainment, was avoided, and so the illusion that the proprietor had free choice over the content of the music hall was preserved. But in fact she or he policed the institution on behalf of the state.<sup>9</sup>

Here can be discerned the strategies of 'techniques of the self' in preference to

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<sup>8</sup> Bailey, 1978, p.166.

<sup>9</sup> Summerfield, 1981, p.223.

more overbearing censorship. The “illusion” of self-determination of his premises was more likely replaced with the realities of proprietorial self-management (self-censorship). The process whereby proprietors became ‘moral policemen’ of the state was sustained by the strategies of other reform groups. Temperance groups<sup>10</sup> contested the renewal of licences against the moral virtues of the proprietor, where (usually) he was “cast as the villain of the piece, a gross and insidious mutation of the publican”.<sup>11</sup> In order to present a more refined image to the middle classes and local authorities, proprietors established strict codes of conduct (house rules) censoring objectionable performances. Clauses inserted into performer’s contracts stipulated that songs be submitted to the management a week before performance and not to be altered once approved.<sup>12</sup> The informal arrangement of tables and chairs near the bar was slowly replaced with fixed seating, which eliminated ‘promenading’ and its association with prostitution (soliciting was easier with a mobile audience).<sup>13</sup> This provided a suitable method of internal disciplining obtained through more careful thought of spatial effects upon patron behaviour; the partitioning of audience subsets according to likely behaviour effectively quarantined potential trouble. A combination of these factors provided a controlled environment of both performance and audience the proprietors were proud to advertise. Dress codes also became efficient forewarnings of expected behaviour (and class differentiation):

Will Thorne recalled proprietors in Birmingham who refused entry to a man not wearing a collar, and the Order and Decorum which became the cliché of every music hall advertisement was so rigidly enforced in Collins music hall in Islington that it became known as the Chapel.<sup>14</sup>

While problems of limited capital existed in the provincial halls, the larger city venues established several entrepreneurs (‘caterers’) who were sufficiently funded to operate a chain of venues and performers. Charles Morton, the proprietor of Canterbury Hall in Lambeth, used subsequent profits to establish the Oxford in Oxford Street. Edward Thornton, Oswald Stoll, H. E. Moss and others ran family empires throughout Britain. Similar chains were also established by breweries,

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<sup>10</sup> Such as the Coffee Public House Association; the Committee for the Preventing of Demoralising of Native Races by the Liquor Traffic; and the United Kingdom Alliance (Girouard, 1975, p.56).

<sup>11</sup> Bailey, 1978, p.159.

<sup>12</sup> Summerfield, 1981, pp.212-213.

<sup>13</sup> Many music halls had ‘snuggeries’, small private apartments for gentlemen to take their newly acquired girlfriends or prostitutes (Girouard, 1975, p.60).

<sup>14</sup> Bailey, 1978, p.166.

who converted public houses to music hall use. The management of several halls brought obvious advantages in terms of economies of scale, enabling the same performers to play several venues on the same night. Charles Morton instituted the 'turns system' by "filling his bill with artists already employed at the Canterbury who thus played in Lambeth and Oxford street on the same night, crossing the river by cab...it became customary for an artist to do four or five turns a night".<sup>15</sup> The high fees commanded by star performers established a hierarchical labour force of professional entertainers. Increasing enforcement of copyright of hit songs by the Performing Rights Society, in which songs ceased to be common property, further reinforced the star hierarchy. The large fees commanded by the top performers masked the severe competition and low rewards for lesser known acts and the costs incurred by artists to perform: "artists had to meet their own expenses for costumes and transport between turns, and the practice of matinees and twice nightly performances ... increased the workload without any guarantee of a proportionate increase in earnings".<sup>16</sup> Successful trade union activity on behalf of performers was spasmodic and largely ignored; infrequent attempts to end the turns system, regulate agents and open co-operative halls were unsuccessful. In contrast, proprietors organised to negotiate with licensing authorities with the formation of the London Music Hall Proprietors' Association in 1860, designed to invoke the businesses with a professional aura. Successful union action by performers did not eventuate until 1906, with the formation of the Variety Artists' Federation, which drafted a charter of minimum terms and conditions for artists, musicians and stage hands.

The history of the English music hall is notable for documenting the transitional elements of past pub culture, and its transformation into heavily regulated entertainment industries with major capital investment. Relations between performer and owner became formalised on a larger scale with the creation of unions. Their emergence as heavily capitalised, mass entertainment reinforced the boundaries of rational and unacceptable leisure as defined by the state (and proprietors). The texture of entertainment and its consumption continued to reflect working class experiences, while incorporating middle class audiences and values. Yet their development also complemented the tendency

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.151.

towards *orderly* leisure. If large audiences were to regularly meet to consume alcohol and sing a few songs, then this could at least be structured to minimise potential disorder: “spontaneity, drunkenness, disruption was likely to affect profit as well as people ... the logic of their production put a premium on notions of professionalism and predictability which reduced commercial risk”.<sup>17</sup> This entailed closer attention to the internal spatial practicalities of providing entertainment — seating arrangements, positioning of the stage, the mingling of the classes and its potential effects. In this respect, the growth in public assembly laws prescribed the limits of behaviour, particularly with the benefit of building codes working in tandem with other considerations. Equally, external contingencies (trading hours, the number of venues within a particular district) remained important.

The licensing process produced varying degrees of regulation which not only threatened lifestyles, but capital. The prohibitive costs of a music hall licence ensured an indirect selection process of entertainments. The uneven transfer of emphasis upon venue owners’ behaviour (as indicative of his patrons’ behaviour overall) was enforced through the fear of withdrawal of the liquor and/or entertainment licence. As Clarke and Crichton note, the development of the music hall heralded the emerging logic of profitable leisure which marginalised the provision of more informal non-profit activities.<sup>18</sup> It also heralded an emerging logic of moral discourses, supplemented by appropriate regulatory intervention, which framed the acceptable boundaries of commercial musical practice.

## **II. Theatre and Vaudeville in Sydney**

The context for live performance in Australia has traditionally been the pub. Hotels were often the first major public buildings in town before the construction of churches (the terms ‘pub’ and ‘hotel’ throughout the thesis are largely interchangeable, and describe public houses within NSW which may or may not

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<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Frith, 1983, p.256.

<sup>18</sup> Clarke and Crichton, 1985, p.95.

provide accommodation).<sup>19</sup> Since the early years of settlement Australia has experienced a haphazard tradition of live theatre, beginning in 1796 with Governor Hunter's granting of a licence to Chequers Pub in Sydney.<sup>20</sup> Hunter subsequently closed the theatre in 1798, fearing its corrupt influence upon the colony's inmates. Government farm convicts at Emu Plains constructed a makeshift theatre in 1825, and performed for visiting dignitaries.<sup>21</sup> From the outset the performing arts were not to be trusted. One critic believed, as "a most moral affair", that the theatre "ought never to be left to itself; it should be licensed by the Executive".<sup>22</sup> In 1828 Governor Darling, in order to discourage potential theatre entrepreneurs, issued the Act Regulating Places of Public Exhibition and Entertainment. In 1832, under the more lenient Governor Bourke, Barnett Levey was granted a theatre licence for the saloon of the city's Royal Hotel, on the condition that London plays were performed without convict labour. In 1833 Levey constructed the Theatre Royal, with a seating capacity of one thousand.<sup>23</sup> Theatre was firmly established with the Royal Victoria Theatre in Pitt Street in 1838; the Pavilion in Melbourne in 1841; the Royal in Adelaide in 1838, and the Argyle in Hobart in 1834. Audiences and entertainment were mixed, where a night's performance could include "an abridged Shakespearian tragedy, singing, dancing and tightrope acts, and an afterpiece farce".<sup>24</sup> The role of the state in censoring audience and performer was clear. Approval of entertainment content had to be obtained from the Lord Chamberlain in London, while local skirmishes among audiences were controlled by the stationing of constables in the pit.<sup>25</sup> Local supervision of content appeared in the 1840s with legislation based on the English Theatres Act of 1843. To gain approval from the local Chief Secretary, the performance had to be free from "anything local, political, sectarian or immoral".<sup>26</sup> The 1850 Regulating Places of Public Exhibition and Entertainment Act removed the need for London approval. The construction of a theatre did not automatically guarantee an entertainment licence. In 1841 Thomas Hodge opened

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<sup>19</sup> John Freeland, *The Australian Pub*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1966, p.4.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Harold Love (ed.) *The Australian Stage: A Documentary History*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1984, p.14.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Waterhouse, *From Minstrel Show To Vaudeville: The Australian Popular Stage 1788-1914*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1990, p.22.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

his Royal Victorian Theatre in Melbourne's Bourke Street, and performances began in April. The police magistrate, however, "intimated to the proprietor that ... if performances continue, performers and audiences will be dealt with as vagabonds".<sup>27</sup> After various attempts to placate the local magistrate, he was fined £50 for "indecent dancing" within his premises.<sup>28</sup>

Within the wider context of order, the colonies became more organised with the gradual development of police forces modelled on the London Metropolitan Police. The Sydney Police Act of 1833, based upon English police laws, empowered Justices to prevent riots, drunk and disorderly behaviour and prohibit gambling, sports and drinking on Sundays.<sup>29</sup> The establishment of a (partly) organised police force also created changing perceptions of what constituted an offence. Regulation of public places was more rigidly defined, with increasing arrests for vagrancy, loitering, prostitution and 'corner lounging'.<sup>30</sup> There did exist an incentive for police to enforce the new Act; before 1850 they were entitled to a portion of all fines received.<sup>31</sup> By the 1890s, Russell Hogg and Hilary Golder suggest that work and leisure practices within Sydney had settled into a pattern of ritualised resistance which centred on "Saturday night excesses [which] were essentially a protest against their own submission to labour discipline throughout the week".<sup>32</sup>

The development of local government powers also commenced in NSW in 1840 with the creation of district councils along police district boundaries, with limited powers under the Governor.<sup>33</sup> To increase incomes, the councils sought in 1844 to receive pub licensing revenue which had previously been allocated to the police.<sup>34</sup> Continuing pressure to increase councils' revenue potential resulted in

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<sup>26</sup> John Richardson, 'Theatrical Treatment of Local Realities' in Love (ed.) 1984, p.67.

<sup>27</sup> John West, *Theatre in Australia*, Cassell, Sydney, 1978, p.26.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Mark Finnane, 'The Politics of Police Powers: The Making of Police Offences Acts' in Finnane (ed.) *Policing in Australia: Historical Perspectives*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1987, p.90.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Sturma, 'Policing The Criminal Frontier' in Finnane (ed.) 1987, p.21.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>32</sup> Russell Hogg and Hilary Golder, 'Policing Sydney in the Late Nineteenth Century' in Finnane (ed.) 1987, p.67.

<sup>33</sup> H.E. Maiden, *The History of Local Government in NSW*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1966, p.49.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p.61.

the 1858 Municipalities Act, with 13 municipal councils established and others to follow.<sup>35</sup> Regulation of public halls and theatres remained with the Chief Secretary's Department. The colonies also developed the British tradition of singing in saloon bars attached to hotels in an attempt to place live acts at some distance from the less refined public bars. The venues offered fixed seating, a separate admission price, with no food or drink permitted during performances. Minstrel acts were particularly popular within the saloons and theatres. Saloon entertainment commonly consisted of minstrel performances alongside vocal and instrumental recitals. The American influence of minstrel acts increased from 1850 with the staging of the first structured minstrel show.<sup>36</sup> Colonial versions of the British music hall developed in the 1840s as theatre proprietors diversified into pub versions of the British style. Hotel owners increasingly attached music halls to their establishments in order to distinguish them from the proliferation of pubs. While the performance was used to entice an audience, the rationale of such establishments was never forgotten: "admission was free, but the guest who failed to provide himself with something liquid at the bar was looked upon with the stony stare that greets the deadbeat who approaches the counter lunch without having first paid his 'footing' at the bar counter".<sup>37</sup>

Richard Waterhouse has argued that throughout the 1830s and 1840s Australian performance was divided into "popular" and "legitimate" spheres.<sup>38</sup> 'Legitimate' entertainment constituted of theatre and opera with appropriate content approved by the state, unlike the more 'popular' performances of minstrel shows, circus acts and music halls. The emergence of a colonial middle class deepened such distinctions, reinforcing British notions of 'rational' (morally and educationally productive) leisure. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, theatre critics and Protestant clergy called for entertainment capable of

... softening the manners, purifying and raising the tone of society... it was the duty of managers to present plays with serious moral and intellectual purposes

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<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*, p.69.

<sup>36</sup> Waterhouse, 1990, p.27.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Norman, *When Vaudeville Was King: a soft shoe stroll down forget-me-not lane*, Spectrum Publications, Melbourne, 1984, p.31.

<sup>38</sup> Waterhouse, 1990, p.26.

and it was the responsibility of actors and actresses to adhere to the prescribed texts.<sup>39</sup>

In Sydney George Coppin used the profits from his Royal Victoria Theatre to establish The Clown Theatre in Pitt Street.<sup>40</sup> In 1866 W. T. Johnston opened the Scandinavian Hall in what was then known as Garrick's Buildings, or Circus Court, in Castlereagh Street, which in time became known as the "handsomest music hall in Sydney".<sup>41</sup> As the halls developed a respectable air of profitability and professionalism, copyright of music and scripts was increasingly enforced. As agent for the Dramatic Actors Association, George Coppin threatened legal proceedings of any play under copyright performed without permission.<sup>42</sup> This problem was avoided by the inclusion of topical political content within burlesques that could not be attributed to any one source.

The mixture of circus, American minstrel, opera, Shakespeare and traditional British music hall acts continued to influence colonial performance into its next definable era, that of vaudeville.<sup>43</sup> Australian vaudeville was a hybrid of past styles and content, its development encompassing all manner of variety acts in the 1890s. London hall performer Harry Rickards is credited with initiating what became known as the Tivoli Circuit in February 1893, when he bought the old Scandinavian music hall and renamed it the Tivoli.<sup>44</sup> Rickards subsequently purchased halls in Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne with varying success.<sup>45</sup> By the time of Federation, Rickards had established a national network (and near monopoly) of theatres and halls, secure enough to rebuild the Tivoli in 1900 for £20 000 after a fire in September 1899.<sup>46</sup> Rival entrepreneurs developed throughout the latter half of the 1800s with Coppin, J.C. Williamson (1874), Bland Holt (1876) and George Rignold (1893).<sup>47</sup> While Rickards was known as the King of Vaudeville, he encountered a serious rival in James Brennan, who opened the

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<sup>39</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>41</sup> Norman, 1984, p.32. It was known briefly in 1870 as the St. James, but reverted to its original name after twelve months.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>43</sup> Norman (1984, p.62) attributes the term to the French valley of Vau de Vire, where songs and comic recitations were performed. Waterhouse (1990, p.117) states that in the early nineteenth century Americans who imported the French term referred to "witty and clever one act plays as vaudevilles ... the term applied specifically to amusement associated with urban life".

<sup>44</sup> Waterhouse, 1990, p.34.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p.117. The Bijou in Melbourne, and the Alhmbra in Sydney were financial failures.

<sup>46</sup> Norman, 1984, pp.34, 36.



National Amphitheatre in Castlereagh Street in 1906.<sup>48</sup> Brennan formed a circuit consisting of theatres and halls in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart. The dominance of the Rickards family empire subsided after Harry's death in 1911. While the family retained the freehold of his venues, the company was purchased for £100 000 by Hugh D. MacIntosh in 1912.<sup>49</sup> The substantial profits made from catering and fight promotions enabled MacIntosh to outbid American interests in the circuit.<sup>50</sup>

In NSW in 1908 there were renewed calls for local government to adopt control of public halls, theatres and accompanying fire regulations from the State Chief Secretary's Department.<sup>51</sup> Under the Theatres and Public Halls Act of 1908, the Chief Secretary continued to authorise censorship of performances on moral or political grounds. The Act prevailed on the Chief Secretary to protect "good manners and decorum".<sup>52</sup> To remove doubt within conflicting jurisdictions, the Fire Brigades Act of 1909 entrenched fire prevention and control as a State, rather than local government, responsibility.

In 1912 James Brennan's company was taken over by London music hall performer, John Fuller, who extended Brennan's circuit to include thirty six theatres and halls in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>53</sup> Harry Clay and J. C. Bain developed suburban Sydney circuits in Petersham, Newtown, Parramatta, North Sydney, Bondi Junction and Balmain.<sup>54</sup> Vaudeville provided a relatively secure working environment for musicians in support roles to the main attractions. Each venue had its own pit band consisting of

... flute, clarinet, trumpets, trombone, piano, bass and the workshop of the ensemble, the drums. The percussionist (a high falutin' moniker for the bong bong man) was a veritable one arm paper hanger. He was the keeper of the rhythm, sound effects man, and general all round dust raiser.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>48</sup> Waterhouse, 1990, pp.117-118.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Maiden, 1966, p.115. In addition, the *Sydney Morning Herald* called for the removal of the Local Government Office from the Public Works Department.

