

INTRODUCTION

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This issue of *Perfect Beat* marks yet another landmark in the life of journal. This will be the final version published by Perfect Beat Publications and Macquarie University. From January 2009, the journal will be published by Equinox Publishing. Equinox have an ever growing list of books and journals in popular music, and in 2011 will be publishing the *Encyclopedia of Film Sound*. Moreover, Equinox have long been supporters of *Perfect Beat*, and we look forward to a rich association into the future. Subscribers can rest assured that the focus and intent of the journal will not change, nor will it's dedication to publish the finest research on the Pacific rim. The first issue to be published under the Equinox flag is a special theme issue on television sound. From 2009 the journal will be available online as well as in hardcopy; further details are available from the journal's new website pages: www.equinoxpub.com. We would like to thank all at Macquarie University who have contributed to the journal over its 16 years, with particular note to Lisa Cuffe who has administrated the journal (much to its benefit) for several years.

This issue commences with David Panichi's investigation into the abolition of the PoPE licence in NSW, an investigation which necessarily calls on previous work by Bruce Johnson, Shane Homan and other key figures in the Australian music studies landscape. It also follows on from a growing body of work (including Cloonan's article in the last (?) issue) that is considering the considerable role played by legislation and regulation in the contemporary music industry. Despite this, Panichi points out that in general popular music scholarship has not spent enough time in this area and the intersecting ideas of agency, infrastructure, performance and consumption that emerge in this study reinforce this message.

John Encarnacao provides a poetic examination of music and place in Australia, in reflecting on very specific personal experiences of music that have drawn him a mental map of Melbourne. He is interested in the personal aspects of the construction of place, and shows how personal histories associated with age, experience, and locale affect the process. Encarnacao reinforces how personal and selective these constructions actually are. This in turn reinforces the

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importance of music in constructing personal histories and understandings of the world, but perhaps questions and plays with the validity of drawing clear conclusions about sound and place.

In the following article, Terry Lancashire attempts to pin down what might be specifically Japanese in J-pop – “whether a ‘J’ in fact exists in J-pop” (PAGE), and explores language, melody and subject matter in a select song corpus. The range of styles explored is quite considerable, so it is not surprising when an attempt to pin down specific musical characteristics evades generalisation, and leads to the conclusion that ultimately performer identity, performance, and shared experience is most critical to understanding that “J”. How it is created, by who, and how it is used are as valuable in extrapolating generalisations about the genre as are specific musical characteristics, and this is a theme long evident throughout *Perfect Beat*’s history. That said, there is a great deal of value in the detailed analysis of lyric structure, phrasing, melodic style and subject matter, showing the subtleties of expression evident in the broad range of genres represented.

Another well-traversed theme continues in this piece in terms of localisation. Lancashire points out how the ‘global’ is modified for local needs but then points out how that is not then readily exportable – the movement is, once again, apparently one way. The difficulty Japanese artists have in breaking into Anglophone markets says a great deal more about the insularity, conservatism and stereotypical attitudes towards identity in the Anglophone countries than it does about Japan. To expect something clearly different; to be disappointed or surprised by the content of recognisable elements present in familiar popular music, and to not ‘get’ the J in J-pop again says more about cultural assumptions from the sources of the ‘global’, a concomitant lack of recognition of subtlety, and the obvious absence of shared experience. The bigger issue at play here becomes one of musical diversity. Either the ghost of grey-out lingers due to the remnants of an ethnomusicological fetish with superficial difference or there is a real debate still to be had here.

In the final article, Jon Stratton explores trends in the charts history in Australia, specifically those in Adelaide and Perth, with a view towards presenting an understanding of the influence of English migrant populations in both centres. Broad links between employment, class and musical taste are drawn, and the very nature of these means it can be difficult to be categorical as to their ultimate veracity. In this sense the article might well be seen as provocative, and we hope it inspires further enquiry with a more ethnographic approach to methodology. This kind of research is difficult without the existence of detailed chart compilations such as those by Ryan (2003, 2007) which are used as the basis for Stratton’s analysis. With a great deal of contemporary industry statistics tied up in proprietary networks to protect commercial advantage, will such studies actually be harder in the future? Does the plethora of unfiltered information in which we wade today provide evidence for an urgent need of modern chart and consumption summaries?

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There is no doubt an inherent tension for the reader between Stratton's article and Encarnacao's. In many ways they sit at extreme ends of the spectrum, with sweeping conclusions about whole populations at one end and the individual at the other. Many will interpret this as providing important boundaries, but will also hear the clarion call for further studies to explore these tensions in the middle ground. We would encourage readers to respond to this, particularly via the Riffs section, which returns in this issue with Karl's Neuenfeldt's extended interview with Rick Cuhuna. The Riff's section is ideally positioned to allow engagement, discussion and forum to exist, and we urge contributors to pursue it further.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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