Bury me deep in isolation: A cultural examination of a peripheral music industry and scene

Christina Ballico

Edith Cowan University

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Bury me deep in isolation: A cultural examination of a peripheral music industry and scene.

This thesis submitted for the fulfilment of a PhD (Communications)

Christina Ballico (BComm Hons)
School of Communications and Arts
Edith Cowan University
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed: 

Date: November 5, 2013
Abstract

Since 1998, Perth bands have had a strong presence within the Australian music scene. Primarily, each year between 1998 and 2009, songs by indie pop/rock acts from Perth have charted within national broadcaster triple j’s Hottest 100 countdown. Many of the albums from which these songs have been taken have sold in excess of 35,000 copies, and a number of successful and recognised Perth bands have toured with the nation’s largest music festival, the Big Day Out as well as their own high profile national tours. At the same time, Perth’s local indie pop/rock music industry has undergone tremendous growth and development, becoming more integrated into this nationally focused industry while also making significant inroads internationally.

This research comprises 40 in-depth qualitative research interviews with 48 musicians and key industry players from Perth’s indie pop/rock music industry and scene. It presents a socio-culturally based examination to explore its evolution over the past decade. This is presented through an examination of the personal experiences of those involved in development of the local industry and who experienced, or witnessed an increase in success and recognition of Perth bands in national, and at times international, contexts.

Broadly, this research explores the repercussions the shift in attitude toward Perth’s indie pop/rock music industry and scene as being worthy of national attention and recognition. In particular, it discusses the implications this has on the functioning of this industry as well as the careers of those within it. Further, this study examines what it means to be a musician and/ or music industry member in and from Perth along with the attitudes toward supporting local music product locally and its attempts to connect with audiences beyond the state. Within this, an examination of the influence of the city’s geographical isolation on the functioning of the local industry and on the ability for musicians to connect with audiences beyond the state is presented alongside an exploration of the role of social networks and the structure of the community of practice evident in this local industry. Additionally, the notions of creativity and creative process, core-periphery, and place and space are examined in relation to the functioning of this industry in business and creative contexts.

Underwriting this is an examination of the shifts in the national and international music industries and associated music culture. These shifts all at once influenced the validity for Perth music to enter the national market and impacted upon the ongoing integration of this local industry within the national and international markets.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my two supervisors, Professor Lelia Green and Associate Professor Cat Hope, for their guidance, support, feedback and friendship throughout the duration of this project. It means so much to me on a personal and professional level. Thanks also to Linda Jaunzems for (amongst a host of other things) administrative support. Thank you Dr Debbie Rodan and Dr George Karpathakis for supporting my application to the PhD program.

For providing such a supportive and encouraging research environment, thank you to: the faculty of the School of Communications and Arts; members of the Centre for Research in Entertainment, Arts, Technology, Education and Communications (CREATEC) as well as Emma, Heather, Marziya, Narelle, Kathryn, Sharon and Trish and my former fellow SOAR Ambassadors in the Graduate Research School. Thank you also to the members and visiting scholars of ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI) for your support, feedback and friendship throughout this journey as well as the IASPM-ANZ cohort for always providing such a fun, engaging and informative conference experience.

This project would not, and could not, be what it is without the support, enthusiasm and invaluable commitment of time and energy made by those I interviewed. Thank you. Thank you also to those of you who put me in touch with people along the way.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to my wonderful friends and family for supporting me throughout this PhD and my years of university study.

What a ride!
Publications

The following conference presentations and published conference papers have arisen from this research and associated literature review:

Conference presentations (non-referred)


**Published conference papers (referred)**


List of figures

Figure 1: Economic contributions of Perth’s creative sectors, 2001 – 2006.

Figure 2: Gatekeepers and cultural producers represented in this research.

Figure 3: The venues (including location and type), which form a part to the functioning of this local industry.

Figure 4: Key live music festivals staged between the years 1998 – 2009.

Figure 5: Relationship between WA festivals and the national festival circuit.

Figure 6: The manifestation of the community of practice in Perth’s indie pop/rock scene.

Figure 7: The manifestation of the social networks in Perth’s indie pop/rock scene.
List of abbreviations

COP: Community of practice

CMJ: College Music Journal

DCA: Department of Culture and the Arts

MEF: Major Events Fund

SXSW: South by Southwest

WAM (and variations thereof): West Australian Music Industry Association
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publications</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of abbreviations</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background; Significance; Research questions; Purpose; Chapter overviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology; Methods; Sample group determination and participant recruitment; Researcher perspective and influence; Data analysis; Limitations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature review</strong></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth-focused music and cultural texts; Ancillary studies linking music to place</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical perspectives</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity, creative capital, and gatekeepers/ cultural producers in the creative and cultural industries; Place and space in relation to the creation and dissemination of music; Isolation; Core – periphery; Globalisation; Community -of practice; Social networks and social capital; The notion of the music scene</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter one: Background</strong></td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth music in a pre – 1998 context and the need to ‘break away’; Local music activity and industry infrastructure pre-1998; Growing up in, and moving to, Perth: An isolating suburbia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter two: Contextualisation</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity and the creative process; Creative capital and music as a commodity; Cyclical nature of music consumption, and shifts in music popularity; The isolation of Perth and its peripheral relationship to the Australian music and media industries; A shifting attitude towards music production and dissemination in Perth, 1998 – 2009; Economic contribution of arts and culture to Perth; Notions of success and recognition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press

Gatekeepers and cultural producers; An overview of the recorded and live music industries; The structure of the recorded music industry: National and international contexts; The role of record labels in the music industry and the commodification of music; The superstar model; The role of the live music sector in the development of musicians’ careers; The role of the music press and music-related media in the music industry

Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets

An overview of Perth’s current-day indie pop/rock music industry; The local live sector: Venues, tours and festivals; The local recorded sector: Producer-engineers and recording studios; The local recorded sector: Local record labels; Local music media sector: Street press, online and community radio; Ancillary support organisations and government funding; Local (and localised) music audiences; Perth as a place of musical inspiration; Creative processes within Perth’s music industry and scene; Limitations and benefits of working in and from Perth; Perth’s music industry as a community of practice, and the role of social networks and social capital; Attitudes toward supporting local music

Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry

International music culture and its influence on creativity; Developing a career within and from Perth’s local music industry; Changing relationship to the isolation and the ability to develop music industry careers; The implications of engaging with the national and international music industries and scenes; Dealing with pressure and a loss of passion and desire towards music; Moving forward

Conclusion

Bibliography

Interviews

Appendix one: Demographics

Appendix two: Musicians, their key bands and primary creative/performance roles

Appendix three: Industry interviewees and question sets

Appendix four: Driving distances and duration


Appendix six: Key releases of musicians’ bands (or solo projects where applicable)
Introduction

Background
Since 1998, Perth bands have had a strong presence within the Australian music scene. Each year between 1998 and 2009, songs by Perth bands have charted within national broadcaster triple j’s Hottest 100 countdown. Many of the albums from which these songs have been taken have sold in excess of 35,000 copies (certified ‘Gold’), and a number of successful and recognised Perth bands have toured with the nation’s largest music festival, the Big Day Out. As well as indicating a strong presence within the Australian music market, these are the general definitions of success and recognition which have been adopted as indicating that the artists should be included in this study.

Focusing on the activity and key developments which occurred in Perth’s contemporary indie pop/rock music industry and scene between 1998 - 2009, this research examines the aspects of success and recognition as defined above in three ways. First, with regards to how success and recognition is related to the local activities of musicians and the ongoing development of the local industry; second, to examine how success and recognition has occurred beyond these local activities and developments; and third, to explore the influence upon the success and recognition experienced by the musicians concerned of living and working within the music industry in and from Perth.

Given the national and at times international level at which that success and recognition has been achieved by some musicians, it could be said that some bands are no longer simply ‘Perth bands’ but ‘Australian bands’. Perth is, however, still important to their story. To aid in examining the role that Perth has played in developing these musicians’ careers, there is an emphasis upon including local industry workers in the research and on analysing the level of their engagement within the local music industry.

This study explores the importance of Perth to the stories of the musicians involved. As Perth is geographically isolated, it provides a unique yet challenging environment in which to create music and gain the attention of the rest of the country. As explored in this research, musicians who are
the focus of this study have created their own unique music community. Perhaps due to its location, many of Perth’s more successful and recognised bands include musicians who have: performed together in other groups; worked together on recordings; started recording studios; toured together; shared management and booking agents; and in some cases, signed other local bands to their own independent record labels. Arguably it is in their collective, not singular, form that these musicians, the bands they play in, the studios (be it at home or otherwise) that they demo in, and the venues they perform in, which have created and aided the success of this music scene and powered the continued development of the local industry. It is this communal experience, coupled with the city’s isolation, which allowed Perth’s musicians to develop their musical style, hone their recordings and live performances. This group of musicians, as well as their managers, producers, venue bookers, promoters and media outlets, share a repertoire of experiences and resources. Importantly, it is not only that these musicians belong to a musical community that influences the music they make, but the music is also shaped by how it reaches a wider audience beyond Western Australia, making Perth unique within the context of the Australian music industry.

Creating music locally and in a communal way constructs a strong link between popular music and host cities. This is because, through being isolated from the rest of Australia and the world, the community of Perth musicians has become inherently connected to the city. While many of the bands featured in this research eventually develop strong links with the eastern states (management, record labels, booking agents and even relocating in recent years), the bulk of their creative development has occurred within the Perth milieu.

**Significance**

The research reported here is both academically and culturally significant to the Perth music industry and the broader academic field of music industry research. In particular, this research fills gaps in cultural research into Perth’s contemporary music industry and scene. This research involves a socio-culturally based examination of the Perth music scene as it has evolved over the first decade or so of the twenty first century. In particular it engages heavily with local industry figures and an array of musicians to examine the development of Perth bands in national, and at
times international, contexts and the implications of this increase in success and recognition. The inclusion of industry players in this research has been done to examine the role of the local industry and scene in the development of musicians’ careers in relation to engaging with national and international music industries. This inclusion allows for a breadth and depth to this examination which is often overlooked in accounts of music industry activity.

**Purpose**

Broadly, the purpose of this research is to examine repercussions of the shift in attitude toward Perth’s indie pop/rock music industry and scene as being worthy of national attention and recognition. In particular, it examines the implications this shift in attitude has on the functioning of this local industry as well as the careers of those within it. Data on these issues is presented in relation to how an increase in interest has influenced the ongoing functioning of the local industry as well as in its relationships to the national and international music industries. Further, this research examines what it means to be a musician and/or music industry worker in and from Perth, along with the attitudes toward supporting local music product from within Perth and the attempts of the music industry to connect with audiences beyond the state.

**Research questions**

Contextualised within the national success and recognition of Perth music, and the continued development of the local music industry, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. **How does the local music industry and scene constitute itself?**
   a. What are the attitudes of the musicians and industry members alike toward supporting local music activity within Perth and its attempts to connect with the broader national and international markets?
   b. What relationship does this locality have to national and international markets?
   c. What implications does the increased integration of Perth’s music industry with those in the national and international markets have for the ongoing functioning of this local music industry?

2. **What are the implications for musicians and related local music industry workers as a result of engaging with national and international music industries and scenes?**
a. What considerations do musicians and industry workers make when navigating the development of their careers?
b. How have careers developed or become stagnant within this engagement with the industry beyond Perth?
c. How, if at all, has this engagement influenced changes and ongoing developments within the local music industry and scene?

With the above questions in mind, the chapters have been set up in such a way so as to provide a solid grounding to the work presented before delving more deeply into the analysis of the collected data and the questions presented above.

**Chapter Overviews**

Broadly, the structure of this thesis is based on it allowing for the logical progression of the findings presented. First, a discussion surrounding the methodological considerations made for this research are presented before an overview of the literature and theoretical perspectives which have informed the structure and focus of this research is presented. Then, a more detailed background and contextualisation to, and of, the study and associated time frame. Then, it will discuss in greater detail, the key theoretical perspectives adopted and provide an overview of the structure of the national and global music industries. The remaining two chapters focus more closely on the structure of Perth’s local music industry and its relationship to the national and global industries. Further this chapter also examines as the implications for local music activity and associated careers in light of the increased interest, success and recognition experienced by the participants along with the developments which occurred in this local industry between 1998 – 2009.

**Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological framework while also examining the method of data collection and data analysis. In addition, it discusses some of the complexities of undertaking the research in the manner that it was. Such complexities include the shortcomings of the data collection method, being research interviews, as well as the influence of the researcher to
the work and for the ability to gain access to the interviewees. This chapter is wrapped up with a
discussion of the limitations of the work presented here.

**Literature review**
This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the exploration of Perth’s music scene
between the years 1998 – 2009. Of particular focus in this chapter are works which specifically
examine arts and culture, including music making, in Perth, as well as other broader texts
examining global music scenes. The purpose of this chapter is to identify gaps in the research field
which specifically pertain to Perth and its contemporary music scene, while also discussing works
which have influenced the way in which this work has been undertaken.

**Theoretical perspectives**
Building on the discussion presented in the *Literature Review* chapter, this chapter examines in
great detail the theoretical perspectives adopted for this research. These perspectives are examined
in light of how they are applied in the work, while also commenting on why they were chosen.

**Chapter one: Background**
This chapter provides a background to the field research presented in the remainder of this thesis.
Drawing on published interviews with local Perth musicians whose music has attracted a following
from as far back as the 1970s, this chapter examines the shifts in attitude toward arts and culture
within the city as well as toward being a musician and music industry worker in Perth. This is
underwritten by a discussion on the memories and experiences of growing up in, or moving to,
Perth.

**Chapter two: Contextualisation**
This chapter expands upon the discussion presented in the preceding *Chapter one: Background* to
examine not only the importance of this research, but also the key events and developments which
took place in Perth’s music industry and scene between 1998 – 2009, as identified through the
research interviews. Such a contextualisation provides a framework for the broad and somewhat
abstract concepts and theories examined in chapters three through five, as well as the key decision
to focus on this particular genre of music and the associated local music industry. This chapter examines, in a broad sense, the cyclical nature of music popularity and consumption before delving more deeply into the idiosyncrasies of Perth as a place for musical production and dissemination. Such idiosyncrasies include the city’s isolation and attitudes toward arts and culture. Wrapping up this chapter is a discussion on the notions of success and recognition adopted for this research. These notions are important as they helped inform who was to be approached for interviews in this research, while also providing a useful backdrop for further discussion in Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry regarding the reflections of the musicians’ experiences. This chapter also examines the somewhat abstract concepts concerning creativity, creative processes and the notion of creative capital. Broadly, these concepts are explored in this chapter within a discussion encompassing the value of arts and culture in contemporary society, with a particular focus on how they can be applied to the experiences of musicians and industry workers who were active in Perth’s music industry and scene between the years 1998 – 2009.

Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press

This chapter provides an overview of the structure of the music industry with a particular focus on the recording and live performance sectors, while also exploring the way in which cultural texts, such as songs, are circulated and marketed to audiences. Further, it examines the specific role of the music press – both print and radio formats - in the marketing of music scenes and associated products to audiences. For the purpose of the analysis presented in this chapter, the discussion is framed within the theory of gatekeeping (Caves, 2000, p. 21) and cultural production (2000, p. 21). Gatekeeping and cultural production form the basis of the functioning of the music industry, accounting for the ways in which creative expressions such as music are given purpose, considered to be valid tradable products and subsequently viewed as being a form of creative capital.

Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets
This chapter examines the structure of the local music industry and scene and the relationship with the wider industries and scenes operating at national and international levels. Examining the structure of the local music industry, particularly in light of the notion of the music scene, allows for a more in-depth examination of how the interviewees’ success, recognition and accomplishments have influenced and supported the development of the industry and the careers of those who work within it. Of particular focus are the components of the local music industry in relation the infrastructure developed, sustained and utilised by the interviewees. Additionally, it investigates the influence of Perth’s geographical isolation on the structure and functioning of the industry, as well as on musical creativity. More broadly, through an examination of attitudes toward supporting local music, this chapter discusses the critical role of social networks and the social capital that forms a part of the community of practice. Further, and in light of the notion of the core-periphery, this chapter examines the connections between Perth’s local music industry; the east coast based national one, and industries that operate within international markets such as Europe and USA.

Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry

This chapter explores, in greater detail, the engagement of Perth’s indie/ pop rock music industry with those which exist in national and international contexts. In particular, it works to offer some explanations regarding the need to, and ability for the music from Perth to engage with a wider audience, as well as the ongoing integration of Perth’s music industry within those that operate nationally and internationally. Further, this chapter comments upon the changes which have occurred in the local music industry as a result of this engagement and integration.
Methodology

Introduction
This chapter explores the methodology, methods and approach to data analysis for the research contained in this thesis. Numerous factors are considered here so as to provide a well-rounded exploration into the considerations made, and consequences of, undertaking this study in the manner that it was. In addition, this chapter also considers aspects such as the approach toward participant selection and recruitment as well the influence of the researcher within the interview process and the analysis of data.

First, this chapter examines the methodology adopted for this study, before examining more closely the primary research method of qualitative semi-structured research interviews. Next, it explores the considerations made in, and process of, approaching participants for the research before discussing the influence of the researcher within this process as well as in the undertaking of interviews. It then goes on to explore the approach to data analysis before wrapping up with a discussion regarding the limitations of this work.

Methodology
The methodological approach adopted for this study is narrative reality. Narrative reality is, as Gubrium and Holstein (2009) explain “the activity of storytelling” (p. 16). In conducting research which fits within the narrative reality framework, it is crucial to identify who is telling the story, why they are being given the opportunity to speak, and how the text’s audience constitutes itself (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 23). Further, the interviewer needs to become aware of their own “fears, aversions and assumptions” (Yow, 1994, p. 76) concerning the research topic, so that interviews can be undertaken with as little bias in the line of questioning as possible. This, it is hoped, allows for unexpected stories to emerge. These factors are examined in the Sample group and participant recruitment section below. Narrative reality was chosen as the methodology due to the decision to undertake research interviews as the primary data collection method.
While the process of constructing narrative realities is collaborative, the questions asked in the interview influence how the narrative develops (Gubruim & Holstein, 2009, p. 110). Consequently, interviewees were allowed to speak freely, in order to allow for their stories to evolve and remain their own (Yow, 1994, p. 61). Approaching the interviews in this way, it was hoped, allowed for the stories to “convey the actual circumstances and sentiments of the individual telling the story as that individual (and only that individual) knows them to be.” (Gubruim & Holstein, 2009, p. 42). A further discussion on the use of research interviews is presented in the Methods section below.

