

MUSICAL MICRO-UTOPIAS

Robert Smith

The many excellent studies of local music scenes (such as Cohen 1991 and 2007; Bennett 2004; and Berger 1999) do not throw much light on *pleasure* at the grass roots and participatory levels. I will focus here on music scenes in South Wales and one community music band. I will ask what works at this level in local music scenes; what held these scenes together pre-COVID and how they might fare in post-COVID times.

This article discusses the ideas of musical pleasure and micro-utopias by referring to three examples as briefly as possible in the full knowledge that the subjects merit a much longer and more detailed study. That is beyond the scope of this iteration. Apart from the Brecon Jazz section, which compares my personal experiences of the festival with published reports, the examples here are drawn from interviews with community music big band *Wonderbrass* and members of *Creative Republic of Cardiff* who run the Moon Club and organise the HUB festival.

We create micro-utopias for the enjoyment of music where music becomes the shared currency leading to other interactions around food, drink, and friendship. DeNora acknowledges that music is ‘part of the cultural material through which “scenes” are constructed’ (2000: 123), though here the reference is to choosing existing recorded music to facilitate social interchange. How much more powerful is this ‘cultural material’ when people are choosing to see it performed live or even constructing it themselves through playing it? Many people leave behind the cares and problems of everyday life (or attempt to) and enter a time and space where they are immersed in music and surrounding activities, either as performers, audience members or both. According to Hersch, *time out of time* opens up spaces in time for escape where people can stand in enjoyment and absorption of moments outside their work and other responsibilities; ‘an opening to experience time for its own sake’ (2007: 45 – see also 207). Hersch is writing about New Orleans here around the turn of the 20th century but his idea of *time out of time* strongly resonates with today’s music festival attendees and participants in music-making activities.

Time out of time can be short and intense, such as at music festivals, or long and thin such as a regular meeting for a community music group. Here I link these times with the concept of micro-utopias. Writing about art, aesthetics, and participation in ‘Micro-utopias’ (2016: 8), Blanes et al. cite Bourriard’s concept (2002: 31) of ‘everyday micro-utopias’; the real-world successors to the collapsed idealistic utopias of the Situationists. They define the idea of a micro-utopia as a form of democratic and participatory arts environment. If we accept Christopher Small’s idea of ‘Musicking’ as meaning ‘...to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing’ (Small 1998: 9 – his italics) then music cultures,



particularly popular forms of music outside of the recording industry mainstream, have perhaps been ahead of the art world in focusing on *relational aesthetics* (Bourriard, 2002). The examples I investigate below are clear illustrations of both Small's definition and of *relational aesthetics*: 'community and neighbourhood as spaces where utopias can be actualised' (Blanes et al 2016: 9). Furthermore, Blanes et al, in discussing what they call the '*cartographies of relational art*', cite '*social, relational, participatory, community or activist art*' (2016: 10). I have chosen a 29-year long community music project to illustrate this notion of *distributed creativity* (ibid: 12) but similar things could be said about community music projects around the world.

Definitions and Methods

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) lays down the essential conditions for pleasurable 'optimal experience' as immersion into a loss of self-awareness, and an accompanying sense of transcendence of self, and transformation of time (1990: 58-67). It is much easier to imagine how performers can experience Csikszentmihalyi's concepts of *flow* and *optimal experience* than it is to imagine an audience experiencing these. The advantage to looking at music at a local level is that audiences and performers are more likely to interact, intermingle and have individuals in both camps (performer/audience member).

I am interested in how communities can form around music. People come together to spend time with like-minded people who share their musical interests or can agree on a shared musical agenda for a single gig or a weekend festival. They are usually there to do what they enjoy, meet people who enjoy the same things, eat food they like, wear what they like. Of course, such gatherings are not restricted to musical agendas; people also gather to celebrate shared religions, real ale, sport, and steam engines, to name but a few.

In this paper I want to explore the idea of musical micro-utopias using examples from my own experience of festivals and of organising a community music project. I want therefore to interpret the term *musical micro-utopia* as engendering large numbers of people coming together to enjoy music in *time out of time* for a short period – as in the case of the two festivals described here, or a small number of people coming together to dedicate weekly slots for years to making and enjoying music together – as in the case of the community music collective.