<sup>52</sup> Love, 1984, p.191.

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Norman, 1984, p.81.

Vaudeville entrepreneurs mimicked their British counterparts in attempts to portray their halls as respectable venues. Ben Fuller adopted a policy of “hilarity without vulgarity”, claiming that his Sydney National Amphitheatre was the “home of clean vaudeville”.<sup>56</sup> All comedians had their material checked in advance; unauthorised content was fined. Harry Rickards based his selection of acts on “novelty cleverness”, and prohibited content designed to “make men laugh and women blush”.<sup>57</sup> MacIntosh continued such traditions. In attempts to entice middle class housewives, his venues held morning teas, mannequin parades and tango demonstrations.<sup>58</sup> Yet the types of performers and content suggest a dichotomy of morals. The censorship exercised by the proprietors coincided with a vaudeville tradition of political satire, sexual innuendo and scantily clad chorus girls. Waterhouse observes that the “entrepreneurs were seeking to have it both ways — to cultivate an image of respectability that would draw middle class families into the stalls and circle, while still presenting programmes that would attract the working class into the gallery”.<sup>59</sup> Minstrel acts, presented within the stereotypical image of the inferior ‘coon’ and the exotic Other, did not constitute a threat or give offence to Australian audiences.<sup>60</sup>

Live performance was inevitably threatened with the arrival of cinema, which was shown in conjunction with vaudeville acts as early as 1896.<sup>61</sup> With film hire immeasurably cheaper than performers’ wages (top acts earned as much as £400 per week), many suburban halls converted to cinema palaces. Audiences were also becoming increasingly distracted by home entertainment. The wireless and gramophone, while turning many vaudeville acts into national stars (notably comedian Roy Rene), presented a comfortable alternative to going out. Harry G. Musgrove, who had bought the Tivoli Circuit from MacIntosh in 1921, screened films in the Melbourne Tivoli, but was ultimately frustrated by the hall’s structural design.<sup>62</sup> Musgrove sold the circuit to the J. C. Williamson organisation in 1924. By

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p.122.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Waterhouse (1990, p.130) believes such representations affirmed Australians’ belief in the Empire and the White Australia policy.

<sup>61</sup> Love, 1984, p.130.

<sup>62</sup> Nancye Bridges and Frank Crook, *Curtain Call*, Cassell, North Ryde, 1980, p.15. Twenty eight columns made viewing an uncomfortable experience.

1927 the Fuller circuit was concentrating on musical comedies. In 1925 the Local Government Association increased the pressure on the State Government to expand local administration, recommending that the licensing of hotels, theatres and public halls and billiard rooms be included in local council supervision.<sup>63</sup> The proposal was submitted within the New States Commission recommendations to the State Government, which were ultimately rejected.

The introduction of 'talkies' and the effects of the Depression proved devastating to the live performance tradition. Vaudevillians' exaggeration of professional climates indicated the extent of change: "everybody thought the talkies would be a nine-day wonder ... but once people saw the film *Broadway Melody* in 1929 and realised what could be done with sound and musicals in film, they just abandoned the theatre".<sup>64</sup> The potential transfer of profits was clear to the existing entrepreneurs. As Sir Ben Fuller stated: "I don't have to put up with temperamental actors any more. Now they deliver them in a tin can every Saturday".<sup>65</sup> The Tivoli was closed in September 1929 after being found in breach of fire regulations requiring exits on two streets. Its losses of £500 per week, however, were cited as the main reason for its closure. In 1931 two local performers, Queenie Paul and Mike Connors, attempted a vaudevillian revival by hiring the Haymarket Theatre in Sydney, eventually transferring to the Grand Opera House with a seventeen year lease in 1932.<sup>66</sup> This was renamed the Tivoli, and taken over by Frank Neil in 1934.<sup>67</sup> The Tivoli provided the only real live alternative to the Capitol Theatre's cinema. The Depression forced the Musicians' Union to adopt more aggressive policies regarding their members' employment. Upon hiring a five-piece band at £8 each per week, Paul and Connors were asked by the Union to accommodate another five musicians. This was only achieved through the original musicians' consensus to accept lower wages.<sup>68</sup>

During the Second World War, with overseas acts difficult to obtain, the Melbourne and Sydney Tivolis were the remaining venues of the vaudeville

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<sup>63</sup> Maiden, 1966, pp.256-257.

<sup>64</sup> Nancye Bridges cited in Bridges and Crook, 1980, p.46.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*, p.54.

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, p.57.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, p.54.

tradition. It is during this period that live entertainment became classified under the broader term of 'variety', where circus and sideshow acts performed alongside traditional vaudeville. David Martin managed the remnants of the Tivoli network in 1944 with an emphasis on musical comedy.<sup>69</sup> The Sydney Tivoli closed in March 1966. As its original fifty year lease had expired, Sydney City Council sold the entire block for office/retail conversion, a development repeated with the Melbourne Tivoli. Many of the vaudeville performers were able to adapt sufficiently to find work in the emerging cabaret lounges, nightclubs and television variety programs.

The adaptation of English practices had, by the 1950s, produced a local live entertainment tradition that nurtured the growth of a homegrown hierarchical star system. The popularity of live performers, however, was not always sufficient to compete with the new entertainment technologies of radio, film and television. The impact of film upon vaudeville is instructive for the later influences of television upon an emergent pub variety culture. Both live performance traditions were obliged to engage in new marketing practices accentuating the additional contextual 'benefits' of live entertainment. One instance of such emphasised contrasts can be seen in the continued burlesque presentations of women vocalists, where a sexual style was deemed of equal importance to the quality of her voice. As argued in the following chapter, this presented various problems for female performers eager to make their presence felt in the new pub lounges. Vaudeville traditions were eventually subsumed within the more sophisticated cabaret lounges, which preferred international talent to local acts.

The establishment of the Chief Secretary's Department is significant as the State's primary facilitator of liquor/venue law for much of the century. The Department's early desire in investing its powers with a moral authority derived from English fears concerning the moral direction of the fledgling colony. The Chief Secretary's role as censor was perceived to be important in displacing any desires by the outpost to forget its civilising origins in London. Like other colonial

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<sup>69</sup> Waterhouse, 1990, p.132. The initial variety stars began a tradition of musical comedy performers which has extended to the present — evident in the careers of Toni Lamond, Helen Reddy (whose parents Max and Stella were vaudeville stars), Jill Perryman and Peggy and Peeta Toppino. 1940s variety also proved good training for later television stars such as Pat MacDonald and Bob Dyer.

settlements, the propensity for high culture was sharpened by the city's distance from the centres of European refinement. This was the secondary aim of the Department's censorship role; licences granted to live entertainments (in the guise of 'acceptable' stage conduct) could be used in directing the locals to 'proper' entertainment as pedagogical representations of Empire. Such developments also parallel the English music hall's growth, with moral responsibilities placed within more practical needs. The Chief Secretary's dual powers of censorship and public assembly building regulations were thus administered within the Theatres and Public Halls Act. Once again, the type of entertainment became intimately linked to its performance space, in a similar manner to British experience. The period to the 1950s was also characterised by difficulties in the allocation of entertainment regulation. While the Theatres and Public Halls Act provided State-wide coherence to billiard rooms, theatres and public halls administration, their ongoing problems as leisure sites, it was argued, were felt at a distinctly local level. Local councils' desire to govern hotels, halls and theatres within their own communities reflected a reasonable argument in the co-existence of local knowledges and responsibilities. This desire (expressed in 1925) embodies a wider battle with successive State governments in resolving the most efficient method of governance. As revealed in subsequent chapters, State-local government tensions have never been fully reconciled, particularly in the areas of policing and tax revenue. Unlike British councils, which have taxation and other powers in keeping with their status as an influential authority countering national government, local NSW councils — certainly until the 1989 Local Government Act — have struggled to perform their statutory functions within relatively diminished revenue structures. This has tempered their willingness to administer public entertainment, although as discussed in chapter six, increased residential concerns regarding local venues has seen a recent re-investment in local authority over entertainment.

### **III. Jazz**

The more successful music hall entrepreneurs put large entertainment centres to other uses upon the decline of vaudeville. While allowing veteran musicians the opportunity of relatively stable work as pit musicians, the vaudeville circuit also

proved an ideal training ground for younger musicians. Drummer Buddy Rich, who toured Australia extensively later, performed at the Tivoli at the age of six as 'Traps' the wonder drummer in 1924-25.<sup>70</sup> In keeping with the moral standards imposed on the music halls by their proprietors, the more daring and challenging music was to be found in the gradual rise of dance halls before the First World War. Influenced by New York clubs and tours by John Phillip Sousa, ragtime was popular, as was the Tango. Andrew Bissett credits the owner of the Crystal Palace Dance Hall in George Street, Billy Romaine, for developing the growing thirst for jazz dancing.<sup>71</sup> With Jim Bendrodt and George Irving, Romaine also converted a Williams Street skate rink into the Salon de Luxe dance hall.<sup>72</sup> The Centennial Palais de Dance was opened in Bondi Junction, with another venue in the White City amusement park at Rushcutters Bay. Romaine also persuaded the owner of Sargent's Pies to allow jazz performances by his band within Sargent's retail outlets.<sup>73</sup> Vaudeville entrepreneurs also allowed jazz bands to share the stage with jugglers, yodellers and vocalists. In 1918 Ben Fuller presented 'Australia's first jazz band' at his Sydney National Theatre and Melbourne's Bijou Theatre.<sup>74</sup> The band played what was "most recognisable as popular music of the day, namely, instrumental ragtime and ragtime song", only to be followed on stage by a boxing kangaroo.<sup>75</sup> Bendrodt also converted the Moore Park Hall of Industries into the Palais Royal, which was advertised as the most refined venue in Sydney.<sup>76</sup> Along with the Wentworth Cafe Ballroom (Wentworth Hotel) and Dixieland at Clifton Gardens, the Palais was the premier dance venue into the mid-1930s. It was usurped by the Trocadero, situated on the city's main thoroughfare, George Street, which Bendrodt opened in 1936, at a cost of £350 000 and a capacity for two thousand people, with the Frank Coughlan Orchestra.<sup>77</sup>

With the influx of (predominantly North American) servicemen throughout the Second World War, alternatives to the town hall venues and department store

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<sup>70</sup> Andrew Bissett, *Black Roots White Flowers: A History of Jazz in Australia*, Golden Press, Sydney, 1979, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>75</sup> John Whiteoak, 'Jazzing and Australia's First Jazz Band', *Popular Music*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1994, p.285.

<sup>76</sup> Bissett, 1979, p.12.

dances increased for jazz musicians with nightclub ventures designed to exploit the temporary clientele.<sup>78</sup> Sammy Lee, a cabaret and rock venue operator in the 1960s, ran the Roosevelt Club from 1940-46 in Orwell Street, Kings Cross.<sup>79</sup> The Booker T Washington Club in Surry Hills provided a relatively friendly dance environment for Negro soldiers on leave and ensured minimal harassment from white service personnel. As a jitterbugging venue where fast jazz tempos were expected, it became highly regarded amongst Australian musicians.<sup>80</sup> The Golden Key (1946), the Baltimore in Pitt Street (1943), the Yankee Doodle Club, and Romano's restaurant (opened in 1938) all benefited from service personnel with a good knowledge of, and thirst for jazz, particularly those venues which allowed musicians to stray from more commercial styles into bop.<sup>81</sup>

Post-war, without the benefit of well paid overseas service personnel, clubs like Romano's and the Roosevelt survived through the late 1940s to become "an extended workshop for professional musicians with progressive jazz interests",<sup>82</sup> although professional survival meant playing across a wide range of styles and band combinations. This brief account of the growth of influential venues does not incorporate the complexity of audience behaviours, dance styles or cross-fertilization of U.S. and Australian performance contexts evident during and after the war. However, two important points can be made regarding the local jazz environment preceding rock and roll's arrival. Firstly, the increased intensity of jazz performance in the war years provided a significant interest in faster dance styles, and the North American content by local performers. Secondly, the demand for live entertainment throughout the war from the U.S. services provided sufficiently established venue owners with spectacular profits. Sammy Lee and Abe Saffron were two such entrepreneurs willing to construct individual empires attuned to the servicemen's tastes. Their influence in post-war entertainment

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<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p.64.

<sup>78</sup> Although some nightclubs, such as the Ambassador's and Smith's Oriental existed through the 1920s, where more 'shmaltsy' styles were considered appropriate within the more rarefied settings (*ibid.*, p.22).

<sup>79</sup> Susan Borham, 'The golden era of Sydney's nightclubs', *Sydney Sun-Herald*, 6th January, 1991, p.24. Lee had come to Australia as a drummer with The Americanadians in 1937. The club was taken over by Abe Saffron in 1948.

<sup>80</sup> Bissett, 1979, p.85. The Booker T Club was an influential venue for many later local players — Graeme Bell, Don Burrows, Rolph Pommer etc.

<sup>81</sup> Bruce Johnson, *The Oxford Companion To Australian Jazz*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1987, p.263.

extended to a range of dance clubs and bars, where both excelled in maintaining 'prohibition cabaret' venues in periods where late night alcohol trading was illegal. The music venue proprietors who profited most from the liberalisation of drinking laws in 1955 were those prepared to trade illegally throughout the immediate post-war period.

#### **IV. Liquor Law 1788-1955**

Not unlike the development of British drinking regulations, Australian liquor licensing history has unfolded within the context of several competing discourses concerning the appropriate use of (male) leisure time. From the outset home duties, family life, sobriety and a strong work ethic became powerful goals of state management, with leisure policies intimately linked to the workplace. Drinking sites were thus presented as the Other of home and industry. The social costs of single-sex comradeship (the pub as the central site of 'Aussie mateship') and the 'wasteful' hours spent drinking had to be weighed against the undeniable economic benefits of alcohol consumption. The popularity of hotels as an alternative leisure site to the home and domesticity made them a natural target of church and temperance groups for reform (if not prohibition). Milton Lewis has argued that industry regulation has been historically incapable of reconciling the obvious fiscal benefits of alcohol tax revenue and high industry employment with governments' traditional emphasis on health policies, welfare policies and public order.<sup>83</sup> Such policy conflicts cannot be disassociated from the development of licensed music venues. Indeed, concerns with the stability of work and home life, 'rational' leisure choices and the maintenance of public order were skillfully argued in countering the possible financial and cultural benefits of evening hotel entertainment for a remarkably long period in NSW.

Until the 1880s, Australian hotel licences were granted and monitored by local magistrates in a similar manner to music hall and saloon licences in Britain. Governor Macquarie's building regulation amendments in 1837 provided an

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<sup>82</sup> *ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>83</sup> Lewis, 1992, pp.1-2.



increased distinction between drinking and other retail premises.<sup>84</sup> The establishment of separate public and parlour bars, with appropriate clientele encouraged for each room, began from 1840. After the 1882 Liquor Act, Licensing Courts were established to replace magistrates' authority, and midnight closing time reduced to 11 p.m.<sup>85</sup> By the 1870s, NSW had 2400 licensed publicans for a population of 540 000. Temperance movements, well organised and given qualified support from church and other organisations, became effective lobby groups for the abolition (or at least reduction) of licensed premises, to the extent that publicans formed the Licensed Victuallers' Association of NSW (LVA) in 1873.<sup>86</sup> Many of the temperance groups mirrored similar organisations in England and the United States: the Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed as an associate society of the American organisation.<sup>87</sup> While some groups demanded outright prohibition, others sought compromise with the LVA and more practicable legislation. The NSW Political Association for the Suppression of Intemperance, formed in 1866, called for the reduction of premises through the English practice of local polling, district plebiscites to gauge the number of drinking sites desired within communities.<sup>88</sup> The 1898 Liquor Act set new accommodation standards, fixed trading hours from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. six days a week, and prohibited music and dancing in hotels.<sup>89</sup> The temperance movement achieved success under the 1905 Liquor (Amendment) Act, which introduced a minimum drinking age of eighteen, and capped the number of licences within the State. More importantly, local polling procedures were introduced. Local polls were held in 1907, resulting in two hundred and ninety three hotel closures, and in 1910 and 1913, with another fifty one closures.<sup>90</sup>

The temperance campaigners' greatest success, however, undoubtedly lay in the 1916 Liquor Act amendments introducing 6 p.m. closing. The popular reasons

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<sup>84</sup> Freeland, 1966, pp.55, 68, 141.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>86</sup> Australian Hotels Association, *A History of the Australian Hotels Association in New South Wales 1873-1988*, 1988, p.4. The LVA vowed to protect its members against "vexatious or malicious prosecutions arising out of the pursuit of their business".