Texts on narrative reality and research interviews discuss the importance of the interviewer being aware of their own biases in designing their research. They also argue for the researcher to be aware of the points of view being shared by the interviewees. In researching a topic, like music, which arouses passionate responses, interviewee biases may emerge. Many interviewees have had very positive or negative experiences throughout their careers and musical lives, and these ultimately influence the opinions they hold about the industry and the subsequent stories they shared. Keeping this in mind, by framing the research as a narrative reality endeavour, and by including detailed quotes from interviewees, the stories shared can be contrasted and compared to provide a more nuanced account of events, experiences and opinions. As Gubruim and Holstein (2009, p. 22) explain, “evaluating stories on individual grounds would fail to take into account the profoundly social influences of narrativity.” Consequently, “to fully understand what is conveyed in a narrative, the researcher should key into the circumstances under which the narrative emerged in terms of both how control is exerted and what effect circumstances have on the results” (2009, p. 110).

Using research interviews to obtain data, also determined how the data was to be addressed. As Baker (2002, p. 781, emphasis in original) explains, analyses of interview data “are characterised by the treatment of answers (and sometimes questions) as accounts, as distinct from reports about matters exterior to the interview or responses to questions.” Constructing research interviews as the primary method for data collection, from members of a shared community, determines that “people are interviewed as members of some specific category or population... Accounting for
oneself involves invoking [a] social world in which one’s version of competent membership in a category could make sense” (2002, p. 781).

**Methods**

Semi-structured research interviews were the major data collection method for this study. As Kvale (1996, pp. 5-6) explains, their purpose “is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (emphasis omitted). As the research has explored the experiences of the participants, the interviews were undertaken so as to make sense of, “describe and understand the central themes the subjects’ experience[d] and live[d] toward” (p. 29).

Interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method for this research for two main reasons. First, due to their ability to provide meaningful, in-depth data, which was required in order to present a comprehensive study bringing together a multitude of experiences, perspectives and points of view. Second, and as discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, the researcher’s background, which includes time spent in music journalism and community radio, resulted in a highly-developed interview skills which could be utilised in order to competently undertake the data collection in this manner.

By tackling these interviews in a semi-structured manner, they allowed for co-construction of narratives and for the interviews to be tailored to individual participants based on the responses they shared. This flexibility is important as participants’ experiences and views are unique; differing from person to person, even within the same band or organisation. Further, a semi-structured approach allows for an easier flow of conversation with interviewees as the order of questions can be changed *in situ* while also permitting follow up prompts such as ‘why?’, ‘why not?’ ‘how so?’. These additional prompts are useful in encouraging interviewees to open up about their experiences if they experience difficulties in articulating themselves.

The people approached to participate in this study were chosen based on the positions they occupy within Perth’s local music industry, as is further discussed in the ensuing *Sample group*
determination and participant recruitment section. Many key industry workers have held numerous positions (often at the same time), and many of the musicians interviewed have a long-standing association with the local industry moving from being a fan to performer (and sometimes back again), so their perspectives on success, on how to operate their business, and on how they create music, encompass a broad range of experiences. Interviews were all prepared with specific questions related to the positions which the interviewees held, and experiences they had, but developed in response to the answers given in-situ.

The sets of interview questions used were dependent on the roles held by the interviewees. Broadly, all interviewees who were born, raised in, or moved to, Perth in their childhood and teen years were asked questions regarding their memories of that time period of their lives, while also being asked questions regarding their perspectives upon Perth’s geographical and possible cultural isolation. Additional questions were asked regarding: music discovery; early engagement with the local music industry and scene; limitations and benefits of working in and from Perth, as well as their attitudes towards and reasons for staying in or leaving Perth.

More specifically, musicians were asked questions regarding their creative pursuits, such as the decisions made regarding when, where and with whom they would record and release records. Additionally, they were encouraged to address their career development in relation to attempting to engage with the national and at times international music industries, and how they navigated these industries in relation to the local scene. This included factor such as the decisions to take on, or part ways with, management; the signing, or negotiating out of record contracts; or going through band break ups.

Industry participants were asked questions regarding the development of their careers, related business endeavours and their engagement with particular production sites and musicians. Included within this set are three people who work in roles ancillary to the functioning of Perth’s music industry. This includes two representatives from government funding bodies, and one Melbourne-based nationally-focused advocacy and support role. For the purpose of this thesis, the
term industry excludes these three interviews, unless specified. The remaining 23 industry workers were asked questions regarding the development of their careers and specific business ventures.

While the use of semi-structured interviews can provide researchers with meaningful, and specifically personal, data; some commentators criticise the use of this method due to concerns of bias. As Brown and Canter (1985, p. 222) explain, any interviewer’s reliance on an interviewee to recount their experiences with complete accuracy is fraught with difficulty. In particular, it is suggested:

that they [interviewees] fail to render the authentic accounts through lack of knowledge of what they are doing (Shorter, 1977); by providing the most plausible explanation for their behaviour when it is demonstrably false (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977) by [a] lack [of] awareness of subtle nonverbal behaviours (Argyle, 1978); or by the biases that appear to be endemic in judgements under uncertainty (Koheman et al; 1982).