I also want to explore the idea of a music scene which is more about participation than passive consumption. This might be a legacy of a communal notion of music-making, but it could also be seen as a legacy of punk and the move towards a do-it-yourself aesthetic in the late 1970s. Certainly one of the major achievements of the punk movement (at least in the UK) was to break down barriers between bands on stages and their audiences. These barriers seem to have arisen as rock and pop music grew into a business then big business through the nineteen sixties and seventies. The Community Music (Higgins 2012) movement seeks to facilitate *participation* in music making rather than merely *consuming* it. Since no human culture has ever been found that does not have music, then making music must be a condition of humanity itself and therefore it must be everyone's right to participate. Community Music is largely a movement of so-called 'advanced' societies where people specialise to earn a living and allow others to do the 'other things' for them. On one level the movement can be seen to be trying to redress the balance between this state-of-affairs and other societies where everyone is expected to participate in music-making (Turino 2008: 28-51). There might be music specialists in these contexts, but these specialists will lead the music making, not just make the music for us. Even in western Europe and the euro-centric sphere, specialised professional music-making is a relatively Johnny-come-lately profession.

The examples I present here are chosen from projects I have personal experience of, and that there is available data for. The Brecon International Jazz Festival (which for its early years was known as Brecon Jazz) commissioned a report into its viability after its instigator Jed Williams passed away in 2003 and attempts to keep the festival going in its original (1984-2003) modus operandi began to fail. *Wonderbrass* is a community music big band which has been going since 1992 and continues to thrive; the data for this was gathered for my own PhD portfolio and thesis (2013) and the band's own WB25 project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (2017-19). Finally, the HUB festival in Cardiff's Womanby Street is centred around The Moon Club venue and my observations of the festival are presented alongside interviews with two of the venue's main organisers.

My personal involvement in all these three examples means that a strand of autoethnography runs through them. In beginning to examine how these localised music scenes work, I have firstly taken a research journey that begins with autoethnography, comparing my own experiences with the findings of a published report on Brecon Jazz. I then move onto research that is based on the participants' own accounts of their experience of participating in *Wonderbrass*, summarising findings from my PhD which used methods inspired by Berger (1999). Finally, I conducted fresh interviews with two key players in the Moon Club and HUB festival, contrasting their aims with Cardiff Council policy and another commissioned report, this time on promoting the musical health and marketability of Cardiff's live music economy. Rather than a pick and mix of ethnographic methodologies, this feels like an opening out from my own personal experiences to the experiences of others in the local music scenes, comparing these with the official assessment of the relevant music scenes that have led to policies for change. These methods and this research make a contribution to research that looks at how grassroots energy and investment fare in local planning and arts policy scenarios.

Example 1: Brecon Jazz 1984 – present [1]

In my twenties, I was one of the up-and-coming artists who benefitted from being paid to attend and perform at Brecon Jazz. Started in 1984 by Jed Williams and marketed as a 'New Orleans beneath the Beacons' (after a city that has had, at times, music everywhere and everyone playing music), Brecon Jazz was an attempt, for many years very successful, to turn a small Welsh market town into, for one weekend per year, a place with *jazz everywhere*. There were extremely popular and well-attended free events in the street. The purchase of a weekend stroller ticket gave access to numerous additional venues where one could see the best of Welsh jazz alongside the best of UK jazz and visitors from Europe and beyond. There were also individually ticketed events where one could see the best of jazz in the world.

There was a conscious bias towards engaging Welsh and Wales-based musicians as performers. The festival worked with the local scenes and performers, allowing them to perform alongside, see for free, and rub shoulders with the best jazz players in the world. This was one of the largely unacknowledged and tangible achievements of Brecon Jazz. In this sense it was participatory and proactive in building relationships with the Welsh jazz community (itself quite spread out amongst geographical hubs such as Cardiff, Swansea, and the northwest of Wales) to facilitate this participation and sense of creative investment in the festival.

There were also open-access jazz workshops as part of the festival. In 2004, I was given the brief of visiting every junior school in the Brecon area to run workshops and get the children making music. There was an ambition to get local school children on a jazz stage at some point, and this ambition speaks of the festival organisers' commitment to linking entry level participation with the finest jazz in the world and presenting multiple points on the journey between those two levels.