<sup>87</sup> Anthea Hyslop, 'Temperance, Christianity and Feminism: The Women's Christian Temperance Union of Victoria 1887-97', *Historical Studies*, vol. 17, no. 66, 1976, p.27. The society also campaigned for world peace, the suffragette movement and eight hour working days (pp.33, 39).

<sup>88</sup> Lewis, 1992, p.53.

<sup>89</sup> Australian Hotels Association, 1988, p.13.

<sup>90</sup> *ibid.*

behind this amendment have largely been attributed to the drunken soldiers' riot at Casula and Central stations on the 14th of February, 1916.<sup>91</sup> The perceived adverse influence of alcohol on the war effort was probably a greater factor, and this was emphasised at rallies for 6 p.m. closing. The Secretary of the Temperance Alliance argued that drink was "more dangerous than submarines"; in the referendum debate on closing times, the Alliance declared that "six was the patriotic hour".<sup>92</sup> Temperance groups found a more compelling argument, however, in the inequity of retail trading hours. Hotels remained exempt from the 1900 Early Closing Act, which forced all shops to close at 6 p.m:

[It is] a scandal that a civilized — not to say Christian — country should close shops for the sale of bread, and keep open places for the sale of intoxicants until eleven. It is a piece of mental and moral topsy-turveydom that permits and perpetuates such a state of things.<sup>93</sup>

A referendum was held on the 10th of June 1916, where the electorate could record a vote for each of the hours between 6 and 11 p.m. With a majority of 138 485, six o'clock closing became legislation on the 21st of July.<sup>94</sup> In 1919 further Liquor Act amendments extended 6 p.m. closing until another referendum was held. Local polling was abolished in favour of a Licences Reduction Board, empowered to reduce the number of licences in each electorate according to voter populations.<sup>95</sup>

Despite the Licence Reductions Board calling for 8 p.m. closing as early as 1934 (citing the "problem of police enforcement"<sup>96</sup>) and the appalling drinking conditions it produced, 6 p.m. closing in NSW was enforced for nearly forty years. Descriptions of drinking after work hours — the 'six o'clock swill' — have shaped the national memory of Australian leisure habits, and reinforced the no-frills style of pub consumption. Walter Phillips correctly states that 6 p.m. closing did "not

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<sup>91</sup> Up to 10 000 soldiers at the Casula base marched to the south-western suburb of Liverpool, vandalised the Commercial Hotel and obtained its liquor supply. Commandeering a train, they arrived at Central Station, where clashes with station staff and police resulted in one death and several casualties. "The soldiers then proceeded to riot through the streets of the city ... the Holman Cabinet closed all licensed premises until 6 a.m. the next day" (Australian Hotels Association, 1988, p.15).

<sup>92</sup> Walter Phillips, 'Six O'Clock Swill: The Introduction Of Early Closing of Hotel Bars in Australia', *Historical Studies*, vol. 19, no. 75, October, 1980, pp.261, 263.

<sup>93</sup> The Methodist Spectator cited in *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Australian Hotels Association, 1988, p.15.

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, p.15. The (United) LVA achieved legislation allowing compensation for licensees whose premises were closed by the Board. The Board subsequently lived up to its name, reducing licence numbers by one thousand over the next ten years.

<sup>96</sup> Lewis, 1992, p.74.

determine the quantity of liquor consumed, only the conditions and manner in which much of it was consumed".<sup>97</sup> The archetypal layout of the corner pub developed to accommodate the cattle-call conditions of the peak hour rush from five to six o'clock. The removal of billiard and darts rooms, and 'personal' service; the linoleum counter for fast service; and the interior decoration of tiled walls (for easier cleaning) all increased the volume of drinkers within limited space. The 'Legend of the Swill', as Graeme Turner explains, produces powerful memories which continue to be used in evoking national identities and characteristics:

In an interview in the American magazine *Rolling Stone* in 1984, the Australian rock band Men At Work regaled the reporter with memories of the swill in Melbourne, offering an apparently gratuitous account of local customs which it is highly unlikely that they were old enough to experience.<sup>98</sup>

Conditions improved slightly with the introduction of restaurant licences for hotels in 1946, allowing liquor sales with meals between midday and 2.30 p.m., and 6 to 8.30 p.m.<sup>99</sup> This did little to stop the popularity of restaurants and nightclubs who illegally served alcohol after 6 p.m. Sydney nightclub owners were constantly brought before the Licensing Court for selling liquor unlawfully. Large profits were to be made by hotels willing to supply clubs with beer sold at black market prices. Nightclubs could legally serve drinks if patrons had ordered them (usually by telephone before arriving at the premises) before 5 p.m., when orders were made to hotels and wine merchants, and bottles subsequently labelled to the appropriate customers. Such unwieldy procedures made policing of licences extraordinarily difficult. In attempting to give evidence against the Sunset Club at Potts Point, the Chief of the Consorting Squad found it "difficult to say whether liquor was sold unlawfully or had been lawfully ordered by customers during legitimate trading hours".<sup>100</sup> The legal difficulties of punishing proprietors like Sammy Lee were irrelevant when financial relationships between club owners and police were commonly acknowledged, if not openly accepted.

The absurdities of 6 p.m. closing, and the black market mentality it produced, became evident in the Liquor Royal Commission headed by Justice A.V. Maxwell throughout 1952. Responding to increasing press criticism, and overseas

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<sup>97</sup> Phillips, 1980, p.266.

<sup>98</sup> Fiske, Hodge and Turner, 1987, p.4.

<sup>99</sup> Australian Hotels Association, 1988, p.25.

<sup>100</sup> 'Subterfuge on Liquor', *Sydney Sun*, 13th November, 1953, p.4.

perceptions of 6 p.m. closing as a “sign of savagery, not civilization”,<sup>101</sup> Maxwell was given wide terms of reference by the Premier to investigate all aspects of the industry. In hearings before the Commission nightclub owners admitted to illegal liquor sales, and hinted at the regular payment of consorting squad officers, and criminal underworld connections.<sup>102</sup> In his report to the Government in February 1954, Maxwell recommended that it no longer be an offence to have an interest in more than one hotel; that the hours allowing liquor served with meals lengthened; additional club licences be granted; and local polling not be re-introduced.<sup>103</sup> These findings underscored the general, yet significant belief in liberalisation. After studying overseas trading hours and licensing procedures, Maxwell recommended that hotels should have a later closing time. The trading hours question was put to a referendum by the Cahill Labor Government on the 13th of November, 1954 (see Figures One and Two). The 10 p.m. closing option won by a slight margin (902 532 votes to 892 740).<sup>104</sup> Extensive amendments to the Liquor Act allowed hotels to trade from 10 a.m. to 6.30 p.m., and from 7.30 to 10 p.m. They could also serve alcohol through the 6.30 - 7.30 ‘tea break’ and with meals to midnight, with a special permit.<sup>105</sup> The new trading hours came into effect on the 1st of February, 1955.

The temperance movement had failed to confront several problems in maintaining its influence with State governments. As the Second World War began to fade from memory, the difficulties in expounding 6 p.m. closing as an instrument of sober commitment to national duty became apparent. The Maxwell findings presented a number of reasoned arguments against the maintenance of semi-prohibition policies. Comparisons with international experience — notably the relaxed nature of European consumption — complemented traditional fears that Sydney lacked the cosmopolitan qualities to be regarded as a ‘mature’ and sophisticated city.

Maxwell provided compelling evidence that early closing times produced the

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<sup>101</sup> ‘Sydney — the city that never grew up’, *Sydney Sun*, 4th January, 1953, p.13.

<sup>102</sup> It was reported at the Commission that a farewell dinner for the Metropolitan Police Superintendent was held at Sammy Lee’s, where the Superintendent was given £600, and “liquor was consumed on the premises ... in breach of the law” (Maxwell cited in Borham, 1991, p.25).

<sup>103</sup> Australian Hotels Association, 1988, p.29.

<sup>104</sup> Lewis, 1992, p.79.



*England  
America  
and France*



# show the benefits of civilised drinking hours

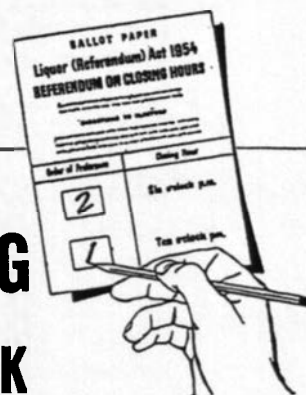
Sensible, convenient hours are a proved success in other countries—  
also in other States of Australia.

10 o'clock closing will . . . enable men and women to drink in quiet  
and comfort . . . encourage moderation through leisurely drinking  
under more congenial conditions.

**VOTE FOR**

**CIVILISED DRINKING**

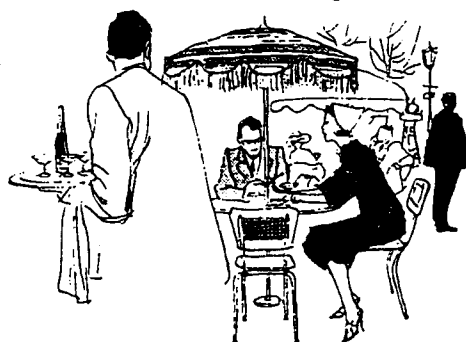
**VOTE FOR 10 O'CLOCK**



Authorized by R. D. Hadfield. ULVA (N.S.W. Branch), 418 Elizabeth Street, Sydney

UN. 2. 1954

Figure 1. United Liquor Victuallers Association, Ten o'clock closing referendum advertisement, 1954. Tooth and Co. Ltd Archives, Noel Butlin Archives Research Centre, Canberra, File Z223.



*England  
America  
and France*

# show the benefits of civilised drinking hours

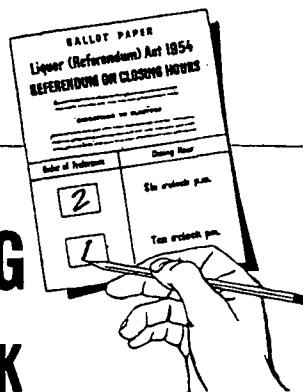
Sensible, convenient hours are a proved success in other countries—  
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10 o'clock closing will . . . enable men and women to drink in quiet  
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under more congenial conditions.

**VOTE FOR**

**CIVILISED DRINKING**

**VOTE FOR 10 O'CLOCK**



Authorized by R. D. Hadfield. ULVA (N.S.W. Branch), 418 Elizabeth Street, Sydney

L.R.5.RSL

Figure 1. United Liquor Victuallers Association, Ten o'clock closing referendum advertisement, 1954. Tooth and Co. Ltd Archives, Noel Butlin Archives Research Centre, Canberra, File Z223.

To the rest  
of the world  
our hotel hours  
look as silly as  
this 1920 fashion



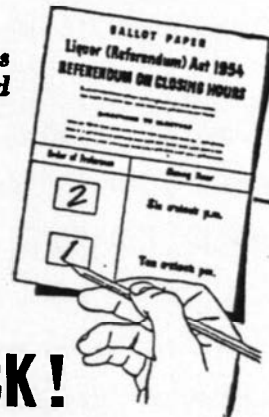
## BRING OUR DRINKING LAWS UP-TO-DATE!

Other countries—other States—have proved the success of sensible, congenial hours. Your vote for 10 o'clock, on 13th November, will make your local hotel a pleasant community centre, where men and women can gather with their friends and neighbours, in a dignified, relaxing atmosphere. Let's get rid of the "evils associated with 6 o'clock closing" and bring in grown-up leisurely drinking conditions as enjoyed elsewhere.

\* Remember, with 10 o'clock closing, hotels will be required by law to close bars and lounges between 6.30 and 7.30 p.m.

**VOTE FOR**

**CIVILISED DRINKING  
VOTE FOR 10 O'CLOCK!**



Authorised by R. D. Hadfield, U.L.V.A. (N.S.W. Branch), 418 Elizabeth Street, Sydney.

L.R. 4.24

Figure 2. United Liquor Victuallers Association, Ten o'clock closing referendum advertisement, 1954. Tooth and Co. Ltd Archives, Noel Butlin Archives Research Centre, Canberra, File Z223.

types of moral decline the temperance movement had predicted. As Diane Kirkby has noted, consumption did not fall, but was merely concentrated in the hours open to drinkers, while drinking at home increased dramatically.<sup>106</sup> It was doubtful that family life improved: the sanctity of the evening family meal was often shattered by the arrival of husbands unfit for socialising or other duties. Peak-hour trading did little for the women barmaids forced to work in such oppressive masculine contexts, which entrenched gender divisions concerning the places of drinking as appropriate leisure sites. The refusal of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and similar groups to contemplate repealing the ban on women in the public bar discounted the possibilities of more refined habits achieved through mingling of the sexes. In a practical sense, the Maxwell findings revealed the difficulties in policing a set of laws derived from moral guardianship. The level of police corruption not only revealed the large profits made by cabaret owners and 'sly-grog' shops in eluding legal strictures, but the extent to which police did not believe in the law themselves. The series of tactics deployed by drinkers in maximising their enjoyment within prescribed limits produced other public order problems. Binge drinking, achieved through ordering five to six drinks at a time to counter heightened demand, produced the 6 p.m. ritual of men staggering out into the streets, with vomiting the predictable effect of ten beers consumed in the space of an hour.

The brief outline of liquor legislation presented here establishes several themes of debate concerning leisure which lasted into the 1970s. The lengthy period of debate regarding trading hours established a re-examination of gender equity issues, highlighting the problems of women's (barmaids') pay, and corresponding rights to public drinking. The Maxwell Commission signified a comprehensive revision of alcohol's place within public order and work priorities, and a break from twentieth century legislation derived from Victorian values. The eventual understanding that early closing was a self-fulfilling prophecy in terms of public (male) behaviour opened the possibilities for the public house to constitute different functions in Australian society.

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<sup>106</sup> Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women's Work in Pubs*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp.159-163.



The liquor reform debates leading up to 1955 were equally important in directing the city's population to re-assess its place within national and international contexts. In relation to the following chapters, liquor law reform provided changes in Sydney citizens' sense of self; its social imaginary lurched towards partial embracing of 'imported' leisure forms. As discussed further in chapter 8, contemporary licensing debates (concerning the benefits in granting restaurants a licence to serve alcohol without providing a meal) have been formed within similar moral frameworks to 1950s arguments. The impending Sydney Olympic Games in 2000 has provoked renewed debate regarding the city's ability to contemplate alcohol consumption outside pub/club networks. Again, the notion that Sydney may be perceived within international contexts as an unsophisticated metropolis is an important factor in the desire for liquor law reform. The introduction of 10 p.m. closing in hotels in 1955 was the symbolic act of implicit trust in pub drinkers to 'behave themselves'. In the context of the next chapter, this break from previous 'nanny' policies coincided with a range of new leisure practices seemingly intent on testing the prescribed limits of orderly behaviour.

## Chapter 3

### Construction Sites 1955 - 1961

The Establishment wants order. The entrepreneurs want money, and the way to make the most money out of pop is to preserve at least the semblance of order.<sup>1</sup>

The evolution of 'legitimate' and 'popular' spheres of performance, as noted by Richard Waterhouse in the previous chapter, was also evident in the emergence of rock and roll in Australia, where the form was immediately branded as a 'popular' vulgarity in contrast to other established leisure forms. Predictions of the death of rock and roll as popular culture throughout the 1950s only served to highlight and confirm its popularity, and to sharpen the differences in style and content of 'legitimate' cultural forms. It is important to consider the eruption of Australian rock and roll performance in the contexts of post-war society. In his analysis of economic and social change in Australia in the 1950s, Nicholas Brown believes national governments' concerns resided in "the practices of governing the new spaces of post-war prosperity — the more private spaces of citizenship, consumption, the local community, the intimacy of relationships and the individual personality".<sup>2</sup> The youthful rock and roller presented problems in the broader interconnections of citizenship and consumption, particularly in youth's attempts to carve out physical and discursive spaces at odds with renewed calls of commitment to family and local community. The economic boom coinciding with the conservative Liberal Menzies Government throughout the 1950s provided a different set of problems of state management, in curbing the various 'excesses' of an increasing consumer culture. The rock and roll performer or fan came to embody youth's potential to unravel the careful construction of the 'rational' consumer/citizen developed during wartime. It is argued in this chapter that "organised selfishness"<sup>3</sup> became a framing discourse for 'wayward' youth leisure

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<sup>1</sup> George Melly, *Revolt Into Style: The Pop Arts in the 50s and 60s*, Oxford Press, Oxford, 1970/1989, p.38.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Brown, *Governing Prosperity: Social change and social analysis in Australia in the 1950s*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1995, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.11.

forms, perceived to encourage immediate self-gratification above the dutiful processes of nation- and local community - building. In this respect the term 'teenager' signified, by overlapping means, youth's renewed potential as consumers *and* delinquents, as it had in Britain and the United States. Brown's "milk bar economy"<sup>4</sup> metaphor is apt in describing the changes youth contributed to economic processes as consumers of significance. Perceptions of their emerging economic power, and of the healthy incomes enjoyed by the more successful rock and roll performers, were sharpened by older generations' immediate memories of wartime deprivation and post-war rationing.