Due to concerns about the differing points of view held by interviewees, “it [was] not essential that the interviews be taken as the only valid account of why something has occurred [or for] explanations be taken completely at face value” (Brown & Canter, 1985, pp. 222-223). Although it is important to recognise that the researcher is also biased. If the researcher aims to factor in a consideration of the context in which the story is told, it can help reduce any bias which is present (1985, p. 223). In order to reduce any bias, hindsight, rationalisation and the impact of unfolding events have all been factored into the analysis of responses. In addition to this, the sample group was also continually evaluated through the data collection phase, as discussed in greater detail below. More broadly, in order to convey the way in which the interviewees have made sense of their experiences, lengthy quotes are included along with indications of pausing ... and laughter (laughs).
Sample group determination and participant recruitment

Potential interviewees were determined based on the level of success and recognition they have achieved in their music careers, along with their ability to discuss a range of experiences and perspectives relating to local indie pop/rock music activity. Within this, strong connections within and to the indie pop/rock music industry and scene were critical, as well as in the national and international context. Key to the decision to include particular musicians was that they had released music in recorded format between 1998 – 2009. A breakdown of this activity can be found in Appendix six: Key releases of musicians’ bands (or solo projects where applicable).

The researcher had prior professional relationships with numerous industry interviewees, as well as a small number of musicians. These relationships were developed through time spent working in a variety of roles in the local media and entertainment industries such as in music journalism, blogging, event ticketing and music retail.

These existing relationships not only facilitated the ease with which interviews could be scheduled, but also helped allow for a more free flowing and open conversation to take place. This network proved vital to gaining the support of musicians who might ordinarily be hard to speak to and also allowed for referral to other members. In cases where difficulties were experienced in accessing interviewees, it was easy to circumvent these gatekeepers and approach interviewees directly. Further, knowledge gained by being a participant of the local music scene – as a fan of the music and the aforementioned roles – assisted in the decision making process of who was to be approached to participate in the study.

The sample group comprises musicians whose work primarily sits within the genre of indie pop/rock. This is a genre of music, defined by Bannister (2006) as:

A post-punk subgenre of independent or alternative rock, featuring mainly white, male groups... to primarily white, male audiences, recording mainly for independent labels, being disseminated at least initially through alternative media networks such as college
radio stations and fanzines, and displaying a countercultural ethos of resistance to the market.

It is important to note, however, that due to the fluidity of musical genres, however, and the continued creative development of the musicians interviewed, there are some deviations within this. As a result some of the musicians’ work also intersects with genres such as blues, experimental, folk and punk. Further, it is important to remember that musicians often perform in more than one band in their musical lives and, have often only been interviewed in relation to one or perhaps two groups who achieved success and recognition. A full list of musicians, their bands (where applicable) can be found in Appendix two: Musicians, their key bands and primary creative/performance roles.

In comparison, industry workers work across a variety of roles such as: artist management; live music touring and festival promotion; music journalism; radio programming; record engineering and producing; and venue booking. The engagement of musicians with key sites and events, such as festivals, as well as local industry resources and industry workers further influenced the inclusion of industry workers as well as the topics discussed in interviews. Additional interviews were conducted with government funding representatives and advocacy workers to provide a broader scope to the project and illustrate the ways in which this local industry receives additional support in order to connect with the national and international music industries.

A total of 40 interviews were conducted over a two year period with a total of 48 participants. The sample group comprises 25 musicians, 20 local industry workers and 3 ancillary/support workers. Included in this group is one cross-over member who was asked questions from a musician and industry worker standpoint. Broadly speaking, the number of interviewees was decided based on making the sample group and interview process manageable, as well as being influenced by the ability to gain access to potential interviewees (i.e. one or two members versus the full band). Further, the inclusion of ancillary workers has been based on a combination of their integration into the local music landscape as well as their roles representing key shifts and developments in the local music industry between 1998 – 2009. Due to the relatively small number of interviewees in comparison to the number of musicians and industry members that work within this local scene,
it is important to note that the findings of this research cannot be viewed as absolutely indicative of the experiences of Perth musicians and industry workers. What the findings do offer, however, is critical insight into the challenges and experience of music making and business practices within and from Perth.

A break-down of the demographics of this group – excluding the funding representatives and external players - can be found in Appendix one: Demographics, with an overview of the different roles industry workers were interviewed about found in Appendix three: Industry interviewees and question sets.

Interviews were most often conducted face to face (31) in settings such as a pubs (3), cafés (9), and office / studio spaces (15) or at the interviewee’s home (4), with a small number conducted via phone (5) or email (4). Most phone and face to face interviews were 45 minutes to one hour in duration, with some lasting up to two hours. Primary analysis was undertaken throughout this time. This analysis identified potential areas of enquiry, as well as key events and developments which would become the focus of the subsequent analysis. Such an approach served to inform the ongoing interview process, as it identified and legitimised the inclusion/ exclusion of potential interviewees. The final interviewee set was further informed by the unwanted exclusion of some potential participants due to them declining to be interviewed, or not responding, ceasing communication and/ or the decision of artist managers who preferred their artists not be involved.

As touched upon above, the perspective of the researcher influenced the interviewees approached for this research as well as the ongoing development of the project.

**Researcher perspective and influence**

It is important to understand the perspective from which this research has been approached in order to understand some of the terminology used as well as the way in which this research is presented. As the researcher is a native of WA, and an active participant in this local industry and scene, their knowledge has, as discussed above, informed the interviewees approached for this research, along the ability to gain such access, while also factoring into the line of questioning in the interviews and the continued development of the project.
Generally speaking, the ability to undertake this project was undoubtedly influenced by the researcher’s insider status. Without this status the ability to gain access, and successfully undertake the breadth of interviews would have been diminished. The work of Hodkinson (2005) and Labaree (2002) prove particularly useful to this discussion. These two researchers have published on the processes of researching from an insider perspective, reflecting on the benefits and limitations afforded by undertaking research with this status.

Undertaking this work with a prior rapport with many of the participants as well as other members of the local music industry certainly assisted in the ease with which interviews could be arranged, and facilitated the ability to gain access to participants who would usually be out of reach. Additionally, it allowed for an ease of conversation in the interviews, as discussed in greater detail later, along with a strong understanding of the topics discussed, meaning that interviews could proceed in a comfortable manner, and data analysis being undertaken with an understanding of the context of experiences discussed and perspectives shared (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 141). At the same time, however, it is important that such understandings are questioned, as they can, and inevitably will, influence the way in which analysis is undertaken (Labaree, 2005, p. 107), as discussed in the Data analysis section below.