This commitment to participation is mirrored by the intense focus of the festival's 52-hour timespan and its practical takeover of the small town that hosted it. It allowed all attendees, whether punters, performers or myriad combinations of these statuses, to feel like participants and experience the intensity of this *time out of time*.

This annual weekend felt like being in a jazz utopia. It was something to work towards each year, or to hang on in there for in a lean year. I got to see amazing world leaders in jazz for free. I got to meet, and occasionally play with, amazing players. This was my jazz utopia, and I was in it every year from 1984 to 2013.

In 2016 Nod Knowles, a jazz programmer and amateur who runs the jazz part of the Bath International Music Festival, was commissioned by Brecon Town Council to write a scoping study around the possibility of revitalising the festival. After Jed Williams' death in 2003 a small team had been appointed to run the festival. Eventually this task fell to the Hay Festival, then to Orchard Entertainment (Knowles 2016). The festival took two other major blows to its openness and inclusivity.

Firstly, Williams fought hard to keep a programme of live music in the streets for free. This is where local businesses made most of their money. People were able to come to the town (Brecon, population around 10,000 [2], is actually a city by grace of its cathedral) and enjoy outdoor music for free in a car-free centre whilst drinking beer out of plastic glasses and eating takeaway food from shops and cafes in the centre. For most people this was the festival and the small food outlets, and pubs made a lot of money. But the police did not like the street music as it caused them problems late on Friday and Saturday nights. Drunken brawling probably happens in Brecon on non-jazz weekends, but it is harder to police in a large crowd. People converged on the town for the festival bringing their habits, problems, and scores to settle (such as Cardiff City versus Swansea City supporters). After Williams' death the street music was quickly dropped, and the local businesses suffered and many withdrew their always qualified support for the festival.

The second blow, introduced by Peter Florence, founder and guiding spirit of the Hay International Literature Festival, was to drop the stroller programme and focus on a series of individually ticketed events around the town. This turned the festival into a concert series rather than a 'jazz everywhere' festival. The stroller programme (1984-2008) had attracted visitors who would pay a moderate price (around £40 in the mid 2000s) to have 30 hours of live jazz, experiencing a mixed bill of Welsh jazz and other acts as outlined above. For many, the stroller programme *was* the festival. The 'disappointing but inevitable' conclusion to Knowles' 2016 report is that:

There is no organisation waiting in the wings with the capacity or ability to attempt to revive it – the experience of professionals such as Hay and Orchard is proof that the model no longer works. (2016: 11)

This was not what Brecon Jazz supporters wanted to hear, but all good things must end. But wait a minute, which model is it that no longer works? The Orchard model of a series of high-profile, expensive, one-off events, peppered with ad hoc street events? A tented area outside the town such as Hay had tried to run, or the 'music everywhere' approach of Jed Williams? Is it possible that the festival has, since 2003, largely been run by people who never understood why it worked in its heyday? The list of interviewees for Knowles' report does not include any musicians beyond those interviewed for their other interests (Paula Gardiner as head of Jazz at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Wayne Warlow as director of Porthcawl Jazz Festival). Two 'regular attenders' were interviewed. Two out of how many?

It is easy to expect too much of a report into the viability of reviving the festival to understand anything other than the business case for the festival. But lots of people made money in the first 20 years of the festival (The Williams era: 1984-2003). It is generally acknowledged that Brecon residents, on the whole, regarded the festival as an invasion, bringing them nothing but trouble and were glad to see the back of it *until the money disappeared*. The problem with these musical utopias is they do not last. The trick is to realise when you are in one.

Example 2: *Wonderbrass* 1992 – present

Formed in 1992, *Wonderbrass* made its first appearance at Brecon Jazz in 1995 (Smith 2015). The band then appeared every year for a long time in the street until the street music was discontinued. In 2005 and 2006 *Wonderbrass* appeared in a joint concert with Capetown's *Amampondo* singing and drumming group with specially commissioned and jointly written music. At other times *Wonderbrass* appeared with Claude Deppa, Jason Yarde, and King Django. In 2012 they appeared in a music-playing flashmob to coincide with (and paid for by) the London Olympics. Research into the band members' experience of participation has shown in many cases that playing at Brecon Jazz was a peak event for them (Smith 2013: 99 and 2015: 171-2).

