[*PB* 14.2 (2013) 95-99]
doi:10.1558/prbt.v14i2.95

Perfect Beat (print) ISSN 1038-2909
Perfect Beat (online) ISSN 1836-0343

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Introduction:
policy and popular music

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This special issue of *Perfect Beat* has its origins in the *Policy Notes: Local Music in Global Creative Economies* project, which was funded by the Australian Research Council between 2009 and 2011. Led by Shane Homan, the project examined popular music policy in Australia, New Zealand and Scotland and culminated in the world's first conference on popular music policy, which took place in Melbourne in June 2012. Academics, activists and policy-makers came together to debate, argue, analyse and ponder the diverse range of policy initiatives around popular music from across the globe (albeit with a clear Anglophonic bias). In this issue we present updated versions of some of the papers from the conference. We are delighted that *Perfect Beat* has recognized the importance of policy within popular music studies by publishing this special issue. Here we outline some broad trends as well as introducing the papers that follow.

In some ways there is something of a paradox in the development of music policies. We live, we are constantly told, in an era of globalization wherein various brands of neo-liberalism have triumphed and national boundaries increasingly mean less. The market has been held to dominate, and any government intervention within it has been increasingly viewed with suspicion. Of course, the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) undermined much of this and once again showed how, if nothing else, nation-states remain the bankers of last resort. Importantly, even prior to the GFC, initiatives within popular music policy were bringing into question whether the free market is in and of itself necessarily the best guarantor of a diverse and flourishing music scene (in both cultural and economic senses). A number of factors can be seen as converging here, based around the music industries, politics and academia.

Within the music industries the recording sector came under threat from declining sales and the impact of peer-to-peer file sharing. Its response was to begin to lobby for clampdowns on file sharing, and this has seen legislation passed, or at least contemplated, in several countries (e.g. United Kingdom, France, New Zealand, Hong Kong, South Korea and Taiwan) which has sought to allow internet service providers (ISPs) to terminate their contracts with customers who frequently infringe copyright legislation by conducting peer-to-peer transactions. The recording sector has also sought to extend the extent and duration of copyright in sound recordings in an effort to ensure a key revenue stream for an extended period. One result of this is that, as this editorial is being written, the European Union is about to raise the term for which sound recordings remain in copyright from 50 to 70 years. The fact that this is being done in the face of fierce opposition from within the academy and from consumer groups is perhaps evidence that it is the recording sector and the private-sector lobbyists—rather than those seeking to represent the public interest—which has had the ear of politicians.

Elsewhere in the music industries the live sector has risen to be the dominant economic force in many countries. However, the picture here is complex, with a general trend of the top acts being able to charge ever increasing prices, while life at the bottom end remains as tough as ever, as venues close and public funding becomes increasingly scarce. At the grassroots level, much policy has tried to secure and/or enhance local provision, but live music has also seen developments in policy at a higher level. The promotion of live music is now dominated by two companies: Live Nation and AEG. The story of the machinations of these companies is beyond this Introduction, but it is noteworthy that their actions have seen governmental enquiries as to whether there are monopolies within some sectors (see, for example, Competition Commission 2010; Department of Justice 2010). The fact that the world's leading concert promoter, Live Nation, is part of the same

company as the world's leading ticket retailer, TicketMaster, still causes concern. The role of policy here is to try and ensure a level playing-field. The extent to which this has been achieved remains in dispute.

Much more could be said about the state of the music industries, and it is important to bear in mind that these industries cover a wide range of activities—recording, live music, publishing, broadcasting, management, and so on—and thus they also cover a wide range of professions. They are also characterized by and share the structures and labour conditions of the broader creative industries—insecure employment, long hours, low pay for the majority and an oversupply of labour (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). However, what should be noted here is that many individuals and organizations within those industries, which may have in previous years been avowedly free market and resistant to any government intervention, have increasingly felt compelled to embrace government in various attempts to shore up their businesses. We live in a world where political lobbying by the music industries in order to effect the policies they want is routine.