It is also important to understand some of the difficulties which can arise as a result of undertaking research with this status. Similar to the inherent difficulties which can arise from undertaking research within a narrative reality framework, as well as using research interviews as the data collection method, as discussed earlier, researching from an insider’s perspective does require some considerations. These includes: how the researcher defines themselves in relation to the subject and participants, as well as where they should and should not be illuminated and shadowed in the text (Hodkinson, 2005, p. 133; Mullings (1996) cited by Labaree, 2002, p. 106); how the researcher’s status is perceived by the participants; how a rapport between researcher and participant influences – good and bad – the responses given in interviews (2005, p. 140). Further, the rapport between researcher and participant will inevitably shift from one participant to another (2005, p. 139), as was the case with this participant group, and as discussed in greater detail below.
An understanding of the ways in which music activity occurs unfolds in Perth, including the key sites of production and dissemination, as well as the industry workers involved in the development and sustaining of such spaces, resulted in a solidified focus to the interviews undertaken. In turn, each interview is valid in its inclusion here. Additionally, an understanding of the challenges faced when working in Perth, such as the geographical isolation of the city, working within a small market, and the attitude toward and from the east coast based national music industry, influenced the focus placed on Melbourne and Sydney as being the core of the Australian music industry. Further, this also influenced the heavy focus on the challenges of isolation and market size. These are particularly important factors to the discussion regarding the ability of musicians and industry members to develop careers in Perth. Further, an understanding of the interconnectedness of this industry as well as the social and professional relationships which exist between members further influenced the focus placed on the role of social networks, social capital and the community of practice when examining the functioning of this scene and industry.

More broadly, however, it is important to recognise the potential influence of the researcher to how the interviewees responded. As discussed above, the researcher not only has standing within the local music industry, but also has prior relationships with numerous interviewees. As such, many of the interviews were conducted with an ease of conversation and in a relaxed manner. While this undoubtedly resulted in a richness of data which would perhaps not have been achieved had these prior relationships not existed, it did also result in some interviewees feeling as though they had overshar ed or in some cases, interviewees feeling uncomfortable about the interview process, as all other prior interactions had been in more informal settings. Accounting for such influences played a role in the way in which data analysis occurred and the way in which findings have been presented.

**Data analysis**

All face to face and phone interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. These transcripts were produced verbatim and, in the initial stages, provided to all interviewees. The reason for this was an understanding that previous social and professional relationships might
result in a degree of openness which the interviewees might feel uncomfortable about in retrospect. After there were only a small number of requests to retract comments, and a larger number of concerns raised regarding the inclusion of redundant phrasing and words, some editing was done to reduce this phrasing, with transcripts only provided upon request.

Analysis of interview data started prior to the completion of field research (Patton, 1990, p. 377) as ideas for categories of analysis emerged during the interview process. Once interviews were completed, the data was analysed in relation to membership categories. This approach has allowed for a more cohesive analysis than taking each interview as a stand-alone data set. By analysing interviewees’ responses in ‘units’, it becomes easier to contrast the stories, insights and opinions shared in the interviews. Themes also offer ways to analyse and present the data in accordance with topics raised and with theoretical perspectives. As van Manen (1990, p. 79) explains, themes can be understood as “structures of experience” (emphasis omitted).

The ability to analyse data in detail was supported by the researcher making detailed notes during the interviews while also undertaking all of the interview transcription. Interviews were analysed in light of the research questions outlined in the Introduction chapter, while also examining: memories of growing up in or moving to Perth, early and ongoing music discovery; initial local music discovery and engagement; additional involvement and support of the industry; limitations and advantages of working in and from Perth; attitudes toward Perth’s isolation; the broader desire or loss thereof toward pursuing music as a career; references to other local music infrastructure and bands; career development; and business and creative decisions. Importantly, due to the large amount of data yielded in the interview process, it is not feasible to present all findings in great detail in this work, with interview quotes included based on the articulation of the interviewees and an understanding and respect for the fact these are, more often than not, active musicians and industry members, who have careers and professional reputations to uphold.

It is important to also consider the reliability of the data collected through these interviews. This reliability is in relation to the ability for the participants to accurately recall events as well as considering the influence of hindsight and personal bias. As such, when analysing the collected
data, the researcher was careful to consider responses in light of such biases. Due to interviews being the primary data collection method, with a focus placed on their ability to allow interviewees to share their stories, it was near impossible to remove all biases from the data set. As such it became important to examine the responses in light of how interviewees were constructing the stories they shared. Additionally, complementary and contrasting perspectives have been included throughout this work to show the variances in the experiences and perspectives of the interviewees.

Another way to reduce the inherent issues of validity of data, particularly around dates, was to examine the experiences of interviewees in light of where they were in the development of their careers as opposed to particular years. While the researcher could often easily access information such tour and release dates, when discussing specifics with musicians, for example, as this was their lived experience, particular dates and time frames became blurred. Further, on occasion, interviewees were being asked questions regarding their careers and experiences which they had not necessarily considered prior. As such, they experienced some difficulties in articulating their responses as they had not thought about such matters in great detail before.

**Limitations**

While this research is significant due to its breadth and depth, it is important to acknowledge the following key limitations of the study:

1. Inclusion/exclusion of specific music industry roles: In determining the scope for this project, decisions were made with regards to which industry roles would be included. These decisions were made in relation to the access to interviewees as well as the positioning of these roles within Perth’s local music industry and the associated scene. As such roles including music photographers and film clip makers, music retailers and commercial radio programmers are excluded. This exclusion is not to imply that these roles are not important to the functioning of local music, however, when examining the development of the industry and scene in question, they sit on the periphery of such activity. Further, it was crucial to limit the number of interviews undertaken so as to make the project manageable.
2. Limiting the scope of the music industry aspects included: Following on from the limitations of who was to be interviewed, it is important to note that this research focuses on the experiences of musicians and industry workers, it in turn places a focus on the recorded and live music sectors of the music industry. This is because it is with these two sectors that the musicians and industry members have predominantly engaged. While it is important to acknowledge that other aspects such as the licensing sector (the using of music in films, television, advertisements and video games) yield profits and can provide income stream for artists, engagement with such a sector is largely beyond the engagement of the musicians included here. Further, the inclusion of ancillary workers was limited to those whose roles represent significant developments or shifts in local music activity and culture. As a follow on, a significant lack of engagement with industry workers based on the east coast has occurred as a way to limit the scope of the project, make it manageable and keep the focus on the experiences of local musicians and industry players.