The band is thirtyish strong, a community big band (sometimes parading) that aims to give people a forum for creating and playing music together (performing, composing, arranging, and improvising). It is open to anyone interested but people need to know how to play their instruments to a basic standard. They need to learn core repertoire before they are invited to perform publicly with the band. The band also operates as a collective, pooling its playing labour and earnings to pay the band's professional directors, fund travel, buy instruments and so forth. The band therefore represents a musical micro-utopia in its own right; a place where people can meet, share musical interests, perform together, and make friends. The band's weekly rehearsal sessions are social gatherings and are supplemented by gigs, tours in UK and abroad, festival performances and the occasional residential weekend. All these 'time(s) out of time' are experienced as enjoyable, challenging, and therapeutic.

The band is intergenerational, has an even gender balance and the effects on well-being of band membership are discussed elsewhere (Smith 2013 and 2015). This positive influence on wellbeing is not unique to *Wonderbrass*; it is a well reported and documented feature and benefit of musical participation (DeNora 2013).

Beyond this basic definition of what the band is, and how it organises itself, there is an idea that membership of *Wonderbrass* gives added value to musical participation beyond that afforded by membership of other amateur music-making groups. People who have participated in other projects feel more attached to *Wonderbrass* than their previous groups because they feel they make a *creative* investment in *Wonderbrass*: learning original music (nobody else plays the music that *Wonderbrass* plays), improvising within it (they are partly making it themselves at every iteration) and in some cases making their own arrangements and/or original compositions for it (making repertoire themselves) (Smith 2013).

Wonderbrass then represents another kind of micro-utopia; different from the festivals that sandwich this example in that it is long (in time) and thin (in terms of numbers of people involved and time invested). Festivals, viewed as micro-utopias, are short and fat by comparison.

Example 3: The HUB Festival, Womanby Street, Cardiff

For this section I interviewed two members of Creative Republic of Cardiff – a crowd-funded collective formed in 2017 to re-open and run the Moon Club which the previous owners had closed due to threats based on noise-levels emanating from the two bars it owned: separate venues on different floors of the building. The noise issues were raised by a large chain company wanting to

develop their huge bar next door to the Moon by adding hotel rooms above it. At the time there were four full-time venues on Womanby Street [3], but two other venues on the street were occasional music venues [4]. The threat to all these venues sparked the 'Save Womanby Street' (SWS) protest in 2017. The Moon and Full Moon clubs closed for a short time in 2017 but by the end of the year Creative Republic of Cardiff had taken over and re-opened the Moon whilst the old Full Moon had been taken over by an outside company and re-opened as 'Bootleggers'. Both are still live music venues.

The two interviewees were Liz Hunt via email (joined The Moon as a music programmer and promoter in 2016) and Tommy Ingrams, interviewed in person at The Moon on 6th May 2019 (Tommy had worked in the bars since the venue's inception in 2010 but became joint owner as a member of Creative Republic of Cardiff in 2017). The Moon is the focus of the HUB festival, hosting the festival office, providing a venue but also administrative support and infrastructure. It is also a first port of call for many emerging bands looking for exposure at the beginning of their performing careers. The venue has given some bands who are now touring extensively their first gigs and it continues to welcome new acts, new ideas and experiments.

I think we can just take chances, you know (...) we don't have a specific genre of music we do... we do a bit of everything... so we can take those risks and do things which normally wouldn't work in other places. We haven't got that specific niche to protect and defend. (Tommy Ingrams, interview with author, May 2019)

Liz Hunt told me:

HUB was founded in 2013 by the team who used to run The Moon Club and Full Moon. I joined the venues in 2016 and started helping the organisation of Hub, (...) We've now got a small team running Hub and it's growing every year. (Liz Hunt, email interview with author, May 2019)

The aim of the HUB festival was always to bring fans and performers together to celebrate the local music scene in its energy and diversity:

We try to make it affordable, and its aim is to represent as much of Cardiff's music scene as possible, working with different promoters and covering multiple genres (...) We want the festival to provide a snapshot of Cardiff's live music scene across Womanby Street and the surrounding venues. We also try to give an opportunity to musicians who might not always get on other festival bills, or from genres that aren't widely represented. (Liz Hunt, email interview with author, May 2019)

The festival itself is a celebration of the vibrancy of the Cardiff music scene, but according to Ingrams, another aim of the festival is:

showing not only music in South Wales, but showing what we're doing here on Womanby Street... (Tommy Ingrams, interview with author, May 2019)

Successful local bands and solo performers play HUB for little if any money but more to connect with people with similar outlooks and often to try out new things in front of a broadly sympathetic audience. There are two main reasons why I wanted to present the HUB festival in this article. The first reason was to show another example of musical activity as a micro-utopia – in this case one

localised to a particular street on a particular weekend (August bank holiday) but also promoting the music of a particular area; Cardiff, Newport, the Vale of Glamorgan, and the South Wales Valleys.

The second reason is to show how much the people active in this scene, whether as fans, musicians or both, care about the scene and have shown that they are prepared to march, campaign and petition to save it. The SWS campaign is generally thought to have led to Cardiff Council's Music Strategy of 2017-18 – a report by Sound Diplomacy [5] commissioned by the council. The council were persuaded to take the campaign very seriously it seems.

We've certainly noticed more people at gigs throughout the street and in The Moon (still not enough, but it's a good start!). The campaign raised a real awareness of how fragile our live music scene is. (Liz Hunt, email interview with author, May 2019)

The marches certainly caused ripples; Cardiff Central MP Jo Stevens 'drew attention to the successful grassroots campaign to save thriving music venues from redevelopment' (Musicians' Union 2017: 17). Since the SWS protest, Cardiff has gone on to lose two more small-scale venues; Buffalo and Gwdihw – the latter being a definite victim of redevelopment [6]. But redevelopment is not always the enemy of local music. Womanby Street's Clwb Ifor Bach has been given the adjoining derelict building to expand into. This will create a larger independent venue than Cardiff has seen some time; around a 350 capacity in its expanded largest room. This donation of derelict property to Clwb can be seen as another example of Cardiff Council's response to the SWS campaign. A tangible outcome for local music scene activists' investment of time and energy.

Cardiff Council's response to the SWS protests has been interesting. Aside from giving Clwb the derelict adjacent property, it also commissioned Sound Diplomacy to conduct a major consultation with stakeholders in Cardiff's live music economy, alongside a survey of the 'economic impact of Cardiff's music ecosystem' and create a report on the state of this economy (Sound Diplomacy, 2019a: 2).

The consultation by Sound Diplomacy appears to have been focussed simultaneously on two developmental fronts. Firstly, there was a view towards Cardiff's potential as a Music City tourist destination that fans might visit to hear music. They might be attracted to a mid-scale show but also spend the weekend soaking up the local musical culture(s). On the other hand, there were recommendations for building a ladder of progression from workshops for primary and secondary school children, through mentoring, small scale gigs up to professional musical activities (Thomas, 2021). This ambitious range of recommendations seeks to represent the desires of a wide range of musical participants. Widely seen as acting on some of the opinions expressed during the consultation, the help given to Clwb Ifor Bach to expand has largely been welcomed as an attempt by the Council to address grassroots concerns about the state of the local live music scene in the city. This attempt to link the higher echelons of the live music economy with Cardiff's tourist industry whilst addressing concerns at community level is an interesting balancing act. But it does recognise the strength and health of the grass-roots-level local music scene.

Music and Communities

Brecon Jazz has always been clear on what kind of music it is promoting though its working definition of jazz has always been open, and it was possible some years to find New Orleans revivalists/purists on the same bill as avant-gardists such as Cecil Taylor. But Wales-based jazz musicians were always important to it too.

Wonderbrass is a musical community built, musically speaking, upon the *modi operandi* of jazz such as structured arrangements with space for solos, head arrangements, spontaneous backing lines and so forth whilst exploring non-jazz rhythms of popular music forms. Like many other musical forms in the world that celebrate improvisation, it is communally created in a spirit of collaboration. This balance between cohesive communication and spontaneous contribution is a model of 'the good life' for Terry Eagleton in his little book *The Meaning of Life: a Very Short Introduction* (2007).