This chapter examines the live music scenes evident immediately preceding rock and roll's arrival in Sydney, and the development of a local live rock and roll circuit from 1957. In keeping with the public/private concepts of 1950s governance identified by Brown, initial rock and roll venues can be regarded as 'construction sites' in three significant ways. Firstly, the initial hostility to local rock and roll required substantial, and ongoing, efforts by its practitioners to find suitable public venues for performance. Part of the challenge lay in the appropriation of civic monuments of public leisure, which, in reality, were forums of private respectability (the town hall and ballroom). Secondly, winning such spaces entailed a series of discursive battles as to the intrinsic worth of the new music form — its legitimacy within seats of government and the media had to be constructed, with each new fear regarding its underlying attitudes explained and attacked. Thirdly, the mythological resonance of Australian rock and roll's initial years remains apparent in the 1990s; its initial performers and venues established a powerful national symbolism of local tradition ('Oz Rock'), and the formation of a (crude) set of *industry* practices. Histories of rock and roll in Australia have been provided elsewhere, particularly the initial formation of bands, performance styles, audience loyalties and behaviour.<sup>5</sup> This chapter examines the emergence of dance hall, youth club and hotel circuits, and the uneven extents to which rock and roll was 'tolerated' by local government.

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.89.

<sup>5</sup> See: Jon Hayton and Leon Isackson, *Behind The Rock: The Diary of a Rock Band 1956-66*, Select Books, Sydney, 1990. John Bryden-Brown, *J'OK: The Official Johnny O'Keefe Story*, Doubleday, Sydney, 1982. David McLean (ed.) *Collected Stories of Australian Rock 'n' Roll*, Canetoad Publications, Sydney, 1991. Michael Sturma, *Australian Rock and Roll: The First Wave*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney, 1991. Lawrence Zion, 'Disposable Icons: Pop Music in Australia 1955-63' in *Meanjin*, vol. 47, no. 2, 1988.

## I. The Dance Hall Circuit

John Clare<sup>6</sup> and Bruce Johnson<sup>7</sup> have revealed the extent to which rock and roll emerged and benefited from the local jazz scene, where the traditional ballroom dance remained popular into the mid-1950s. Many of the musicians who were to form early rock bands had substantial training in jazz and swing bands. Before his 'conversion' to rock and rock and roll as a piano player with Alan Dale and the Houserockers, John Charter recalls a healthy jazz scene:

I used to go to the Surreyville [Ballroom] on City Road, near Broadway. That had a sprung dance floor, and when you danced the whole floor moved, it was funny. I was playing jazz in those days at the Grand Hotel in Rockdale, and the big band scene was coming to an end. Surreyville was great on a Sunday night, it would be jam-packed with dancers. Ted Hamilton was the singer, Frank Marcy on drums; I used to go just to watch the band ... everyone would dress up. I remember one guy, Barry, he had the chains, the big jacket with shoulder pads; he was a great jive dancer. He'd take off, and everyone would stand around and watch him. The first dances I had, even before Alan Dale, was Bells Ballroom, which is now the South Sydney Junior Leagues Club. It was a little corner Ballroom which grew into a giant club in the 50s. We played barn dances — *The Pride of Erin!* I would have been fifteen or sixteen. There was also a great Dixie band at Maroubra; the people would be jiving to Dixie.<sup>8</sup>

For those willing to acknowledge it at the time, the threats to traditional dance hall entertainment were evident in the growing popularity of jitterbugging and jiving, and the inclusion of 'variety' artists within town hall line-ups formerly reserved for swing and jazz. The Port Jackson Jazz Band (under Ray Price), Bobby Limb, Edwin Duff and Bob Gibson's Big Band were Sydney Town Hall regulars. The range of performers encapsulated traditional jazz, cabaret, swing and pop standards of the day. The concerts were also marked by the quarantining of vigorous jitterbuggers from the rest of the audience.<sup>9</sup> Anticipating what was to follow, swing/boogie pianist Les Welch proclaimed in 1954 that he had been playing rock and roll for twelve years.<sup>10</sup> Such claims cannot be entirely discounted. Certainly Welch's forms of r&b and boogie precipitated, and eased the

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<sup>6</sup> John Clare, *Bodgie Dada and the Cult of Cool*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, 1987, pp.32-50.

<sup>8</sup> John Charter, interview.

<sup>9</sup> Clare, 1995, pp.25, 34. Jitterbuggers were sometimes banned from ballrooms, for taking up too much space in competition with traditional ballroom dancers.

<sup>10</sup> In an article heralding the arrival of rock and roll in Australia, Welch states that he had been playing rock and roll for "the last 12 years" and that it was the "real jazz" ('Rock n' Roll is Here Now', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th August, 1954, p.54).

transition, to rock and roll.<sup>11</sup>

The tenuous consumption of overseas trends through record imports (relying on visiting U.S. sailors) changed with the introduction of international 'all-star rock 'n' roll shows' by U.S. entrepreneur Lee Gordon from 1957. For Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Gene Vincent and Bill Haley, the Australian tours in some instances were their first ventures outside North America. Gordon had expressed interest in such tours as early as 1953, but was dissuaded by prohibitive Australian tax laws.<sup>12</sup> His Sydney Stadium concerts provided a crucial forum for performers and audiences to witness international stars, usually at the height of their popularity. Reflecting on a career of rapidly accumulated profits and spectacular losses, five months before his death, Gordon confessed that he did not realise "the tremendous effects rock and roll would have on the lives and outlooks of Australian teenagers ... some people class me in the same category as the guy who imported the first rabbit into the country".<sup>13</sup>

The end of an earlier big jazz concert era seemed near with the appearance of Johnny O'Keefe on the bill for (North American star) Mel Tormé's Sydney Town Hall concert on the 22nd of November, 1955.<sup>14</sup> The increasing emphasis on audience reactions and participation did not sit well with jazz aficionados:

The promoters, in their eagerness to reap bountiful crops of government lettuce, have purposely and deliberately presented programmes with the accent on audience participation — the louder, the more successful the show — and by this very fact, are, or rather have created a monster that gives every indication of devouring its masters.<sup>15</sup>

The brash, louder music and dance forms which local youth audiences sought was found in the screening of *Blackboard Jungle* in Sydney in late 1955,<sup>16</sup> an imported cultural form which inspired local practices. The film, featuring Bill Haley and the

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<sup>11</sup> Johnson, 1987, p.43. Clare (1995, p.23) states that "r&b took on the dance function of the declining big bands, while modern jazz was designed for close up listening in small clubs".

<sup>12</sup> Bruce Smee, 'Lee Gordon Tells All', *Everybody's*, 17th April, 1963, pp.13-16, 52. Before 1957, overseas stars were required to pay double tax on their local earnings.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* Gordon also organised small Hawaiian tours for Elvis Presley, while never managing to bring Presley to Australia. Gordon's life reflected the most excessive of rock and roll mythologies; wanted by Sydney police on charges of pethidine addiction, he died in London in 1963 reportedly owing his U.S. creditors \$500 000 (*ibid.*, 4th December, 1963, pp.22-24).

<sup>14</sup> *Sydney Sun* advertisement, p.52.

<sup>15</sup> Ted Rigney, 'Brisbane Band Wagon', *Australian Music Maker*, vol. 1, no. 7, December, 1955, p.39.

<sup>16</sup> See Zion, 1988, pp.285-286.

Comets, inspired Alan Dale, a dance band singer, to form a group in the Haley mould (Dale had been singing professionally since 1951 with a seven piece dance band). Dale formed the Houserockers and began the first Sydney rock performances at Maroubra Memorial Hall in February, 1957.<sup>17</sup> The Haley performances also encouraged Johnny O’Keefe to abandon his successful ‘variety’ act on the Sydney Town Hall jazz bills in favour of rock and roll. The Jacobsen brothers — Col, Kevin and Keith — were similarly moved after watching *Blackboard Jungle* twelve times to form the KJ Quintet, later to become Col Joye and The Joye Boys.<sup>18</sup> While jazz combinations attempted to come to terms ideologically with the notion of rock and roll, the Dale, O’Keefe and Jacobsen bands established a live rock circuit of sorts. The major problem was finding enough venues. Besides opposition on moral and aesthetic grounds, the larger ballrooms were reluctant to concede that their traditional/swing nights were in decline. The Trocadero, the Surreyville and the Phyllis Bates ballroom in Pitt Street did begin to incorporate rock into their programs. The Trocadero’s revolving stage provided a forum for alternate performances between jazz and rock, and such compromises were successful for a short period.

The three bands staked out territories according to their own inner city circuits. O’Keefe and the Dee Jays performed at Paddington Police Boys Club, Leichhardt Police Boys Club, the Balmain Workingman’s Institute, and Newtown Police Boys Club. Dale and the Houserockers played at the Maroubra Memorial Hall, Alexandria Town Hall (for fourteen months), Botany and Mascot Town Halls and Mawsons, a private hall in Newtown. The south-western city circuit gradually expanded to other areas: the Cabramatta Civic Hall, Chatswood Dispensary Hall, the Brookvale Palais, the Lidcombe Paradance, the Oddfellows Hall at Newtown, and the Ironworkers Hall on George Street. The violence which accompanied some venues validated middle class fears of youthful vulgarity. Any romantic notions of violent crowd behaviour as encouraging signs of a broader anti-authority agenda were not shared by the musicians, who rightly perceived dance violence as a threat to an established live circuit. Incidences where local councils stopped dances in mid-performance were few. Dee Jays’ drummer Catfish Purser only recalls one time at “either Newtown or Balmain, where they came in and said

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<sup>17</sup> Alan Dale, interview. See also McLean, 1991. Maroubra is a popular beachside suburb.

'we have to close you down, the girls are being exposed to rude gestures and things'''.<sup>19</sup> O'Keefe's mannerisms with the microphone did upset authorities and audience ("he was rude ... he used to gyrate and do things with that long microphone and we would sit there with our mouths open"<sup>20</sup>). However, audience behaviour was a greater concern for police and councils, where the dance violence derived from a number of factors. As had occurred with the swing era, the rock dances attracted gangs and local youths eager to pick up girls. Similar to earlier dance practices, the banning of alcohol was countered by the surreptitious use of hip flasks in toilets. The consensus among performers, however, is that alcohol was not the major problem. Jealous male teenagers often fought between themselves, and with the bands, over girls, as performer Lonnie Lee recalls:

There was always potential for fights because a lot of boyfriends were very jealous of us; the girls were really taken by us. Many times their boyfriends would call out 'you queen'. Some of the guys would jump off the stage and get into them. Often they would go out the back and wreck your car. The amount of money I spent fixing my car after dances ...<sup>21</sup>

The typically blunt recollections of O'Keefe reveal that the sexual mythologies of the rock and roll lifestyle were evident from the beginning:

It wasn't grog that caused (fights). There was never much grog associated with the early days of rock and roll. There was a lot of sex ... It often seemed to me that all the girls wanted to do was fuck. It was so easy to get a chick if you were a rock star or even a rock muso. The girls just wanted to get close to their idols and root.<sup>22</sup>

10 p.m. closing of hotels was a further factor in upsetting the peaceful co-existence between bands and audiences. Many of the fights would break out between 11 and 12 p.m. as male teenagers, particularly biker gangs, left the pubs to attend the dances. The Capitol Ballroom on Chapel Road, Bankstown, the Buffalo Hall on George Street, and Mawson's dance in Newtown acquired reputations as the roughest venues. Dale and the Houserockers began performing at Mawson's, a private hall organised by Bill Mawson, a local boxing and dance instructor.<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> Sturma, 1991, p.16; John Byrell, *Bandstand .... and all that!* Kangaroo Press, Kenthurst, 1995, p.24.

<sup>19</sup> Catfish Purser, interview.

<sup>20</sup> The memories of a Manly girl in Stratton, 1992, p.153.

<sup>21</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview. For similar stories, see Isackson and Hayton, 1990, pp.12-13, 32-33.

<sup>22</sup> Johnny O'Keefe cited in Bob Rogers and Denis O'Brien, *Rock n' Roll Australia*, Cassell, Sydney, 1975, pp.24-25, 129.

<sup>23</sup> According to Stratton (1992, p.131), Bill Mawson established a jive school in the 1930s, and introduced the jitterbug after learning the steps from black sailors.

Mawson's dance challenged the Sunday Observance Act which was strictly policed by local authorities and church groups.<sup>24</sup> Alan Dale believes that its brief existence was due to the fact it was a private hall not owned by Marrickville Council. Despite the enlistment of bouncers from Ern McQuillan's local gymnasium, the venue turned into a "weekly bloodbath".<sup>25</sup> The increasing violence led Dale to sell the venue to O'Keefe, who managed to perform for two weeks before its permanent closure by Newtown police. The unpredictability of the security teams employed in policing venues did not encourage public safety. Many bands hired local toughs as bouncers, who at times were the sole causes of fights. The employment of petty criminals also didn't help:

Bouncers may have over - reacted at times, because a lot of the guys were criminals, although they weren't criminals like they are now — they were just into stealing, one or two may have been actual hit men. Others a bit further down the track hung around [nightclub/hotel entrepreneur] Abe Saffron, bodyguard types.<sup>26</sup>

The violent behaviour in some instances conformed to the moral panics surrounding youth subcultures, specifically the 'bodgie' panic of the 1950s.<sup>27</sup> Rock dances provided a visible platform of confrontation between youth and government in the second bodgies and widgies panic constructed by media and politicians between 1954 and 1959.<sup>28</sup> Reports of 'bodgie bashings' and 'bodgie riots' after the screening of rock and roll films were mostly fabricated. *Daily Mirror* and *Sun* reports concerning bodgie attacks in Sydney on the 19th of June, 1956 were revealed in the citing of police reports in parliament the next day to be elaborations of less spectacular pub fights.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Under s.19 of the 1908 Theatres and Public Halls Act, entertainment in public theatres and licensed halls was banned on Sundays, with the exception of 'sacred' religious entertainments. Drinking in hotels was prohibited, unless one could prove that they had travelled thirty miles outside their locality to do so.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Dale, interview.

<sup>26</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview.

<sup>27</sup> The 'bodgie' label applied to male teens is believed to have derived from Australian slang denoting inferiority, or being of dubious character (cf. 'dodgy'). The female equivalent, the 'widgie', also became widely used throughout this period. For an authentic account of local bodgie inflections of U.S. styles, see William Dick, *A Bunch of Ratbags*, Collins, London, 1965. A.E. Manning's *The Bodgie: A Study in Psychological Abnormality*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1958, also provides a revealing display of mainstream attempts to understand emerging youth attitudes. While noting that connections could be made to earlier youth subcultures, the title is representative of the study's overall approach.

<sup>28</sup> Stratton (1992, pp.2-11) documents an earlier milk bar bodgie era around 1948.

<sup>29</sup> NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 20th June, 1956. In the absence of the Colonial Secretary, the Opposition asked whether the Minister was "hep" to providing protection



Concerns with bodge and widgie behaviour presented the owners of local halls and ballrooms with management priorities in the adequate supervision of youth sexuality, 'appropriate' dancing and dress styles. Local councils, responsible for the management of town halls and other municipal venues, acted on behalf of their 'natural' constituencies — local residents — in closing the more violent dances. It is also clear that many dances were prohibited in the belief that all rock and roll performances constituted inappropriate behaviour for youth audiences and performers. The hiring of town halls by local councils proceeded according to the whims of local aldermen. No rules applied, apart from the often unspoken assumption that the hall be used for 'community' purposes. Dale, Joye, O'Keefe and other performers (particularly Johnny Rebb and Johnny Devlin) experienced an indiscriminate pattern of refusal by local councils to use public halls. The newly constructed Blackheath Community Hall enforced a rock ban, citing potential damage to the hall from "youngsters flinging themselves all over the place".<sup>30</sup> The Mayor of Botany Council, in prohibiting rock within the municipality's three halls, observed that rock musicians "don't play a piano in the accepted sense of the term".<sup>31</sup> The potential for hall damage at the dances was real, although consisting of minor nuisances: light bulbs broken, bubblers screwed off etc.<sup>32</sup> This compares favourably with the damages bill from a football club function at Coronation Hall later in the year.<sup>33</sup> The Mayor's comments revealed how practical considerations often corresponded with aesthetic judgements of performances. There were no corresponding local reports concerning the behaviour of local sportsmen.

An example of the ways in which the discourses of moral panic concerning juvenile delinquency, boddies, and rock affected performance opportunities can be found in the management of public halls at this time by the western suburbs council of Parramatta. The area in early 1958 had already experienced a number of bodge panics constructed around their presence within the city's commercial centres, where their rights as consumers were questioned by local shopkeepers. Cafe owners protested that they could not install television sets in their shops for

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of the "squares" of the community who needed protection from "anti-social" midnight screenings of rock films (NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 26th February, 1958, p.2288).