3. Access to participants: While all possible attempts were made to interview key musicians and industry workers, some potential participants declined to participate; did not reply to participation requests; or agreed to participate then ceased communication. Further, some difficulties were experienced in dealing with artists’ managers who did not want their musicians involved. While this was able to be overcome in some instances by approaching the artists directly, this strategy did not work in all cases. Such nuances in participant recruitment further influenced the final set of interviewees approached, as the validity of including other musicians and industry workers was diminished through the unfortunate exclusion of some musicians and industry workers.

4. Bias of interviewees: As discussed throughout this chapter, this study is working within a narrative reality framework, the interviewees are likely to have biases and express these in the study. While all possible measures have been taken to reduce and account for any bias encountered (particularly via a critical analysis of what is said, in relation to what others say occurred), some elements of bias will still be present, and will also be present in the interviewer’s approach, and in the subsequent data analysis.

5. The specific set of music genres and the scene being explored: As this study is leveraged upon the success of some more commercial and successful musical acts, it circumscribes
the range of genres and scenes being explored. For example, the experimental music, jazz and blues scenes are not included in the research. While these scenes exist in Perth (and are successful in their own right), they are omitted from the study and therefore this limits the genres addressed, the scenes considered and the subsequent interviewees approached. While these broader genres and their associated scenes are excluded from the research, it is important to understand that these scenes intersect with indie pop/rock through utilising the same performance and recording spaces as well as, on occasion musicians and industry workers.

6. The role of the Internet in the music industry, its impact on revenue streams and musicians careers: The Internet and associated technologies have undoubtedly a significant mark on the global music industry, including an impact on the functioning of Perth’s local music industry and scene, as well as for the ability for up and coming acts to reach new audiences, circumscribing some of the challenges inherent in working in and from an isolated locale. Despite this degree of importance, this research largely ignores these factors, due to the broad nature of this issue within the music industry and the required narrowing of the scope for this project.

7. Inherent gender-basis in the sample group: As this research is examining success and recognition within the music industry, while also delving into the key roles held by enablers as well as musicians, there is an inherent and unavoidable gender bias resulting in a predominantly male group of participants. While the gender bias in the industry is evident, it is not a subject of the research and does not inform any of the analysis presented here.
Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the methodology, methods and approach to data analysis adopted for the research presented here. It has examined the decisions made by the researcher in relation to the way in which the research was designed, undertaken and analysed, while also discussing some of the difficulties resulting from tackling the research in this way as well as the positives and negatives of undertaking research with an insider’s perspective.

This chapter examined the adoption of narrative reality as the methodological framework, while also discussing the decision to undertake data collection by using research interviews. It also discussed how this approach informed the choice of methodology as well as the ongoing collection of data. Additionally, it explored how these interviews were structured and undertaken. Further, this chapter examined the influence of the researcher in the design of the project as well as on the collection of data.
Literature review

Introduction
This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the exploration of Perth’s music scene between the years 1998 – 2009. It examines two key groups of texts: those exploring the success of Perth’s music industry and scene, and others examining more successful cities and scenes such as the 1990s Seattle ‘grunge’ movement, ‘emo’ and punk music culture from the early 2000s, and Liverpool’s rock music culture. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, to identify gaps in the research field which specifically pertain to Perth and its contemporary music scene. Second, to explain the way in which this research has been undertaken in regards to its focus and approach. This sets the context for the analyses undertaken throughout the rest of the thesis.

This literature review begins with texts exploring Perth’s music industry and scene along with the city’s broader arts and cultural sector. These texts are examined in relation to how they influence the way in which this research has been approached as well as the subsequent presentation of its findings. These texts discussed here included: Tara Brabazon’s 2005 edited collection Liverpool of the south seas; Jon Stratton’s 2007 collection Australian rock: Essays on popular music; the 2003 edited collection Farewell Cinderella: Creating arts and identity in WA; and the 2009 documentary Something in the water. This review then examines a further four texts that link music and place: the 1996 documentary Hype!; Kyle Anderson’s 2007 book Accidental revolution: The story of grunge; Andy Greenwald’s 2003 book Nothing feels good: Punk rock, teenagers and emo; and Sara Cohen’s 2001 book Rock culture in Liverpool: Popular music in the making.

Importantly, this review is limited to works which directly influence the research presented here. While part of this chapter could be devoted to examining additional works which examine music scenes in broader, more international contexts, this is instead undertaken in the ensuing Theoretical perspectives chapter. This is done as a way of linking the literature and theoretical perspectives and to also strengthen the use of underlying theories in this research. Further, a strong focus is placed here on works which examine Perth music, in both academic and non-academic contexts. This is because Perth is often marginalised within discussions surrounding Australian
popular music culture and industry activity, despite being an interesting site of analysis while also making considerable contributions to the Australian music market.

**Perth-focused music and cultural texts**

*Liverpool of the south seas* (Brabazon, 2005) is an edited collection of 20 academic essays exploring the success of Perth music and the broader local music industry and scene. Written predominantly by early career researchers from various fields of cultural studies, the collection explores Perth music in a variety of contexts. These contexts include: the community of music makers; live music and nightlife; local music retailing; and local music journalism and street press. An eclectic mix of scenes and genres are explored - including those which exist on the periphery. The collection’s papers adopt various writing styles, from interview transcripts to traditional academic essays. While such a broad approach and scope gives a voice to aspects of local music activity which are perhaps under-represented in most discussions about popular music, the resulting text lacks overall cohesion. This lack of cohesion significantly compromises the collection as no central argument is presented, and each essay is essentially left to stand on its own. Keeping these factors in mind, the work presented here is much narrower in scope, focusing on the indie pop/rock genre of music, with cohesion within the interviewee set. Further, the structure of this thesis, as discussed in the *Introduction* chapter, is designed in such a way so as to allow for the logical progression of analysis, from examining the structure of local scene and its relationship to national and international industries, to the implications of this engagement upon the careers of musicians and the business practices of the industry members. As a result, a cohesive argument is delivered, exploring the structure of the local music industry, its relationship to those which operate in national and international markets as well as how the continued integration into these larger industries, as well as an increase in the success and recognition of Perth music beyond the city, have influenced the ongoing development of this local industry.