Take, as an image of the good life, a jazz group. A jazz group which is improvising obviously differs from a symphony orchestra, since to a large extent each member is free to express herself as she likes. But she does so with a receptive sensitivity to the self-expression of others. (...) As each player grows musically more eloquent, the others draw inspiration from this and are spurred on to greater heights. There is no conflict here between freedom and 'the good of the whole', yet the image is the reverse of totalitarian. Though each performer contributes to 'the greater good of the whole', she does not so by some grim-lipped self-sacrifice but simply by expressing herself. (Eagleton 2007: 98-100)

This is of course idealistic but also probably a fair representation of what most group-minded jazz (and other community music activists and participants) are striving for: 'There is self-realisation, but only through a loss of self in the music as a whole' (ibid: 100).

The Moon Club, as can be seen from the quoted interviews above, is an inclusive venue that consciously positions itself at the centre of the grass-roots music scene in Cardiff and surrounding areas. It has the confidence to promote new and emerging bands and artists, some of whom go on to wider success and even music industry careers. But it is also a live music venue offering immersive and pleasurable musical experiences (the venue is intimate) and establishing relationships between performers and listeners, culminating in The Moon's summer HUB festival where the experience spills out onto the streets and neighbouring venues.

The Hub festival is an open-genre festival featuring jazz alongside local indie bands, folk singers, metal, hip-hop, reggae and music in both the languages of Wales [7]. But the most interesting feature of the Hub festival seems to me to be the fact that the huge majority of bands are active on the local (Cardiff, Newport, the South Wales Valleys, and the Vale of Glamorgan) scene. The scene comes together at HUB to celebrate itself. The South Wales music scene probably feels it earned the right to do this when it fought the SWS campaign in 2017 to defend Womanby Street as an all-year-round hub for live music venues after developers began to move into the vibrant area and restrict noise levels. These protests in the summer of 2017 managed to change the city and county council's mind regarding this issue and on the issue of live music policy (it decided it ought to have one).

In this example, an inclusive grass-roots local music scene was able to resist change that threatened it. This suggests that people care enough about their local music scene to fight for it. They are prepared to defend their micro-utopia.

Conclusion

One person's musical utopia, potentially if it is as noisy and annoying as jazz played by predominantly brass instruments in the street, can equally be someone else's idea of hell. Music can be a weapon if you feel excluded by that music or find it an intolerable listen.

The events, organisations, and activities I have mentioned here seem to all point to one important fact: a healthy music scene is united [8]. Confidence and vibrancy are also desirable, but they follow from that unity and strength. People can be supportive of the fact that a particular style of music

is present and represented at an event even if they themselves would not choose to listen to it. People who do not themselves make music can feel as involved and invested in it as those who do.

As we emerge from the COVID lockdowns and are allowed into music venues (this has only been possible for less than three months in Wales at the time of writing) there is an enormous sense of goodwill in the resurgent South Wales music scene. Venues have been lost but the store of pre-COVID good will is evident in those that have survived. Some artists have been helped through the crisis by small grants (including *Wonderbrass* who moved activities online until recently and are now blending their activities between online and live <http://www.wonderbrass.org.uk/category/project/>) and government schemes. Despite this, venues have been lost and therefore opportunities to lose ourselves in *time out of time* and the pleasure of live music have been lost too. So, a picture is presently emerging of a whetted appetite for the pleasure of live music, a goodwill towards the opportunities for that pleasure and those providing it, but also the beginning of a realisation of what has been lost and a resurgent anger about those losses. How these forces play out in the coming years will be interesting to observe. Paul Carr, in a report to the Senedd (Welsh Government)'s Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee [9], recommends a 'three-year music industries' recovery strategy, which takes the ongoing impact of Covid-19 into account (2020: 6-7 – see also 34-44).

