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Shelley Brunt

Oli Wilson

## Editorial introduction

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Our second issue for 2017 welcomes Shelley Brunt back as editor following her maternity leave. During her absence, Oli Wilson has been acting editor but he now joins her in a permanent role as co-editor for *Perfect Beat*. We are pleased to present the first issue under this new partnership.

There are four articles in this issue, as well as five book reviews. The first pairing of articles relate to policy and popular music in the city of Melbourne, Australia. 'In Melbourne tonight: Pop/rock histories and futures' looks at how the term 'music city' functions as a marker of identity and also how it is used as a socio-cultural narrative. The authors Shane Homan, Seamus O'Hanlon, Catherine Strong and John Tebbutt explore the discursive politics of musical history in Melbourne—the 'self-proclaimed music and cultural capital of Australia'—and present a critical position on this claim. They argue that the urban 'furniture' (such as venues and institutions) is the result of deeper interconnections of creativity and place-making that are historically grounded. In order to better understand Melbourne as a 'music city', the authors provide essential historical context via self-critical historiographic methods that address representational issues and hegemony bias, concluding that broader topics of culture and power require further consideration in emerging research on creative cities. Their ideas stem from early results from their 2016–2018 Australia Research Council Discovery project, titled *Interrogating the Music City: Cultural Economy and Popular Music in Melbourne* and, as such, the authors point to future research that is needed on their part in order to complete the study. The second article about Melbourne considers how musical histories play an important role in the way identities and practices form, both in the present and in the future. Author Declan Martin explores policy in relation to liquor licensing through a case study on the well-known music venue, the Tote Hotel. This article, titled 'Cultural value and urban governance: A place for Melbourne's music community at the policymaking table', investigates the 'positive externalities' that are enabled through the operations of the venue, evidencing a critical perspective on policymaking frameworks concerning value which, according to Martin, prioritize financial considerations over less tangible social and cultural outcomes.

His research also evaluates the role of political agendas in policymaking processes, concluding that the processes in this context risk excluding stakeholders who may be considered less economically and politically mobile, resulting in an unbalanced approach to urban management. This inequality manifests as tensions between competing interests. Martin argues that these tensions are manageable through urban policy that intergrades cultural value, and that this would ensure diverse uses and interpretations of city spaces. The article concludes with a challenge to policymakers to apply an inclusive approach that recognizes the various ways in which value can exist outside of market-centred economic metrics, and therefore enables a framework that advocates for the value of venues such as the Tote.

The next two articles explore regional music scenes. 'Playing bluegrass in Australia across country and folk scenes' presents research gleaned from author Miriam Jones's time as the 2015 National Folk Fellow at the National Library of Australia's Oral History and Folklore department. Jones provides a much-needed overview of bluegrass cultural history in Australia, documenting the early manifestations of the style, and considering developments in the context of broader social and musical trends. According to Jones, bluegrass music has been part of Australian musical culture since the 1920s and came about via hillbilly music radio broadcasts: these played into Australian's established ideas concerning the American South and 'Wild West', which had reached Australia via minstrel shows of the late 1800s and the silent Western films of the early 1900s. In the 1960s, contemporary bluegrass music was performed in Australia after LPs of established American artists were imported. Central to Jones's study is the notion of music scenes—both bluegrass and the folk revival of the 1960s—and the 'internal logic' of these communities played a determining role in the musical practices of bluegrass musicians. The final article in this issue explores the influence and broader cultural significance of the Dunedin, New Zealand, band The Clean which is widely recognized as a key act in the Flying Nun era 'Dunedin Sound' of the 1980s. In his article, 'Liveness and improficiency in The Clean's influence upon Dunedin Sound bands', Darren Jorgensen argues that The Clean's importance can be attributed to its performance and recording methods which relied heavily on improvisation as a distinguishing point from other acts from that era and the Dunedin Sound. This 'liveness' played an important role in establishing the group's authenticity, which was grounded in oppositional politics that responded to the emerging and highly mediated pop genres (and their associated ideals) of mainstream New Zealand culture during the 1980s.