<sup>30</sup> 'Rock-n-roll banned', *Sun-Herald*, 3rd March, 1957, p.7.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Quieter Cats May Carry On', *Sun-Herald*, 16th May, 1957, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> Health and Building Report, Ordinary Meeting, Botany Council, 10th April, 1957.

fear that “bodgies and widgies will crowd their shops and keep more stable types of customers away”.<sup>34</sup> While other shops appreciated the commercial opportunities (one cafe owner planned to make space for a dance floor), later local press reports discussed the effect of bodgie behaviour on young girls in the area.<sup>35</sup> The patent unsuitability of ‘official’ youth entertainment in the area was highlighted by the concerns of a Wentworthville School of Arts concert, where the popularity of the Wild Cats rock band contrasted sharply with the rest of the bill. It became clear to the organisers what the local teenagers wanted:

A near rock ‘n’ roll riot occurred in the Wentworthville School of Arts last Thursday night ... The trouble started during a solo by a tenor. A girl yelled to the singer, “crazy”. The tenor was singing *Sonny Boy* when the teenagers burst into a loud applause, giving a hint it was time for him to stop. During his next song, *God Understands*, a youth shouted “You ought to be in church, mate”. After the tenor had walked off stage the group of teenagers began to chant “Bring out the Wild Cats” ... when the Wild Cats commenced their act, dancing broke out at the rear of the hall.<sup>36</sup>

Within this climate O’Keefe and the Dee Jays applied for use of the Granville Town Hall for a ‘Teen Age Hops’ dance on Tuesday night, the 12th of August, 1958. The band had previously played at the Parramatta Town Hall, despite a council resolution of the 20th of May, 1957 that “town hall bookings be refused to rock and roll hirers”.<sup>37</sup> Permission for the Dee Jays had been granted previously by a clerk unaware of the 1957 policy, (or perhaps O’Keefe or his manager had successfully presented a different image of the band to the clerk). The Granville dance was refused, and O’Keefe promptly labelled the Mayor “a square ... we’ve checked with people who live near the Granville Town Hall, and they have made no complaints about our two earlier dances there” (see Figure Three).<sup>38</sup> O’Keefe’s manager Lyell Pratt demanded to know the specific reasons for the ban, and his letter to the Town Clerk was voted by the Council to be discussed in private committee by the aldermen (who feared a public confrontation from local fans at the next Council meeting). In a statement to the *Parramatta Advertiser*, the Mayor cited the ban as “a matter of policy” without elaboration.<sup>39</sup> Pratt’s objections were

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<sup>33</sup> Mayoral Minute, Ordinary Meeting, Botany Council, 9th October, 1957. The football club damage included holes in doors and torn light fittings from walls.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Bodgies Terror Reign Bars TV’, *Parramatta Advertiser*, 27th March, 1958, p.1

<sup>35</sup> ‘Bodgies and Girlfriends Welcome Here’, *ibid.*, 10th April, 1958, p.16.

<sup>36</sup> “‘Rock’ Riot Here: Hep Cats Ruin Fine Night’, 1958, *ibid.*, n.p.d.

<sup>37</sup> Minute 1297 of Ordinary Meeting, Parramatta Council.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Mayor is a square’, *Sun-Herald*, 10th August, 1958, p.15.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Civic Square? What’s That Asks Mayor’, *Parramatta Advertiser*, 21st August, 1958, p.1.

dismissed, while legal advice confirmed the Council's opinion regarding its powers under the 1919 Local Government Act to refuse the hire of its Town Hall without due reason.<sup>40</sup>

Confronted with a prohibitionist strategy (and in the case of Parramatta Council) accompanied by unexplained and implicit agendas, O'Keefe and his management devised alternative tactics. First, they engaged the councils in a battle of semantics regarding the nature and definition of dance entertainment. Parramatta Council specified that town hall bookings be refused to "*rock and roll* hirers"; Botany Council stated that "*no dancing of rock and roll or similar type*" was permitted.<sup>41</sup> O'Keefe and Pratt humbly suggested that their performances could not be described within these terms: "we do not concede that our dances are 'rock and roll' nor do we advertise them as such. Our band plays modern Rhythm and we advertise our dances as 'Teenage Hops'".<sup>42</sup> O'Keefe similarly proclaimed that his band did not play rock and roll, "... it's dead. We only play the 40 top tunes you hear on the air every day ... I wonder if an American rock and roll star came to Parramatta, whether the council would ban him. I cannot picture them saying 'no' to Elvis Presley".<sup>43</sup>

In unsuccessfully presenting their performances as 'modern dances', O'Keefe recognised the semantic significance of the 'rock and roll' description. The words themselves came to signify a range of associated folk devils and practices — smoking, uninhibited dancing, dress and sexual behaviour (and the same can be said of rock's initial development within Britain and the U.S). O'Keefe's denial of the fundamental nature of the music reveals the difficulty he and others experienced in engaging the councils' concerns on their own terms. In stressing that it was better for teenagers to have "proper supervision rather than lolling about the streets, hotels and in milk bars",<sup>44</sup> O'Keefe engaged in a discursive argument which he could hardly hope to win. Clearly the *sites* of such music

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<sup>40</sup> 'Letting of Town Hall — Legal Advising', Parramatta City Council file no. 132/C, 15th October, 1958.

<sup>41</sup> Minute 1297 of Ordinary Meeting, Parramatta Council, Mayoral Minute no. 13; Botany Council Meeting, 26th June, 1957.

<sup>42</sup> Lyell Pratt letter to Parramatta Town Clerk, 5th August, 1958 (Council file no. 132/C).

<sup>43</sup> Johnny O'Keefe cited in the *Parramatta Advertiser*, 21st August, 1958, p.1; O'Keefe cited in 'Banned Band's New Bid', *ibid.*, 18th September, 1958, p.18.

performances were not the central issue, but the *practices* of youth once inside them. Local and State governments shared concerns regarding youth behaviour in milk bars, hotels and on the street; simply switching the 'vulgarity' of rock dancing and jiving to town halls did not eliminate the offending practices. Equally, abandoning the term 'rock and roll' denied the central significance of the term to its performance, and implicitly acknowledged the 'worthless' nature of the music stated by some authorities. In presenting himself and the Dee Jays as part of the solution, O'Keefe perhaps confirmed wider opinion that there was a problem requiring legislative response.

While some councils prohibited live rock entirely, others persisted with various methods of control. Throughout the 1940s and 50s the Bankstown Capitol ballroom had acquired a reputation for ballroom dancing, cabaret, and as a centre of community activity (Smith Family Ladies' Auxiliary dance and card nights were held every Tuesday in the 1940s; old time dances and jazz were performed Saturday nights).<sup>45</sup> With a capacity of fifteen hundred, the ballroom was the obvious choice for corporate balls and charity fundraising. Local concerns were inevitable once Bill McColl (promoter of the earlier jazz Sydney Town Hall concerts) made it a popular rock venue:

The Capitol was well known for its fights. I was there one time a really big fight started, people screaming everywhere and they were heading for the stage. [Col]Joye got his guitar by the neck and started swinging it above his head. If anyone was near him, they would have got their head knocked off. It was a full on brawl. I can't really say that he attracted those types of people; maybe because the venue was close to a pub.<sup>46</sup>

The construction of a wire compound built for crowd/stage control signified the Capitol's new function as a youth centre, while the sight of seventeen bouncers in dinner suits provided an absurd attempt at reminding rock and rollers of the venue's 'civil' origins. Bankstown Council responded in 1960 by imposing a dress code for Capitol audiences. On the 2nd of August, acceptable dress for girls was deemed to be "frocks, skirts and blouses, flat or high heeled shoes, cardigans and jumpers and hair combed and tidy".<sup>47</sup> Boys were to be soberly attired in

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<sup>44</sup> O'Keefe cited in *ibid.*, 10th August, 1958, p.15.

<sup>45</sup> *Bankstown Torch*, 22nd October, 1975, p.18.

<sup>46</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview.

<sup>47</sup> *Bankstown Torch*, 4th of August, 1960, p.1: "The prohibited dress for girls includes stockingettes, slacks, shorts, bermuda shorts, matadors and thongs".

# The Advertiser

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## CIVIC SQUARE? What's That Asks Mayor

If the Mayor of Parramatta (Ald. Mahoney) is a "square" he doesn't know about it!

"I may be old-fashioned but what is a square?" the Mayor asked when told that teenagers' band leader, Johnny O'Keefe, had described him during television shows as a square.

O'Keefe twice last week attacked Ald. Mahoney on television for Parramatta City Council's refusal to allow him use of Parramatta City Hall for his teenage dances.

"I'm afraid young Johnny is on the wrong track when he attacks me."

"I don't think I'm a square and I didn't ban his dances."

"Parramatta council decided as a matter of policy long before I took the chair, that rock-n-roll would not be allowed in the town hall."

"I didn't ban this type of dancing, the council imposed the ban, and while the policy stands the officers of the council have no option but to implement it."

### ● REVIEW

Alderman Mahoney said that council at its meeting on Monday night would consider a letter from O'Keefe asking for a review of the situation.

Meantime, aldermen of the City Council have quietly visited a number of O'Keefe's dances to acquaint themselves at first hand with O'Keefe's claim that his teenage type of dancing is not rock-n-roll.

Alderman Mahoney said yesterday he knew of no complaints about the actual behaviour of the teenagers at O'Keefe's dances but he had been advised that

they had caused damage at some halls in which the dances had been held.

### ● IN CAMERA

Parramatta Council recently rejected a move to discuss in open meeting the banning of O'Keefe's dances.

Aldermen overwhelmingly rejected a move by Aldermen Olsen and Valry to have letters from O'Keefe's manager (Mr. L. Pratt) and O'Keefe's supporters discussed in open meeting.

Letters protesting against the ban and seeking reasons for its imposition were placed before council in committee at the conclusion of the ordinary meeting.

Consideration was deferred until next Monday.

O'Keefe adamantly maintains that he does not play rock-n-roll music and claims that rock-n-roll is dead.

A council officer told reporters during the meeting that O'Keefe had been granted permission to hold dances in the Parramatta City Hall and Granville Town Hall "because of a mistake."

The officer said that when the permission was granted the fact that there was a motion on the books banning rock-n-roll had been overlooked.

O'Keefe said that Ald. Mahoney and the Town Clerk, Mr. Jameson had attended for a short time the last dance staged by his band in the Parramatta City Hall.

Mr. Jameson, he said, had told him that large



MAHONEY —  
SQUARE?



O'KEEFE —  
YEAH!

numbers of letters protesting against the banning of the dances had been received by council and would be listed for discussion.

O'Keefe said his dances were a valuable aid in keeping teenage children off the streets.

"We don't play rock-n-roll. It's dead. We only play the 40 top tunes you hear on the air every day."

"We have two tunes of our own on the hit parade now."

Figure 3. Parramatta Advertiser. 21st August, 1958, p.1.

“shirt and tie, sports shirt, sports trousers, sandals or shoes, cardigans and jumpers and hair combed and tidy”.<sup>48</sup> The attempts to re-establish the more refined atmosphere of past ballroom practices, and eliminate the dress code most synonymous with rock and roll — the bodgie combination of t-shirts and jeans — was not entirely successful. Given the troublesome nature of the venue, drummer Leon Isackson “wouldn’t have been surprised if there was something going on ... I think [promoter] Bill McColl was probably slinging something to someone at the council to stop the Capitol closing down”.<sup>49</sup>

Histories of the more ‘respectable’ ballrooms reveal that the problems of violence and alcohol smuggling were not new to local councils. The Trocadero and Surreyville had experienced such problems since the 1930s.<sup>50</sup> In 1957 a group of ballroom dancing organisations, education authorities and a parents’ committee initiated a ‘Dance Week’ in an attempt to convince rock and rollers of the advantages of ballroom dancing. The ‘Dance Week’ committee asserted that “the crude exhibitionism of many rock and roll dancers is a cover up for a lack of elementary knowledge of basic rhythm and dancing ... lack of ability should not be used as an excuse for noisy, vulgar displays that often become publicly offensive”.<sup>51</sup> Rock dancing also ended the polite etiquette of ballroom dancing, where one danced with a number of partners. The developing habit of girls dancing all night with the same partner, “lights turned low, and (going) home together cosily with him in a car, may place a moral strain on the young couple”.<sup>52</sup> Dancing with several partners meant little opportunity for serious physical attachment to develop; couples dancing exclusively with each other could lead to other things altogether.

The distaste of ballroom proprietors towards rock was not a singularly aesthetic judgement. The popularity of lounge/beer garden rock and roll ended their monopoly as dance venues. With their financial viability threatened, ballroom owners mounted an attack on pub rock and roll in the best Temperance

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

<sup>50</sup> Stratton (1992) p130. Before the 1950s, the Surreyville was less respectable, due to its lenient policy on pre-dance drinking.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Ballroom Dancing Versus Rock n’ Roll’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th June, 1957, p.5.

<sup>52</sup> Barbara Henderson, ‘Mixed-up kids who won’t mix’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1st July, 1956, p.21.

Alliance tradition. A concerted campaign was established in the south-western suburb of Rockdale by the Amusement Proprietor's Association, Australian National Dance Clubs, and the Rockdale Chamber of Commerce. This alliance of mutual (economic) interests believed that youth would become "habitual drinkers" on a large scale as under age drinking was "rife".<sup>53</sup> They also argued that ballrooms were significantly disadvantaged as unlicensed premises, with State governments looking after brewery interests, and, given the "large capital investments" in ballrooms, believed a parliamentary investigation was required.<sup>54</sup> The construction of moral outrage barely concealed wider motives. The coalition warned against widespread youth drinking, yet lobbied persistently for the licensing of ballroom premises. Press reports did not reveal that the President of the local Chamber of Commerce — a vocal opponent of the eighteen year old age entry to pubs — was also the owner of the Rockdale Paradance ballroom.<sup>55</sup>

The scarcity of venues led to rivalries largely ignored or understated by the initial performers determined not to offend colleagues or disrupt less complex industry mythologies. The consensual agreement among former accounts of the dance hall circuit suggest band rivalries in the best traditions of Australian mateship. Yet enough anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that friendly rivalry could extend to planned assaults on another venue's reputation if a rival dance became too popular. As Pratt had discovered in dealing with the aldermen of Parramatta Council, promoters and bands were forced to adopt a dual strategy regarding venue hire. The success of the dance was dependent upon the basic mixture of loud rock driven by guitars and drums, propelled by audience reaction: "watching the kids react was the biggest buzz for us".<sup>56</sup> These elements had to be understated in presentations to councils, where the goodwill of the local authorities rested on rock dances being more closely aligned with 'traditional' dance hall components. O'Keefe had a decided advantage in that his father was Mayor of Waverley. Alan Dale believes that certain venue closures were more

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<sup>53</sup> 'Sensational Disclosures: Leading Dance Associations Back Members of Parliament for Investigation', *The Rockdale News*, 16th July, 1959, p.1. Ballrooms were regulated by the Theatres and Public Halls Act 1908, which prohibited liquor licenses for either theatres or halls.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Police Superintendent of Licenses, letter to the Department of the Attorney General and Justice, 30th June, 1959, 1944-62 Liquor Act General Papers, file 61/21345, NSW Archives. Apart from stating the conflicts evident in their arguments, the Superintendent also cited the large differences in investment in obtaining hotel and ballroom licenses.

than a coincidence:

O'Keefe did it to me in two venues. His father was the Mayor at Waverley, and he put screws on the council at Liverpool to close us down, and the following week O'Keefe opened there. That happened at Newtown too. In our ads we said 'make no mistake, the genuine dance is at Liverpool Town Hall with Alan Dale and the Houserockers this Wednesday night. Admission is four shillings'. And in the same paper [*Daily Telegraph*, 1st July, 1958] O'Keefe had an ad stating 'don't miss the big teenage hop with the Wild One himself, Johnny O'Keefe, at the Liverpool Town Hall, admission five shillings'. He opened on the Tuesday, and I'd been there a long time on the Wednesday ... in the end I had to close. We were the best of mates, but we were the best of enemies too. The council used to just say it's too noisy, too many complaints from residents. But we used to say 'how come you don't get complaints from the Tuesday night dance?'<sup>57</sup>

O'Keefe has also been accused of upsetting Col Joye's first night at Paddington Police Boys Club, after O'Keefe had left the venue in a disagreement about wages.<sup>58</sup> Lonnie Lee observed that

There was an inbuilt rivalry in so much as if you wanted to expand and play other suburbs, you'd ring up a Town Hall and find that someone else had it ... I know O'Keefe was very aggressive, he was quite a pusher and really for the industry's benefit. I would say that the only aggression was between those two (Joye and O'Keefe). If there was any skullduggery, it was between those two. Col looked at Alan as a very big threat, because Alan was the first to start, had a great band and a big following, and he was treated in a way to try and eliminate him.<sup>59</sup>

The disruptive tactics of bands and promoters in ensuring violence at rival venues (with O'Keefe it seems as a prime offender) only served to confirm councils' fears. Of course, not all councils adopted the rock ban. Rockdale Council prohibited rock in its Arncliffe Coronation Hall, but encouraged bands to use its Town Hall, situated some distance from residential areas. The policy was in some respects a brave one, given that the local Chamber of Commerce had stated that juvenile delinquency was "flourishing" in the area.<sup>60</sup> The Council seemed to understand the wider discourses operating upon the construction of juvenile delinquency fears:

I am getting a bit long in the tooth but I do not think there is anything wrong with rock and roll dancing except that I cannot do it. Dancing is one of the best ways of keeping young people off the streets ... Many people are under the impression that the youth of today is on the downgrade and teenage delinquency is rife. But I

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<sup>56</sup> John Charter, interview.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Dale, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Byrell, 1995, p.27. A piano was smashed amid fights with the Joye Boys. O'Keefe would often raise the band's fee immediately before going on to perform.