Apart from the SWS protest in 2017, it is at festivals and gigs where the different stakeholders come together to enjoy, celebrate, and participate in the local live music scene. When blocks of time can be set aside and people can immerse themselves in the pleasures of the music, spend time with the right sort of music, the right food and drink, and the right people, these places – and the periods of time in which they are visited – are micro-utopias [10]. Groups like *Wonderbrass* [11] represent a different kind of micro-utopia; keen, non-professional musicians spending quality time together, learning repertoire together, and performing all over Wales and further afield. *Wonderbrass* has also proved, for many people, to be a route from being in the audience at a gig to being on stage. Both these micro-utopian models are primarily about communities. In such communities, participants are seen as broadly equal and mutually dependent, whatever their role. This model, based on participation rather than consumption, might be a useful way of looking at local musical scenes; more useful than viewing the music as a product in a producer/consumer economic model (see Turino 2008: 225-231). They would certainly, for most people involved in the cases I have studied, be a truer picture of how they enjoy their music.

Dr. Rob Smith is a Senior Lecturer in Music and Performing Arts at the Faculty of Creative Industries at the University of South Wales. Apart from being musical director of *Wonderbrass* he also composes, improvises, and performs music throughout the UK, Europe and, occasionally, USA. He is a founder member of Community Music Wales and has also led creative workshops for organisations such as Welsh National Opera, St. David's Hall and South Wales Intercultural Community Arts. He has also creatively collaborated with musicians from France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Romania, Gambia, Cameroon, GuineaSouth Africa and South India.

Endnotes

1. The festival is still operating but has (in the period 2010-21) undergone huge changes and had fallow years. The history of the festival falls into three main periods:

1. The Jed Williams Years (1984-2008) where the founder Williams directed the festival followed, after his death in 2003, by a small committee who tried to run the festival in line

with his vision. Williams had always held out against the local police wanting to stop the street music. The small committee that succeeded were unable to do so.

2. The period 2008-2015 when professional companies ran the festival according to their own business plans.
3. The period 2017 to present when the festival has been run by small voluntary groups and local associations of jazz lovers.

2. This figure, people in the town boosted from the normal ca 10,000 to 35,000 for the festival weekend is my estimate. It is based on estimates of attendance published in the late 1980's and early 1990's. In 2002 the BBC estimated attendance at 50,000

(<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2187810.stm>) so my estimate based on memory and similar sporadic figures.

In his scoping study, Nod Knowles writes:

Scoping Brecon's audiences past and present and attempting to size up potential cannot be a reliable or scientific process. What data and research there exists is neither consistent nor sufficient to make finally definitive statements. Anecdotal observation, however, and the experiences of other festivals and their audiences presents some convincing impressions. (Knowles, 2016)

In short, nobody, least of all it seems the Arts Council of Wales, cared enough about the festival to find out how popular and significant it was. So my estimates, when compared with the BBC's, are a little conservative, but as a guide across the festival's heyday, the Williams years and the few years thereafter, I stand by them.

3. The Moon, The Half Moon (now Bootleggers), Clwb Ifor Bach, Fuel. The Four Bars Inn (or Dempsey's) closed as a music venue in January 2017.

4. City Arms and Tiny Rebel Bar.

5. <https://www.sounddiplomacy.com/about>

6. The vacated building on Guildford Crescent is currently an empty cleared site, almost three years after the club was made to leave.

7. Wales is an officially bilingual nation with Welsh (spoken by around 20% of its residents) and English as its two (official) languages.

8. Spillers Records in Cardiff (reputedly the world's oldest, but definitely now Cardiff's main independent record store) has survived recession and a recording-sales crisis by treating its 'customers' (surely now an outdated term but I can't think of a better one) as discerning friends. The shop has put itself at the heart of the local music economy, branching out into ticket sales, t-shirt and merchandise, placing itself at the heart of campaigns like 'Save Womanby Street' and working with local bands to launch their releases, often with in-store performances. The synchronicity between Spillers, the local scene and small-scale venues and promoters is an effective survival strategy. At least it has been until now.

9. Available online at: <https://livemusicexchange.org/resources/the-welsh-music-industries-in-a-post-covid-world-a-report-for-the-culture-welsh-language-and-communications-committee-professor-paul-carr/>

10. Other examples I've not mentioned would be Green Man festival, Chepstow's Green Gathering and the quickly growing Swansea Jazz Festival.

11. Similar groups would be Baracwda samba drumming group, Cardiff Gamelan based at St David's Hall and Cardiff Canton Singers - a community choir in the Canton area of Cardiff.

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