

**Submission
No 397**

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

Organisation: The Manly Fig

Date received: 20 March 2018

My wife & I have run a live music venue (The Manly Fig) for 9 years. It is volunteer run & non-profit and it exists to help the live music industry survive, to provide an affordable, listening space where people can enjoy live music without any aggro, and to build community. We run 11-12 (monthly) shows a year covering most genres and usually have 200+ bookings.

Our observations which may interest you –

1. Live music is very price sensitive unless celebrities are playing. We once raised our ticket price by \$5 to \$20 and immediately experienced a 20% drop in attendances
2. Sydney people are generally not night owls once they reach 30
3. Sydney people seem to have far less ready cash than they did even 10 years ago
4. There is not much money to be made in the live music industry for anyone except celebrity artists, booking agents & managers.
5. Our audience, mostly over 40, are not impacted by the lock-out laws, nor is our venue
6. American music venues are concentrated in low rent buildings or areas eg 6th St & S Congress Ave in Austin, Beale St in Memphis, Broadway in Nashville, Frenchmans St in New Orleans. They are invariably very run-down as there is no spare money for renovations. This is similar in Sydney.
7. Many people don't like the regular linkage in NSW between poker machines & live music. Using something good to attract people to such a harmful environment is saddening.
8. Most musicians over 40 see a clear link between the invasion by poker machines and the demise of the local music industry
9. We used to take our young children to adult live music events in clubs & bars and we loved to dance together. Some laws changed (or maybe pokies arrived) which caused kids to be banned from those venues

Conclusions –

- People's lives are enriched by music so it is in society's interest to improve citizen's access.
- Live music is very good at strengthening communities by getting people together unless it is in an alcohol or drug fuelled environment
- Concentrations of venues helps them all financially so allocating low-cost precincts for live music would be a big help. Suburbs like Newtown and Marrickville are current examples to a limited extent. America is full of examples as is Melbourne.
- We need to protect venues from intolerant neighbours especially those who move in near a current venue then complain about the noise
- We need to make it easier to run a venue remembering that any state imposed cost reduces the likelihood of the continuity of a venue
- There are many ways to reduce the cost of housing in Sydney. The resulting reduction in the cost of living would free up spending money for music would be a big boost.
- Reducing the rental cost of venues would be great
- I heard someone say on radio that high population density is almost a pre-req for a thriving industry. Most of the US examples I cited above show this to be false
- Enabling an online comprehensive event lookup site for Sydney so at a glance a consumer can see every venue and its program within a specified radius of any location. There are sites now but they are woefully incomplete. For instance our venue is one of the most successful in Sydney but can't be found on any site except ours. In our case it's OK as we don't need the advertising but we are unique in that.

- Facilitate more family friendly music venues. Northern Beaches has a brilliant weekly outdoor event in Manly from Jan-March each year on Friday nights

Hope this helps and am happy to discuss,

Steve Elliot

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