<sup>59</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview.

<sup>60</sup> This led to the district Secretary of the Registered Clubs Association publishing a strong denial of under age drinking in the area (*St George Call*, 25th June, 1959, p.1).



think the teenagers of today with their rock and roll are no worse than the youth of the early 30s with their Charleston and jazz.<sup>61</sup>

Councillor Rigby's comments were a brief respite from the majority of media portrayals placing the 'new' music form at the centre of a generational slide into depravity. They are significant not just as an exceptional view offered by a local and State government member, but in placing rock and roll within broader youth leisure contexts. The rare reflection served to reveal the constructed nature of localised panics, and it is interesting to ponder how many others in authority had similar views which, due to various tabloid and local pressures, were never published.

## II. The Police Boys' Club Circuit

Increasing concerns with fights at dances led to a proposal from Constable Reg Dowton of Leichardt Police (in the city's inner west), who suggested supervised rock dances from 8 p.m. to 11.45 p.m. Dowton was given cautious approval for the dances, and Alan Dale hired the Redfern Police Boys' Club on Friday nights from the 4th of October, 1957. The success of the new venue led to O'Keefe following suit with Leichardt Police Boys' Club which began holding dances on the 6th of November, 1957; he and the Dee Jays later played at the Newtown Police Boys' Club.<sup>62</sup> While the use of local police did not totally eliminate violence,<sup>63</sup> it had obvious mutual advantages to musicians seeking solutions to the constant venue closures by councils and police. The behavioural boundaries imposed by local church and councils could be extended under the mantle of police supervision:

The police wanted a way of getting the kids in, and Reg Dowton approached Johnny to play at Newtown. That was unbelievable. We'd finish [ABC television program] *Six O'Clock Rock* and then have to race down there, and it would be packed outside. We'd set up, and then they'd let the doors open, and it would be jammed. They'd just sell coffee, tea, lemonade. Kids would have a few drinks outside, but alcohol was banned inside. They wouldn't let anybody in who was drunk. They were like the Blue Light Discos they have now ... everybody enjoyed

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<sup>61</sup> Rockdale alderman and State Member for Hurstville, W. Rigby cited in 'Ccl. Invites Rock n' Roll In Town Hall', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29th May, 1959, p.16; and in 'They'll let off steam', *Sun-Herald*, 21st June, 1959, p.36.

<sup>62</sup> Sturma, 1991, p.19.

<sup>63</sup> Johnny Devlin remembers playing at Bulli Police Boys Club, organised by dance teacher Bob Malcolm, until it was closed after a stabbing.

themselves. I liked playing the police clubs, because you were so close to the kids, and they enjoyed themselves so much.<sup>64</sup>

The regular appearance of O'Keefe et al at the clubs was an extension of club policy in providing street-cred alternatives to less wholesome youth leisure activities. The establishment of the Police Citizens Boys' Club movement is an example of the 'rational' institutional leisure approach adopted from British government practice, as outlined in chapter two. The first Club in Woolloomooloo in 1937 was established to provide an alternative to the activities of the infamous razor gangs who frequented the inner east dockside areas.<sup>65</sup> In opening the Club in 1937, Police Commissioner Mackay stated that "we stand as sentinels at the gateway of the child's mind ... it is ours to say what shall or shall not enter".<sup>66</sup> Public and private financial incentives ensured the growth of the clubs throughout Sydney. A Supreme Court ruling in 1957 held that the clubs were "public benevolent institutions", and therefore not subject to payment of land rates. The decision did not merely rest upon technical differences between public charities and "benevolent institutions". In justifying his decision, Justice Brereton noted the public benefit of the clubs in preventing juvenile delinquency.<sup>67</sup>

Use of the youth clubs as dance venues provided police with the opportunity to recruit club members, and counter the more violent elements of dance audiences simultaneously: "all the boys who come to the dances are enrolled as club members ... [the dancing] is primitive alright, but a wonderful safety valve when it's supervised".<sup>68</sup> The willingness of musicians to use the clubs revealed the desperation to perform before audiences solely interested in the music and dancing. Safety concerns, important in ensuring the longer term viability of venues, replaced any notions of rebellion which sections of the audience may have wished to attach to venues. Respectability meant the possibilities of an established live circuit and regularity of income.

The obvious popularity of hotels, police clubs and dance halls with teenagers

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<sup>64</sup> Catfish Purser, interview.

<sup>65</sup> 'Community Policing in Action', *Police Service Weekly*, 24th September, 1990, p.27.

<sup>66</sup> 'The New South Wales Federation of Police and Citizens Boys' Clubs: A Historical Survey', *A Centenary History of the NSW Police Force 1862-1962*.

<sup>67</sup> 'Boys' Club Land Not Ratable', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th June, 1957, p.13.

did not deter temperance and church movements in attempting to provide alternative 'wholesome' leisure pursuits. The Australasian Temperance Society and the Seventh Day Adventist Church formed a youth temperance group. The possibility that claims of excessive teenage drinking in hotels were overstated were unwittingly highlighted by the group's Secretary, who proclaimed that "[the teenagers] are there for the entertainment; the drinking is incidental".<sup>69</sup> Few newspaper reports of the time reveal serious teenage drinking problems. The real challenge was presenting teenagers with "meeting places and recreation under socially desirable conditions".<sup>70</sup> A Festival of Australian Youth and Culture was held in Marrickville in 1958, a forum of 'rational' leisure activities (sports meetings, painting, needlework) designed to "show young people there are better things to do than hang around milk bars".<sup>71</sup> Similarly, the New Educational Fellowship published a booklet instructing youth on how to establish their own youth clubs and appropriate activities — jiving and ballroom as "wonderful outlets for self expression"; table tennis, chess and group activities (carpentry, sketching, photography).<sup>72</sup> A church 'teenage cabaret', organised by Reverend Ted Noffs, encouraged the singing of hymns in Castlereagh Street.<sup>73</sup>

However, gradual recognition by governing authorities and the musicians in the need for more stable performance environments provided the framework of order ensuring the success of the police boys' circuit. The clubs provided a stable source of income into the early 1960s for the initial performers (O'Keefe, Dale, Lee, Joye) and for emerging vocalists such as Laurel Lee, Judy Stone, Barry Stanton and Warren Williams. As revealed in chapter five, the police club circuit provided a successful template of youth dance entrepreneurship, which was repeated in the 1970s.

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<sup>68</sup> Constable Reg Dowton cited in Tess van Sommers, 'Girls lure boys back to clubs', *Sydney Sun*, npd.

<sup>69</sup> 'What youths spend on liquor: \$2 a week claimed', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19th May, 1957, p.21.

<sup>70</sup> 'Meeting Places For Youth', Letter to the Editor, *ibid.*, 22nd May, 1957, p.2.

<sup>71</sup> 'Festival of Youth To Fight Delinquency', *ibid.*, 12th February, 1958, p.17. The Festival was in response to teenage behaviour after midnight screenings of rock films the previous month. The Director of the Methodist Church observed that "we have fed the kids on sex and jungle music and expect them to act as though they are eating lolly sticks. When you organise this stuff at this time of night what do you expect?" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29th January, 1958, p.6).

<sup>72</sup> 'How to run your own club', *Sun-Herald*, 18th October, 1959, p.88.

<sup>73</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30th of July, 1960, npd.

### III. The Hotel Circuit

Despite continuing rallies and marches by the Temperance Alliance and church groups, there was a sense of inevitability about the introduction of later hotel trading hours. The manager of Entertainment Enterprises, Jack Neary, realised the possibilities for musicians with the changed pub conditions, and envisaged a music hall strategy of “floor shows, with one act moving from club to club”.<sup>74</sup> Neary and other managers were besieged with calls from hotels from late 1954, anxious to secure acts. The impact of the introduction of 10 p.m. closing in NSW hotels in 1955 on live performance opportunities cannot be overstated. Hotels now possessed the legislative authority to compete with restaurants and nightclubs in terms of entertainment, the provision of meals, customer service and comfort. They also offered a more realistic alternative to home leisure activities. Some pubs lost their historic one-dimensional function as male refuges, where the only entertainment may have consisted of listening to the races on the radio, or observing the antics of the six o’clock swill.

As noted in the previous chapter, the eventual consent to 10 p.m. closing derived from a wider acknowledgment that Australian drinking habits lacked the refinement that was evident in their European counterparts. Part of the argument for later closing maintained that more leisurely drinking, in more comfortable surroundings, would quash the inherent practices of the six o’clock swill. Lesley Johnson has described the number of government initiatives designed to bring Australia into the heady consumerism and modernisation sought in the 1950s.<sup>75</sup> Public projects designed to reveal the extent of technological proficiency constructed highways, dams, shopping centres, and the Hydro-Electric Scheme. Privately, the suburban home offered an increasing array of domestic appliances promising women new pleasures in an “ever-increasing democratisation of desire”.<sup>76</sup> The ‘new’ Sydney pub,<sup>77</sup> with its basic functions enhanced, embraced both these notions of modernisation. Publicans advertised the installation of devices designed to improve service, while emphasising spatial modifications

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<sup>74</sup> Neary cited in ‘On The Beat’, *Sydney Sun*, 3rd February, 1955, p.36.

<sup>75</sup> Lesley Johnson, *The Modern Girl: Girlhood and Growing Up*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp.49-50.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p.50.

improving customer comfort. Entertainment facilities played an important role in convincing women in particular of hotels as an alternative site for evening leisure.

Clearly the traditional spatial arrangements of the corner pub were not designed to meet the needs of live performance. Suburban hotels with space to spare benefited most from the new entertainment options. While inner city hotels grappled with the idea of installing wash basins in their toilets,<sup>77</sup> those committed to late night entertainment renovated and extended lounge bars and constructed beer gardens. The Oaks Hotel in Neutral Bay established a beer garden, and a lounge for seating three hundred and twenty, with a PA system and acoustic tile soundproofing.<sup>78</sup> The Rex hotel chain boasted the first hotel specifically designed for 10 p.m. closing at North Bondi, with a beer garden to seat five hundred and a lounge to accommodate seven hundred people, a snack bar, dance floor and stage.<sup>80</sup> With a yearly entertainment budget of £20 000, the Rex chain appointed big band leader Wally Norman as musical director.<sup>81</sup> By the end of 1956, £7.5 million had been invested in hotel renovations and extensions.<sup>82</sup>

Live music was not often the first entertainment choice of hotels. Prior to being banned by the Licensed Victuallers Association (LVA), twenty five city hotels showed films in their lounge bars.<sup>83</sup> Before 10 p.m. closing, the licensee of the Castlereagh Hotel organised vaudeville performances (with a juggler, comedian and nightclub singer) from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., extending the lounge and building a stage.<sup>84</sup> Nightclub floor show acts, or the vaudeville tradition of the Tivoli seemed the logical entertainment choice for many publicans faced with larger crowds staying in venues up to midnight. The transformation of the typical drinking pub into 'showtels' was not a uniformly smooth transition. For a short period, the LVA and the breweries, who owned almost half of the State's hotels, placed a ban on

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<sup>77</sup> Ten o'clock closing was not introduced in Victoria until 1966; in Western Australia, until 1960.

<sup>78</sup> 'Washing in Hotels: Committee Acts', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2nd August, 1955, p.5. A hotel architect noted that the public were not ready for "such refinements".

<sup>79</sup> 'Unusual Lounge And Beer Garden at Neutral Bay', *ibid.*, 21st August, 1956, p.10.

<sup>80</sup> 'Lounge for 700 at new hotel', *Sydney Sun*, 16th June, 1955, p.21.

<sup>81</sup> 'On The Beat', *ibid.*, 11th October, 1956, p.46.

<sup>82</sup> 'Improvements Planned', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th May, 1957, p.10.

<sup>83</sup> 'ULVA Bans Film Shows in Hotels', *ibid.*, 14th July, 1954, p.8.

<sup>84</sup> '200 See Hotel Vaudeville', *ibid.*, 14th December, 1954, p.8.

live entertainment.<sup>85</sup> The smaller pubs unwilling or unable to upgrade their premises sufficiently for live performances lobbied the LVA strongly to place limits on the nights allowed for entertainment, and the budgets allocated to performers. While the larger hotels were criticised by their smaller colleagues for excessive investment in entertainment, the Musicians' Union accused others of providing cheap (or voluntary, unpaid) entertainment through talent quests and amateur nights.<sup>86</sup>

The relationship between female audiences, performers and hotels, despite the publicans' rhetoric, remained a contested one. Many pubs advertised themselves as the authentic 'family' hotel, ignoring the singularly male presence of the public bar and emphasising the new unisex lounges and beer gardens. This did not prevent publicans from including 'variety' performers likely to discourage female audiences. Publicans opted for acts within the vaudeville tradition (dancers, jugglers, and comedians), and did create renewed opportunities for women performers. Such opportunities, however, existed within the strict confines of the vaudeville sex symbol tradition. One publican believed that "the pretty girl with the 'low cut' voice [was] a winner ... If she can sing really well — she's a riot".<sup>87</sup> The Maroubra Bay Hotel, presenting 'modified striptease' along with many others, ensured that the preferences of the hotels' male clientele remained undiminished.<sup>88</sup> Attempts by women to bring children into beer gardens were instantly proclaimed illegal by police. The practice brought into question technical definitions of a bar, where the Liquor Act proclaimed it an offence to include children. As beer garden patrons were served by waiters from other sections of the hotel, there was confusion as to whether beer gardens constituted a bar.<sup>89</sup> The Women's Christian Temperance Union also questioned women drinking in beer gardens accompanied by children "open to the molestations of perverts and other undesirables, as well as to sights and sounds abounding in these surroundings to

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<sup>85</sup> 'Actor's Equity Attack On Breweries', *ibid.*, 1st October, 1954, p.5. After union intervention, the ban was lifted.

<sup>86</sup> 'Ban On Amateur Shows In Hotels', *ibid.*, 8th October, 1955, p.5.

<sup>87</sup> 'Can-Can In The Suburbs', *ibid.*, 15th January, 1956, p.19.

<sup>88</sup> 'Pub With No Cheer', *Sunday Mirror*, 22nd March, 1959, p.25.

<sup>89</sup> 'Liquor Trade Challenges Police On Beer Gardens', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6th of January, 1959, p.1.

which children of tender years should not be exposed".<sup>90</sup>

Assumptions regarding the proper place for women on stage were hardly more liberal. O'Keefe's comments cited earlier reveal the limited roles for women established from the beginning, which presented two choices: that of mindless fan or unpaid support crew. Wives and girlfriends of the bands performed important administrative functions at dances organised by the musicians themselves: the time-honoured duties of making refreshments (usually tea, coffee or lemonade), collecting admission fees and making appropriate stage costumes. Judy Cannon remembers playing town halls and being prohibited from singing rock and roll.<sup>91</sup> Women vocalists who became popular from 1960 (Noelene Batley, Brenda Lee, Dinah Lee) were allowed to perform, provided they didn't attempt to pick up an instrument. Judy Stone was advised by Col Joye to stop guitar lessons and concentrate on her singing.<sup>92</sup> Female instrumentalists were unthinkable, and barely practicable:

In the early days, there was never any suggestion that there would be female players. It can be tiring at times, moving all the gear about ... I think in hindsight it works better without the female players; something happens when four guys work on stage. I'm not putting down female performers, but it's better with four men on stage.<sup>93</sup>

John Charter remembers an unwitting alliance between the stage and dance floor, where "girls weren't accepted much in those days; they were there to make the place look pretty I guess ... from an audience point of view, they wanted to hear the boys".<sup>94</sup> Few formal or informal networks existed for meeting potential musicians and band members. Players were often recruited through chance meetings at record stores or (the few) instrument retail shops. Such loose networks did not exist for women, and were reinforced by retail store ads and instrument makers emphasising the apparent 'maleness' of instruments. The dichotomy of male performer/female listener is evident in Palings guitar advertisements depicting handsome male players watched by admiring girls; and record player advertisements usually accompanied with the picture of a young woman

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<sup>90</sup> WCTU letter to the NSW Minister for Justice, 5th of July, 1955. Papers re Liquor Act 1954-56, file 55/4462, NSW Archives.