Many politicians have been swayed by arguments that the creative industries are key driving forces in the new economy. Where once cultural policy meant providing access to the high arts, it now increasingly often means providing access to finance for various economic initiatives. Popular music has inevitably been caught up in all this as politicians and policy-makers have come to take an interest in the music industries, and a number of local and national initiatives have been undertaken. While these have often been short-term and one-off, their cumulative affect has been that notions of having a music policy have moved up the political agenda. Once again, this was a counterweight to neo-liberal thinking, as even the most economically orientated music policy is a recognition of market failure. Policy interventions in the music market affect either supply or demand economics. While this may not mean having a commitment to Keynesian economic policy, it does suggest a more or less veiled critique of overtly neo-liberal approaches. Increasingly, the question has been less about *whether* to have a music policy, but *what sort*.

What all this means has been the object of some academic interest, evidenced by this special issue and the conference and project which spawned it. In part, this has been wound up in the development of popular music studies and broader academic trends. It is possible to chart a move from economic critique bound up in Marxist and Adornian analyses of 'the culture industry' towards economic engagement via popular music scholars acting as 'experts' in developing policy and/or being engaged as activists advocating various policies. The motivations for this often spring from experiences as musicians or fans, but the development also overlaps with the increasing desire on behalf of universities for their academics to

engage in public policy debates. The days of ivory towerism—if they ever existed—are now over. Here, popular music provides scope for academic analysis, advocacy and public proclamations in a context where institutions increasingly expect the latter.

Fortunately, as this issue shows, one result of all the combined trends across the music industries, politics and academia has been the development of high-quality academic work. Importantly, this work has shown the diversity of approaches towards music policy evident across the globe, and this is reflected here. The articles in this special issue concern three music policy topics: broadcasting, venue licensing and music festivals.

Addressing the tight links between music and broadcasting policy, Chris K. Wilson discusses the *Australian Music on Radio Inquiry* (1988) as a foundational policy moment. The report concluded that commercial radio had a responsibility to support the development of the Australian music recording industry. Wilson explores how the inquiry's findings—in conjunction with broader youth, broadcasting, and popular music policy shifts—prompted the Federal government's development of Australian non-commercial youth radio services.

Paul Oldham looks at how the interaction between Melbourne's musicians, audiences, performances and live music spaces contributed to the inception of Australian pub rock and the construction of the Oz rock identity. Oldham traces the career trajectory of Billy Thorpe and The Aztecs, and uses two venues as case studies, Mulgrave's Village Green Hotel and Nunawadings's Whitehorse Hotel, to reveal the initial formations of both the pub rock 'punter' and performer in Oz rock mythology. The role of the state in providing the proper legislative inducements—in this case, the 1967 *Sunday Entertainment Act* (amended in 1968) and the *Liquor Control Act* (1968)—was important in opening Melbourne's pub venues to longer weekend and evening trading.

The remaining articles in this special issue, those of Chris Gibson and Dan Bendrups, address the policy contexts of festivals. Examining the developmental role of festivals in rural and regional Australia, Gibson argues that the qualities of music festivals (for example, their format, management structure, values, ethics, and degree of integration into local and regional community and economic life) have a significant impact upon regional development, as his comparison between commercial, community and not-for-profit music festivals illustrates.

Using the Rapanui (Easter Island) delegations' performances at the 2008 and 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts as a case study, Bendrups discusses the increasing inclusion of popular music at these festivals, and the movement away from exclusively traditional music and dance performances. This article sheds light on how both national and multinational discourses on popular music help shape island

identities and their representation in a festival context. Bendrups shows how the cultural policy of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, with its emphasis on both cultural preservation and development, has facilitated this.

To conclude, the range of activity on display in this journal issue and elsewhere is evidence that policy is now a vibrant component of popular music studies. Always an avowedly political project in an ideological sense, popular music studies now increasingly finds itself political in a practical, day-to-day sense. We hope that the insights provided in this issue help to inspire more work in music policy to sustain those already engaged in it. In Gramscian terms, we hope to inspire less pessimism of the intellect and more optimism of the will. Popular music deserves no less.

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