
Denis Crowdy

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Introduction

Denis Crowdy is a Senior Lecturer in Music at Macquarie University. His research has focused on the popular music of Melanesia, and he has published literature on topics including local stringband, local rock/reggae, and the traditional/jazz-rock fusion band Sanguma (from Papua New Guinea).

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This issue of *Perfect Beat*, the first in its third decade of publication, sees an array of articles that exemplify the breadth of the journal and also the interconnections that frequently arise. Rather randomly, this issue also brings together some of the most prolific contributors to the journal over the past two decades (Tony Mitchell, Jon Stratton and Founding Editor Philip Hayward). The first connection that occurs here revolves around islands. In one article (Hayward and Long), a detailed study within an island occurs, while in Stratton's article we read about musical longing for 'island-ness'.

Danny Long and Philip Hayward have worked together in island research in Japan for some years now, and their latest collaboration examines the specific role of music and associated activities in assisting with social cohesion. Their article, centred on the remote island of Minami, combines historical context with modern fieldwork, exploring locally themed songs, references to particular locations and origins, the complex issue of train relics and a history of exploitation, and the presence of this theme in song. Their article adds to a growing body of work demonstrating the benefit of such island studies. Here we have specific insights into how communities live the dynamics of cultural interaction, negotiating internal identification with ethnic groupings along

with the cosmopolitan intersections, influences and movements that characterize modern connected life.

In a song lies what? Jon Stratton takes the anthemic 'My Island Home' and answers that with 'a great deal'. This is a wide-ranging article that zooms out from a single song to cover broad politics and histories of settler colonialism, indigenous displacement and land rights. He moves from personal narratives of a series of covers of the song, focusing on subtle changes in circumstance and lyrics that affect the interpretation, to discussions about settler unease and instability that the subaltern themes invoke.

The second connection point in this issue occurs between Mitchell's article and the work of *Perfect Beat* scholars over the past 20 years in establishing disciplines and debates in popular music studies. Tony Mitchell's work has been pioneering and he has been a powerful advocate for the value and importance of once regionally and culturally specific genres and scenes, particularly as they spread, adapt and form part of musical cultures in other parts of the world. While much of his focus has been on the region's *Perfect Beat* covers, he has also communicated this over much wider geographical spans. While his work has mainly covered hip hop, here he turns to free improvisatory jazz and tensions between the US and Australia, through his discussion of a review of Australian band The Necks, and an interview with them.

To some extent this speaks to the thread that emerged quite a few years ago in Australian scholarly circles around jazz in Australia versus Australian jazz, with the work of Bruce Johnson and John Whiteoak forming central pillars of opinion around this. There are obvious parallels with hip hop, and probably almost any genre which ends up forming part of music cultures and traditions beyond its origins. That jazz and hip hop have such strong meaning and grounding for African American people and the politics of racism and identity makes this a particularly active site for analysis and discussion. Characteristically, Mitchell pulls no punches here.

The upcoming July 2013 issue of *Perfect Beat* will be a special issue revolving around popular music policy in Australasian contexts, guest edited by Shane Homan, Jennifer Cattermole and Martin Cloonan.