<sup>91</sup> Damian Johnstone, 'Judy Cannon' in McLean (ed.) p.94.

<sup>92</sup> Lindy Morrison, *Australian Women in Rock and Pop Music*, Ausmusic, Melbourne, 1995, p.7.

<sup>93</sup> Catfish Purser, interview.

<sup>94</sup> John Charter, interview.

listening.<sup>95</sup> An Elvis Presley impersonation contest at the Trocadero won by Lonnie Lee in 1957 was marked by the “unaccountable presence” of a twenty one year old girl who dared to enter the contest.<sup>96</sup> It appears that men had a monopoly on swagger and blue suede shoes. Opportunities did exist for women performers in those hotels within the vaudeville entertainment tradition; yet as noted above, such opportunities were dependent upon the sexual attributes which were apparent in a singer’s range of ‘charms’.

The ‘showtel’ boom which accompanied 10 p.m. closing had other effects. Publicans who attempted to convert traditional drinking and eating spaces for entertainment purposes were often reminded of the original authorised purpose of their hotels. An Armidale magistrate informed a publican that the use of his dining room for dancing should not take priority over his guests’ rights to “rest in peace”; every hotel was a “common inn, and as such, had a responsibility to receive and cater for travellers”.<sup>97</sup> Legal late night drinking meant that outings to nightclubs serving liquor illegally could be avoided, and nightclubs suffered temporarily. The milk bar scene, which had thrived before 1955, also suffered as a part of their clientele switched to the hotels.<sup>98</sup> This provoked attempts to simulate the pub ambience: milk bars at Campsie (the Parisienne), Oxford Street (the Gaiety) and Marrickville began playing ‘modern’ jazz.<sup>99</sup> They provided a commercial alternative for teenagers to the less socially acceptable street activity. As Jon Stratton has argued, middle class fears of milk bar activities created divisions between ‘acceptable’ milk bars serving coffee, and more ostensibly working class establishments which served as ‘hangout’ and meeting places (with pinball machines and jukeboxes) for working class youth.<sup>100</sup> This is evident in the bodgies panic constructed within the Parramatta district discussed earlier.

While the breweries and smaller pubs believed in improved beer quality and

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<sup>95</sup> As Jennifer Brown has noted, the depiction of instruments towards a male bias continues today (‘Engendering the electronic soundscape: women and technological imperative in contemporary music’, IASPM conference, 23rd-24th June 1995, University of Melbourne).

<sup>96</sup> ‘Oh, no! not one of us: Sydney Has Its Elvis’, *Sun-Herald*, 3rd March, 1957, p.7.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Hotels’ Duty To Let Guests Rest In Peace’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6th May, 1955, p.9.

<sup>98</sup> A *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter noted that the popularity of lunch and evening milk bar drinking produced its own “one o’clock swill”, 5th May, 1954, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> Clare, 1995, pp.24-25.

<sup>100</sup> Stratton, 1992, pp.107-110.



more efficient service to counter falling customers, hotel lounges became lucrative venues for less conservative publicans who acknowledged the changing entertainment climate. Under section 47 of the Liquor Act 1912, the Licenses Reduction Board could issue a permit for dancing within a specified area of the hotel. Between 1955-56, thirty one permits were granted for one-off functions. eighteen hotels were granted general annual permits, while many instigated entertainment without the Board's permission.<sup>101</sup> The Joye Boys' first performances were at a Maroubra Junction hotel. Alan Dale established a lucrative suburban hotel circuit concurrent with his dance hall work, with the Bull and Bush at Baulkham Hills, and hotels within Sydney's south-west: Cammeray, Auburn, Cabramatta, Fairfield and Carlton.<sup>102</sup> A residency at the Rockdale Grand Hotel (replacing Johnny Wade and His Hawaiians) in December 1957 led to Dale accepting a five year contract with the Rex hotel chain, and a residency at the Pagewood Rex, changing the lineup of the group and renaming it The Casuals.<sup>103</sup>

Other major acts — O'Keefe and the Dee Jays, the Joye Boys, Lonnie Lee, Johnny Devlin, Dig Richards etc — did not embrace the beer garden circuit as forcefully as Dale. For many of them, the pubs were initially viewed as last resort, stop-gap venues between public hall dances and regional tours. There was "a feeling early on that if you went in to pubs, you must be going bad".<sup>104</sup> This view is reinforced by Leon Isackson, who encountered the older pub performance traditions, and the reluctance of publicans to pay above dance band award rates:

We used to play the Rockdale Grand and the Erskineville Rose [hotels] with the Stoneagers, and we'd get £ 3 10s a night. They were pretty grotty, old-fashioned pubs with the tiles and all that. Most of them weren't set up for entertainment, so you had to find some crappy little corner where there might be an old piano, and set up there. Everyone would sit staring at you along the long bar; some of them were hopeless. Some of the older places were full of diggers, who'd request *The Miners' Dream of Home* and stuff like that. I was sixteen, and technically I wasn't allowed in. You'd have two types in the pub — the eighteen to twenty one set for us, and the old diggers. I can't remember pubs being really successful venues. It was always strictly union money in the pubs, and it was low, because we were used to negotiating our own fee.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Under Secretary of Justice letter to Canterbury Town Clerk, 6th June, 1956. Papers re Liquor Act 1954-56, file 55/4462, NSW Archives.

<sup>102</sup> Dale in McLean (ed.) p.13.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid* .

<sup>104</sup> Catfish Purser, interview.

<sup>105</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

For Alan Dale and the Houserockers, the pub circuit was perhaps a welcome relief after the competitive skullduggery of the dance circuit. Other musicians suggest that Dale and his bands' style, more transparently jazz influenced than others, was readily adaptable to hotels struggling to reconcile themselves to rock and roll.<sup>106</sup> Pubs could not totally ignore the increasing number of rock and roll performers in the amateur talent quests many staged in preference to paying professional bands.<sup>107</sup> Without a mixed beer garden section, many bands faced audiences in crowded public bars or lounges different from the willing dance hall crowds. Adult audiences still demanded performers in the established crooner style of the 1940s:

Our fans weren't those adult drinkers; our fans were the younger kids. The men hanging around the pubs were interested in Johnny Ray, Frankie Laine, those kinds of acts or earlier. Bing Crosby was still very big. Most of the songs I was forced to sing, whether I liked them or not, were songs of the 30s and 40s. People today criticise older acts for still being around — it's not new, it happened then.<sup>108</sup>

The variety culture of pub entertainment also provided the proper adult environment for the "exotic, sensual yet innocent" performance of Hawaiian<sup>109</sup> music and dancing.<sup>110</sup> Hawaiian music had established itself on the vaudeville and public hall circuits since the 1930s, and was in decline by the late 1950s.<sup>111</sup> The revealing costumes of the dancers (in keeping with strictly defined roles for women performers, as previously noted), and the relaxed nature of performances were ideal for publicans unwilling to accommodate rock and roll. Hawaiian performances — and the policy rationale behind its popularity with venue owners — continued to exert an influence on rock performances into the 1960s. Johnny Wade, one of the most popular Hawaiian players, later instituted an anti-rock policy as entertainment director for the Millers hotel chain from the early 1960s.

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<sup>106</sup> Catfish Purser and Leon Isackson believe that Dale and the Houserockers did not possess the definitive rock edge that was more obvious with the Dee Jays, Devlin and the Devils, Rebb and the Rebels etc. At the Sydney Town Hall concert with O'Keefe, Joye and Dale, Isackson remembers Dale's band "doing Bill Haley stuff, very badly". In Sonny Neville, however, it is agreed that Dale had a genuine rock and roll guitarist.

<sup>107</sup> The talent contests did produce new performers. Les Morrison (Lucky Starr) and Warren Williams, two regulars towards the end of the dance hall scene, became known after winning first and second prize in the Allawah Hotel's talent quest (Sturma, 1991, p.4).

<sup>108</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview.

<sup>109</sup> 'Hawaiian' is meant here to denote Hawaiian - style music performed by Australian acts.

<sup>110</sup> Nikki Bambrick and Jeremy Miller, 'Exotic Hula: Hawaiian Dance Entertainment in post-war Australia', *Perfect Beat*, vol. 2, no. 1, July, 1994, p.72.

#### IV. The Deviance of Amplification

The hostilities displayed to local performers revealed the extent to which moral discourses were filtered through ambiguous legislation at the local level. Fears regarding rock and roll partly derived from media perceptions of imported stylised attitudes and behaviours, despite the incubation of jiving and swing musics in Sydney venues since the war. The concern over Australian youth affecting U.S. slang, dance styles and dress (black pegged pants, black shirts, red jumpers, tapered suits for men) has been well documented by those keen to emphasise the more obvious sociological effects of its impacts. This has led to a relative ignorance of the technical contexts of initial rock and roll performances. This section examines the different sound construction of the music, a process of sonic attack evident to both councils and residents, and to those jazz musicians who “just couldn’t bloody play it and didn’t get it”.<sup>112</sup>

The scarcity of halls willing to accommodate rock and roll was matched by the scarcity of competent musicians and instruments. Guitar players able to play rock and roll were quickly incorporated within the major bands: Lou Casch (Dee Jays), Dave Bridge (Joye Boys), Peter Bazeley (Johnny Devlin and the Devils), Sonny Neville (the Houserockers and Johnny Rebb and the Rebels), and Jon Hayton (Digby Richards and the R-Jays/Rajahs, Lonnie Lee and the Leemen). Bass players proved to be more of a problem. Many bands performed initially without bass, a distinct handicap in attempts to capture the authentic Haley sound. Leon Isackson’s description of the Sydney Town Hall concert on the 16th of December, 1957 which included O’Keefe, Dale and Joye (the only time they all appeared on the same bill) serves to illustrate the differences in musicianship, stage presence and equipment:

O’Keefe’s band blew them all away really. I mean, Col didn’t even have a bass player. Alan Dale’s band was pretty rugged ... doing Bill Haley stuff, very badly. At that time O’Keefe had just done a show with Little Richard, and he had an electric bass and was doing Gene Vincent songs. He had a good guitar player, two saxes, and he’d come on in a big cape.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> See Jackey Coyle and Rebecca Coyle (1995) ‘Aloha Australia: Hawaiian Music in Australia (1920-55)’, *ibid.*, vol. 2, no. 2, January, 1995.

<sup>112</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.*

O'Keefe's band had obtained an electric bass only through innovative means. Bass player Ron Roman, admiring the Fender bass in Gene Vincent's band, cut out a cardboard replica which was shaped by a local carpenter, and completed by home made electrical circuits. O'Keefe also brought back Fender amps for Roman and Lou Casch from overseas.<sup>114</sup> Slap acoustic basses were more common:

My first band ... the guy built himself a tea chest bass with the string and a broom handle that bent. The string came down through the actual tea chest and centred itself on the bottom, so when you played the string you moved the broom handle backwards and forwards to get the change in sounds. It sounded very slappy, just like rockabilly. I didn't have a drummer; many bands didn't.<sup>115</sup>

With amplified vocals and guitar, the drummer, saxophone, piano and bass player (the formalised line-up modelled on Haley and the Comets) struggled to be heard, particularly in the larger ballrooms. Vocalists would go home with sore throats in attempts to be heard over the band. The incompetence of bass players was partially redeemed by the fact that "... if they didn't know a chord, they'd just hit an E string, and go boom ... they were felt, rather than heard".<sup>116</sup> The struggle between amplified and acoustic instruments is typified in the vomiting and cramps experienced by the Dee Jays' sax player, Bob Bertles after performances; the Houserockers' John Charter would have bloody hands at the end of a night thumping the piano in competition with the guitar amps.<sup>117</sup> Performance styles were dictated by the basic desire to be heard:

If the PA blew, you just put the microphone through a guitar amp, and sometimes that was better than the PA anyway. Because of years of really bad PA systems, people like Barry Stanton would sing with the microphone halfway down his throat, and nearly swallow it. He still sings like that, and I feel like saying 'Barry, it's okay, we can hear you'.<sup>118</sup>

The battle to be heard produced comical effects at times, with masculine displays of instrument volume:

[Dee Jays bass player] Ron Martin was a bit of a techno nut, and he made a horn cabinet for the bass. It was only a small amplifier, but the actual horn was ... that big you couldn't fit it through the doorway at Mawson's at Newtown. He had to

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<sup>114</sup> Catfish Purser, interview. Leon Isackson remembers Casch's amp containing two hundred and forty volt transformers and being extremely heavy. Isackson's bass player in the R-Jays, Peter Baker, also made a Fender bass copy which was quickly dubbed the 'Off-Fender' (Hayton and Isackson, 1990, p.21). Fender basses were not available in Australian music stores until 1961.

<sup>115</sup> Lonnie Lee, interview.

<sup>116</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

<sup>117</sup> Bissett, 1979, p.112. John Charter, interview: "That's why I jumped around — I thought if I couldn't be heard, I might as well be seen".

<sup>118</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

bring it in through the fire escape at the side, and once he got it on the stage, there was no room for anybody else. When he played a note, all you could hear was bass! It was a huge five ply bin. It was obviously over the top, because you only had twenty watt guitar amps. You couldn't hear acoustic bass, so when we heard the electric bass, it was just, wow! <sup>119</sup>

The concern in also finding suitable drummers reflected the importance of the rhythm section to any competent renditions of Haley, Gene Vincent, Little Richard or Elvis Presley material.<sup>120</sup> Such profound interest in highlighting what would normally constitute the rhythmic 'backing' of a jazz performance, intended to highlight extended solos, to the foreground resulted in extravagant displays of aural (and visual) intimidation as described above. The desire throughout rock and roll history to use "massive amplifiers beyond all reason",<sup>121</sup> however unrealistic given the developmental technology, was evident from the beginning.

The principal intentions of the Cahill Government's 1954 Liquor Act amendments were to establish a leisurely drinking climate through longer trading hours. The conversion of hotels into public entertainment centres was in some respects an unforeseen consequence of the amendments and constituted new regulatory problems. PA systems may have been primitive, but their effect in beer gardens within residential areas can be imagined. Enduring the limited chaos of the six o'clock swill paled beside the longer torment of entertainment to 10 or 12 p.m. for nearby homeowners. Local police, council health inspectors and district licensing police supervised public hotel entertainment by two means. The police could revoke the publican's dancing permit (section 47 of the Liquor Act) if the conditions of the permit were not complied with. Within the Local Government Act, councils had the power to "control and regulate the use of premises so as to prevent objectionable noises thereon at reasonable hours ... (to) control and regulate noises in or near any public place".<sup>122</sup> Local concern rivalled that of the dance hall panics as councils realised that the Local Government Act powers were too imprecise in court actions against hotels. Difficulties were encountered in proving such noises to be 'objectionable'. In 1956, after complaints from residents,

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<sup>119</sup> John Charter, interview, concerning Ron Roman, bass player with the Dee Jays and the Rebels.

<sup>120</sup> As Bradley (1992, pp.58-59) argues in relation to the early Haley sound and the later Beat movement in England, the centrality of bass and drums in rock and roll arrangements is akin to a jazz band's rhythm section, where the 'background' instrumentation is foregrounded.

<sup>121</sup> The Who guitarist/songwriter Pete Townshend cited in Melly, 1970/1989, p.115.

<sup>122</sup> Local Government Act 1919, section 289.

Burwood Council forwarded a motion at the Local Government Association Conference seeking deletion of this highly 'objectionable' word from section 289.<sup>123</sup> No evidence can be found of the Minister for Local Government amending the Act in this fashion. The Metropolitan Police Superintendent informed the Minister that a condition of all dance permits insisted on entertainment ending by 9.45 p.m.<sup>124</sup>

As evidenced in the struggle for public hall space, interest in implementing specific legislation — the need for adequate technical definitions — accompanied other concerns. In the south-western district, Canterbury Council questioned the Chief Secretary in regard to its specific powers prohibiting hotel entertainment. Noise complaint problems were allied to the greater concern of teenage dancing in pubs. The combination of amplified music and lounge/beer garden dancing "was most undesirable".<sup>125</sup> The issue of permissible sound levels obscured the wider concern of 'appropriate' youth recreation. In terms of defining and regulating performances, the music and dancing were considered inseparable experiences; technical regulation of one practice, it was hoped, would alleviate the moral concerns of the other. Local council noise concerns derived from an indisputable increase in the number of resident complaints, confusion regarding supervisory procedure and the siting of new entertainment practices in residential areas (a zoning problem increasingly apparent in later years). There is little doubt, however, that the ways in which the noise was *produced* underpinned the desire for regulation. The increase in sound levels made possible by amplification constituted the demise of the more 'natural' instrumentation of the swing and big band eras. Plugging a guitar or bass into an amplifier was an innate act of defiance in itself:

If music be the food of love, play on! The operative word is "if". Music can be, and often is, as a study of human relations in any suburban street will show, the food of hate. That is why thousands of otherwise kindly Australians must have felt a thrill of fiendish satisfaction when they read this week that a Melbourne band leader had been almost electrocuted by his electric steel guitar ... In the end it was impossible not to feel for a man who, writhing on the floor with an inordinate voltage in his system, was probably considered to be getting the best out of his

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<sup>123</sup> Motion 118, Local Government Association Conference 30th of October-1st of November 1956, Report of Proceedings p.121, LGSA Archives.

