

**Submission
No 267**

**INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN
NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: The Haze Magazine

Date received: 28 February 2018

Firstly I would like to congratulate those behind this inquiry, and taking the time to read these submissions. I recently attended a roundtable with hardly enough seats which was an eye-opener into the passions of local pollies – many spoke about their kids being involved in the music scene in some way, and I think this is the key - starting with the youth.

I represent independent music publication The Haze Magazine, a self-funded quarterly music/arts/food/culture press that focuses on up-and-coming and less-established musicians and artists emerging in the Blue Mountains, Nepean, Hawkesbury and Central West. Together with our partners at Retro Rehash (a music program on Radio Blue Mountains that is like an episode of Recovery on VHS) we try to support as much of the creative industries as we can towards having a voice into the community, and raising awareness of live concerts and events, as well as the lives of those in the local music industry and what motivates and affects them.

Having 'run' the magazine for 13 lucky editions so far, we've been able to liaise closely with a diverse range of musicians, industry, audience, licensees, cafe owners and those surrounding the industry. It is clear that these people are a passionate bunch for starters, often putting in a lot of time for the 'love' of music that goes both unrewarded and underpaid.

Our particular focus is on live music and there seems to be a real lack in all-ages / underage live music. And when it does happen, it is usually not a 'gig' but some kind of festival, or an event for oldies where they can tag along – rather than a regular event for them. Thankfully those underage performers in the Mountains have the opportunity to busk – but daytime venues and spaces for them to play would be more ideal, along with venues that could host underage events without having to worry about covering costs with alcohol. My mum grew up in Hazelbrook (Mid-Mountains) hundreds of years ago (the 60s?) and even back then they managed the infrastructure of a bus taking kids of an evening to the weekly dance or movies at a local hall, sometimes as far as Katoomba.

Having myself grown up in the Lower Mountains, with regular concerts both at school and organised by the local music enthusiasts at the local hall in Blaxland, I personally see that tween/teen period of life as setting up for a rich cultural adulthood. The social aspects along with the cultural experience of performing and being involved in the music (setting up rooms/assisting with PA/performing/Lighting/managing bands etc) are lifelong skills that can be learned well before a Tafe or University course, and without a HECS debt. Watching a Year 10 boy roll up a microphone lead the correct way blew my mind as a kid – and people forget the skills that surround concerts - it's not just about the performers.

The Blue Mountains, although technically a small city, hosts many live music styles and scenes including rock, punk, folk, hip-hop, blues, jazz and more – and the scene has really survived from the pressures of local promoters pushing their excitement across thresholds of local pubs, clubs, cafes and whoever will give them a room – and usually taking the risk on themselves rather than the Rooms taking the risk in some cases. These 'rooms' / venues could I suppose be given some incentives or ease (or even some government marketing?) on why music is beneficial and how they can offset the risks and costs associated.

In case my ramblings above have been too long I'll put some point form brain-dumps below on what I think is worthwhile thinking about, although this close to deadline I'm unable to suggest how they might tie in with Legislation:

- Focusing on accessible, under-age concerts – both in school and run separately by council / youth bodies / independent kids!
- If the kids aren't going to see live music now, there will be no live music at all in 10 years
- Attendance at pubs seems to be lower in the Mountains than it has been historically, and I think it is the lack of a regular live 'original' music scene. Give the pubs a good incentive to pay bands regularly
- Cafes need to be able to easily hire musicians day or night
- Busking should be encouraged everywhere
- The Council (or someone) should perhaps have a live music body to assist bands (like a Business Chamber but for the Arts?) in Katoomba, Penrith... Orange seems to have one already
- The Winter Magic Festival (Katoomba) was not financially supported, and its biggest loss will be that local musicians won't get to play to an audience of 20,000 frozen tourists
- Music needs to be accessible in schools to students (not just at lunchtime!! Music helps people learn – and do it properly, not just the teacher that happens to play guitar and thinks they can sing – get professionals in!!)
- Travel infrastructure needs to match the needs of punters. We have plenty of venues in the Upper Mountains especially that are virtually useless due to location being far from public transport, or trains not running late enough to see the last band
- Some Marketing materials on the steps venues need to take to implement live music, or something along these lines. Send them a Rudd cheque if they promise to provide a PA for the artists or something?

And lastly, coming back to the Music magazine that I run:

- A Music Scene needs more than music. Magazines like ourselves who have 15 volunteers need a hand, somehow, so that we can continue to support the artists. We review music, interview, video, write, blog, promote, photograph to enhance the 'scene' and generate interest for locals and tourists alike, stimulating audiences to go along and spend money, and yet we struggle to make any ourselves due to the size of the area we live in. Perhaps if Katoomba were classified as Regional to open us up to some more Grants? (This point sounds desperate, it's because it really is, our readers everyday tell us the music scene is so much better since the magazine came along, and yet we cannot sustain it financially. Luckily live music transcends capitalism, right?)

Kindly take into account that I have been up way past midnight for the last week putting together The Haze Autumn edition when reading this submission... I've attached some images of a past magazine outlining the already thriving scene in the Blue Mountains despite the whinge I've had above.

Cheers,
Mark.