<sup>124</sup> Letter to the Under-Secretary of Justice, 10th of July, 1959. Liquor Act General Papers 1944-62, file 61/21345, NSW Archives.

<sup>125</sup> Canterbury Town Clerk letter to Chief Secretary's Department, 23rd of March, 1956. 1944-62 Liquor Act General Papers, file 61/21345, NSW Archives.

guitar ... This is certainly not an instrument to be demeaned by modern science. The very description 'electric steel guitar' is a contradiction in terms, an offence against the natural order of things ... if the guitar is not allowed to speak for itself — in "punteado" or "rasgueado" — without the aid of electricity, then electrocution is the only fitting answer.<sup>126</sup>

Here can be detected the discursive distinction between sound and noise, free of its technical definitions. The editorial signified the middle class resentment against rock and roll, in the manner in which it effectively shattered "the natural order of things". Electric steel guitars and amplifiers were not a novelty — they had been locally manufactured and played from the 1930s.<sup>127</sup> It seems that large jazz or swing bands were preferable to the 'unnatural' smaller rock band configuration. The ability to extend the decibel capacity of an instrument through amplification was (and remains) central to the thrill of live performance. However, as the editorial implies, the electrification of 'acoustic' instruments increased middle class attitudes of a sense of contrivance and artifice about rock and roll performances, where the guitar could no longer "speak for itself". The visible mediation of performance through amplification was not incidental. Sheer volume as part of the performance was a sign of intent; in this sense physical intrusion represented discursive intrusions. It is significant to note that to many performers of the time, there seemed little difference in sound levels between the jazz and rock bands. Leon Isackson "saw [jazz band leader] Graeme Bell play at a dance, really loud, and the joint used to roar".<sup>128</sup> The Houserockers' piano player ohn Charter believed that "for noise, the big bands were on a par with the early amplified rock and roll bands".<sup>129</sup>

In 'decoding' music making, Dick Bradley maintains that the listener

*constructs* tunes, rhythms, progressions and so on by holding in mind the immediate and even remote *past* ... the musical experience itself will be a part of a larger totality-of-apperception — including things seen, non-musical sounds, thoughts or feelings which come to mind.<sup>130</sup>

The totality of music perception in regard to the initial obstruction of Australian rock and roll cannot be underestimated. The grim editorial above represents the

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<sup>126</sup> Editorial, 'Hoist With His Own Guitar', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20th of December, 1958, p.2.

<sup>127</sup> Coyle and Coyle, 1995, p.45.

<sup>128</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

<sup>129</sup> John Charter, interview.

<sup>130</sup> Bradley, 1992, p.21.

inability to free new musical practices from past referents. Further, the amplification of guitars was not the only “contradiction in terms”. The sites of the new amplified, ‘objectionable’ noise contradicted common-sense perceptions of youth leisure which preferably entailed supervised, familiar pursuits. Hotel rock was accompanied by drinking, a practice usually reserved as a later sacred rites-of-passage entry into adulthood. The public hall circuit, before the police boys’ clubs, meant unchaperoned spaces, and a visible reminder that youth no longer quietly awaited the end of adolescence.

## V. Giving Up the Day Job

With further consolidation of the local live circuit, those performers sufficiently organised were earning well above the average wage. With the exception of O’Keefe, most of the early local performers emerged from working class backgrounds and employment: Alan Dale was an apprentice printer; Lonnie Lee was a bank clerk and so on. The opportunity of earning £500 a week<sup>131</sup> was no doubt an exciting prospect in comparison to the career paths previously mapped out for them. Leon Isackson cites a typical week playing with Dig Richards and the R-Jays in 1960:

Monday: rehearsal

Tuesday: Teen Time (channel 7 show) — £9

Wednesday: Cabramatta Civic Hall (no wage recorded)

Thursday: Taree — £12

Friday: Teen Time (afternoon); Ironworkers Hall — £5

Saturday: Bankstown Capitol — £5

Sunday: Ironworkers Hall — £5<sup>132</sup>

Most musicians were earning £50 a week from dances, but may have earned over £100 per week with additional performances at the Sydney Stadium, for example. The ability to perform three times a day (Saturday afternoon pub; 7-10 p.m. dance;

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<sup>131</sup> Supposedly Dig Richards’ weekly wage, cited in ‘What are rock and roll stars like off the record?’, *Sun-Herald*, 13th September, 1959, n.p.

<sup>132</sup> Leon Isackson, interview. Isackson remembers buying an FJ Holden for “three hundred quid, which was only about three weeks’ wages”.



10-12 p.m. pub show) on weekends increased earning potential. With the ability to organise their own dances, intervention by the Musicians' Union or Actor's Equity in establishing 'appropriate' performance rates for live work was treated with contempt:

The union money was a joke. The union money for playing places was probably about three quid, and we were getting closer to ten quid. I went to one meeting where they were talking about putting up the price of a gig from £3 10s to £3 12s, and thinking 'is this all these poor bastards get?' <sup>133</sup>

The disparities between union rates and actual weekly incomes established the initial attitude among performers that union representation was largely irrelevant. In 1955 the Federal award for 'casual dance band players' was £3 6s; the State award was £2 14s.<sup>134</sup> These rates reflected traditional ballroom/jazz band rates; they clearly did not cater to a rock and roll circuit based on strictly laissez-faire negotiations between performer, promoter and venue. Several promoters earned their respect through prompt payment and reliability (Bill McColl, Bill Watson, Bob Malcom, Alan Heffernan, John Collins, Lyle Pratt, Lee Gordon, and John Harrigan). The actions of other promoters confirmed Clare's reflection that there was "a heady whiff of exploitation in the air".<sup>135</sup> All bands suffered from promoters who disappeared with the night's takings. Other practices — paying less than the agreed fee due to the crowd not being as large as first thought, or the promise of later payment by cheque — confirmed the Do-It-Yourself attitude of many performers. Other promoters outside the circle of respected entrepreneurs were viewed as "opportunists ... there was no professionalism there at all".<sup>136</sup> The sense of exploitation was probably heightened by the fear that rock and roll was to be a passing novelty, a short term, disposable leisure item for working class youth.<sup>137</sup>

The gradual incorporation of rock and roll within television (as a useful part of youth programming) provided a further means of career development. The

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<sup>133</sup> Leon Isackson, interview

<sup>134</sup> 'Dancing Doldrums Follows Craze', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28th of June, 1955, p.5.

<sup>135</sup> Clare, 1995, p.87. Clare recounts the superior attitudes of a Melbourne disc jockey to the rock and roll form.

<sup>136</sup> Leon Isackson, interview.

<sup>137</sup> The local press predicted the death of rock and roll many times. It was stated near the end of 1956 that it had only "two months of lusty life left" (*Sun-Herald*, 30th September). Craig McGregor believed in 1957 that rock and roll would make way for calypso music ('A voodoo death for rock 'n' roll', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17th February, p.48).

introduction of television in 1956 preceded the hesitant birth of the local live scene, and was viewed by the unions as a very real threat to the popularity of live entertainment:

... had the new [10 p.m. closing] liquor laws not commenced operation shortly before the advent of television we would now have approximately eight hundred members less in this State, or else those eight hundred members would not be getting a living at all.<sup>138</sup>

However, a succession of live or mimed programs — *Your Hit Parade*, *Accent on Youth*, *Bandstand*, *Six O'Clock Rock*, *Review 61* — were crucial in allowing performers to develop a national audience. As discussed in the following chapter, television and radio airtime meant the difference between a local/regional following and a nation-wide fan base. Television appearances made touring a viable financial option, although the potential for promoter scams was greater. As Sally Stockbridge<sup>139</sup> and John Potts<sup>140</sup> have argued, media programming did not differ from the live circuit in being unashamedly North American in style and content. The slavish devotion to overseas styles by local acts was insisted upon by the main radio stations. The more popular disc jockeys became de facto producers to this end:

Around 1961, 2UE changed their format. They decided that they weren't going to play any records with sax in them, they were going off the coloured music, and they virtually told us that if we recorded anything loud they wouldn't play it. [Sydney DJ] Bob Rogers had a big say in the organisation, and he virtually dictated the terms.<sup>141</sup>

The influence of Rogers and other disc jockeys incited industry practices designed to further increase their power. The U.S. experienced its payola scandal in 1961, when Alan Freed and seven other DJs were convicted of receiving bribes to play records, a practice proven in court hearings to have been occurring since 1947.<sup>142</sup> Sydney established its own payola practices, which were never investigated locally. Rewards for local record exposure were of the more mundane variety:

Alan Lappin was the big announcer on 2SM, and I had a song that needed to be played, and as far as the history books, he wrote it. A lot of people did that. But

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<sup>138</sup> The General Secretary of Actors and Announcers' Equity, Hal Alexander, evidence to the Federal government inquiry into media and local content, 29th March, 1963. NSW Hotel File E241/19, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University.

<sup>139</sup> Sally Stockbridge, 'From Bandstand and Six O'Clock Rock to MTV and Rage: rock music on Australian television' in Hayward (ed.) 1992

<sup>140</sup> John Potts, 'Heritage Rock: pop music on Australian radio' in Hayward (ed.) 1992

<sup>141</sup> Johnny Devlin, interview.

<sup>142</sup> Fredric Dannen, *Hit Men*, Vintage Books, New York, 1991, pp.42-50.

the nearest he got to (writing the song) was having a beer with me. Alan Toohey was the main DJ at 2UW, and when I needed something to be played, he would say to me 'I'm running short on shirts Alan', so next time I'd go in with two good sweat shirts. Jay Justin, he had a couple of hits in the early 60s, was a shoe salesman, and he used to supply Bob Rogers with shoes. They openly admit it, now. I know O'Keefe did that too ... I remember going into Bob Roger's secretary, and she said 'Mr Rogers is out' and he was standing over in the corner, reading the *Women's Weekly*. I'll never forget it. But that's how he was — if he didn't want to talk to you on the day, he didn't. He made and broke a lot of people; there were probably a lot of good records that couldn't get in.<sup>143</sup>

The initial contexts of Australian rock's development consisted of imitation, refinement and further imitation, derived from young audience demands for local versions of North American and British material. Dale and the Houserockers initially performed Bill Haley covers, sometimes playing *Rock Around The Clock* three times in one night. O'Keefe and the Dee Jays started playing a mixture of Haley and Gene Vincent songs. Lonnie Lee (Laurie Rix) initially began as 'Australia's Elvis Presley'; Johnny Devlin arrived in Australia pre-packaged as 'New Zealand's Elvis Presley'. It was also common for the band to perform a set of instrumentals, before the lead singer would make his entrance.<sup>144</sup> The lack of originality in the first three years of local live performance is not surprising, given the popularity of overseas stars, the scarcity of competent local musicians, and the initial attitude of local recording companies and audiences to domestic compositions.

Yet the mixture of dance halls, pubs and police boys clubs established a dependable circuit supplemented by regional and interstate touring. The dance hall circuit remained the most popular with musicians, enabling them to entertain large audiences for the largest returns. If organised by the musicians themselves, the only overheads consisted of the hall hire fee (usually around £10), a deposit, security (employment of a few local toughs) and perhaps local press advertising. This explains the persistence of O'Keefe and others in challenging council concerns, and the feeling that the respective unions (the Musicians' Union and Actors' Equity) offered unrealistic award rates. For the audience, the town halls were the ideal venue to see bands in public spaces free from adult supervision, and without the concerns of age limitations in unlicensed venues. Those councils willing to allow their halls to be used, as evidenced by Rockdale Council, placed

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<sup>143</sup> Alan Dale, interview.

<sup>144</sup> Johnny Devlin believes this practice continued until the early 1960s (interview).

other associated concerns within wider contexts. Others made purely financial judgements. The Dee Jays' Catfish Purser believes initial attitudes changed when "they realised they were making a lot of money out of us".<sup>145</sup> Moral concerns, exemplified in the considerable efforts of self-preservation of the ballroom proprietors, often derived from fiscal considerations and anxieties.

The 1950s histories of rock and roll panics were also narratives concerning the development of competing leisure industries driven by legislative change. 10 p.m. closing was significant in providing hotels with the financial incentive to invest substantially in renovations designed specifically for entertaining large audiences. This single piece of legislation transformed the traditional functions of hotels, critical to their long term survival, and established Sydney as the city of hotel entertainment.<sup>146</sup> The suburban 'beer barn' audiences associated with live rock in the 1970s found themselves listening to bands in extended lounges often built in the 1950s. The ways in which councils sought to counter the 'objectionable' nature of local performances entrenched a set of regulatory tactics adopted often over the next forty years. The issue of noise complaints became the legislative Trojan horse for other concerns. A precedent was established in using legislative directives to act upon moral disquiet.

Lawrence Zion has noted that the environment of the early rock and pop scene did not yet constitute a coherent music industry.<sup>147</sup> The uneven developments outlined above confirm this. The economic power of performers and consumers — the sales growth in teen fan magazines, record players, transistor radios and youth clothing — overcame the wider moral doubts of the music as credible youth leisure activities. Local efforts to replicate U.S. compositions were repaid with the success of Johnny O'Keefe's *Wild One* in 1958, and Col Joye's ballad *Bye Bye Baby* in 1959.<sup>148</sup> Persistence by the popular dance hall performers led to increased interest from local recording companies (for example, Festival and Lee Gordon's Leedon Records). The gradual growth in local recordings belied the balancing act

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<sup>145</sup> Interview.

<sup>146</sup> In Victoria, after the recommendations of the Phillips Royal Commission in 1963, 10 p.m. trading was introduced in February 1966. In the intervening years, many jazz, variety and rock performers migrated north to increase their employment opportunities. Hotels on the NSW border benefited from the legislative difference.

<sup>147</sup> Zion, 1988, p.293.

needed in gaining sufficient venues. While performers and audiences delighted in the signifiers of dress and dancing styles marking them out from swing and jazz fans, promoters impressed upon local councils the (uneven) extent to which rock and roll continued local pop traditions. Media and government fears resided in the construction of rock and roll as a more vigorous form of working class masculinity, clearly apparent in the resistance displayed to those women eager to replicate their male counterpart's dynamic stage representations. The cynical exploitation of the teenage consumer did not wholly incorporate the music's wilder edges. Working class youth's unashamed investment in the new dance culture presented the rock and roll body as a symbolic break with 'polite' civic culture. Cynically composed to fuel local mythologies as it may have been, O'Keefe's *Wild One* recording embodied a more than useful construction of the 'unruly' performer/teenager. This is most evident in youth's attempts to rupture the community/civic symbolism of ballroom and town hall practices, and the ingrained sense of ordered space such sites commanded. The incursion of rock and roll revealed the mythic view of the local town hall and ballroom as inclusive sites of public use; clearly, some practices were classed as public utilities more than others. Here O'Keefe's use of his father's mayoral position is significant in the class subtexts of governance. The ability to manipulate council powers was a tactic not available to his ostensibly working class colleagues (although O'Keefe's suggestive stage manner sufficiently obscured his family background).

Most importantly, the means by which early promoters and performers made their presence felt was crucial in the construction of enduring local mythologies. The extent of moral resentment against them, entrenched in legislative procedures, created a set of beliefs among musicians that remain with the industry. Brown's 1950s economic discourse of "organised selfishness" aptly describes the industry's strong belief in self-promotion and distrust in organised labour in finding work opportunities. While borrowing directly from international contexts, the formation of localised stage practices constituted the emergence of a nationalistic culture. Australian rock and roll's formative years differed from their U.S. origins in important ways. Local appreciation of the need for performance skills was sharpened by the obvious live failings of many touring overseas acts. In relation to this, the older vaudevillian ability to 'work a crowd' was crucial to success; the

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<sup>148</sup> O'Keefe's song has been covered by Jerry Lee Lewis and Iggy Pop, among others.

enduring mythic qualities of O’Keefe’s live performances in comparison to his recorded output attest to this. These formative industry benchmarks, accompanied by the desire to overwhelm audiences with volume, reveal that the ‘Oz Rock’ tradition did not begin in the 1970s, but was forged in 1950s ballrooms and town halls.