Recognising that Brabazon’s collection, in spite of its shortcomings, represents a good starting point for the research presented in this thesis, selected essays by Brabazon as well as Trainer are used to strengthen select arguments presented in later chapters.
In comparison, Jon Stratton’s 2007 anthology *Australian rock: Essays on popular music* brings together eight of his previously published academic essays examining Australian popular music from the 1960s to 1980s. The first half of the book explores the broader Australian music scene while the second half narrows in on the music from Perth, with a particular focus on the following artists: The Scientists; The Triffids; and Dave Warner and the Suburbs. As he explains in the collection’s introduction: “I do not attempt a panoramic view of this period. Rather, I identify particular themes associated with the idea of Australian popular music at that time and develop the themes through the chapters” (pp. 20-21). These themes include: the notion of a ‘Perth sound’; the influence, and internationalised flows, of music; and the sense of place present in Perth music. Stratton’s work is useful because it serves as another example of how the music of Perth evolved, including within the context of the broader Australian music scene, with the focus of his work largely predating the time-frame focused on in the work here. This proves useful as a way of illustrating the cyclical nature of music popularity and the engagement, and recognition of Perth music within the national market. Further, as discussed in the *Background* chapter, when examining the attitudes toward being a musician in Perth in a pre-1998 context, much of it is centred around the notion of needing to ‘break away’, leave Perth and live elsewhere to continue creative pursuits such as music.

In comparison, the edited collection, *Farewell Cinderella: Creating arts and identity in Western Australia* (Bolton et al, 2003), assists in positioning this research into the indie pop/rock music scene within a broader discussion about the value of arts and culture in Perth. *Farewell Cinderella* consists of eight academic essays exploring: architecture, dance, literature, music; radio and television; religion and visual arts. As explained in the Introduction (p. 3):

> The stories in this collection of essays are predominantly of the past and are constrained by their mainstream focus. For the most part marginal voices are absent. Nevertheless the narratives form an important record of the cultural forces at work in Western Australia from colonial settlement in 1829 to the present. Like all stories, these accounts are selective, partial and partisan – and at the same time informed, thoughtful and scholarly. As records of people, places, events, productions and stories about stories that have been largely untold, they now become part of the present. And to the extent that they are carried forward imaginatively and materially, they constitute a part of the future.
The approach and scope of *Farewell Cinderella* proves useful to the research presented here. This research is similarly constrained by a mainstream focus and, while the time frame is much more present day, the experiences of the interviewees are similarly treated as stories, and are about past experiences. In comparison, with *Farewell Cinderella* some of the stories may have already been told but, due to the broad nature of the questions asked in the semi-structured research interviews, untold stories and minority or suppressed points of view have emerged.

In contrast to these three academically focused collections, the Perth music documentary, *Something in the water* (2009), explores the phenomenon of nationally recognised, successful Perth bands with a particular focus on contemporary music created in the period from the 1990s to 2000s. Contextualised within Perth’s discussion around isolation and cultural identity (or lack thereof), the documentary ponders the question of how and why bands found success beyond the city. Initially going back as far as the 1960s, *Something in the water* briefly explores the success of bands throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s before honing in on successes from the mid-1990s onwards. While providing a detailed insight into the ‘trials and tribulations’ experienced by bands trying to get their music to a national audience, and the ways in which bands learn to deal with new-found success, the documentary largely excludes the local industry from consideration. Due to the focus on bands as key movers in the music industry, it does not engage with the many other industry workers. Its focus upon ‘top tier’ bands and the ‘major players’ of the national music industry, based in the eastern states, explains the exclusion of the local industry workers and lesser known bands. The consequence of excluding key local players, however, is that little attention is paid to the conditions under which Perth bands developed within the local scene, and how industry workers developed their careers and the associated local music industry sectors. The role of local music venues, community radio, street press, artist managers are largely excluded and, in turn, so is the local industry and wider scene which operates at a more ‘grass roots’ level.

Recognising that the exclusion of local players, as well as musicians with differing levels of success and recognition, results in a significant gap in the field, this research engages with a much broader set of interviewees. As a result, the work presented here is of a broader and deeper scope.
The works undertaken by: Brabazon (2005); Stratton (2007); Bolten et al (2003); and Landers and O’Bryan (2009) are examples of how the success of Perth music has been explored and analysed from both academic and non-academic perspectives, as well as indicating the ways in which the broader arts and culture sectors of Perth have been examined.

Collectively, these works, as described above, illustrate the varying ways in which Perth music has been given, an albeit often absent voice, within popular music studies in Australia. Using these works as a guide, the research presented here has attempted to move beyond simply aspects such as: the cultural identities of Perth; historical reflections on popular music making and expression by Perth musicians; the broad nature of local music scenes in relation to genres, and sites of production and performance; and the mainstream success and recognition experienced by Perth music.

A discussion of texts exploring other, more notable, music scenes and genres is presented now to further strengthen the rationale for undertaking this study and the manner in which it has been done. These texts are particularly useful as they examine how music exists within a place, how existing music influences the local development of new music, and the ways in which music reaches new audiences. Further, the books also address how a boom in popularity in place-based music impacts upon people who make music in a given locale.

**Ancillary studies linking music to place: Seattle ‘grunge’, America’s ‘emo’ and punk scenes and Liverpool’s rock music culture**

The 1996 documentary *Hype!* explores the success of the grunge music scene which grew out of Seattle, Washington. The documentary examines the genre from its birth in the late 1980s, to its debatable death in the mid-1990s following the suicide of Nirvana lead singer Kurt Cobain, who many viewed as the music movement’s figurehead. Of the countless interviews featured in the documentary, only a few are with people who are from outside the city. This results in a strong ‘insiders’ perspective’ being presented. Further, the documentary goes beyond the ‘top tier’ bands, excluding the two remaining members of Nirvana - Krist Novoselic and Dave Grohl, and Soundgarden front man Chris Cornell - to explore the wider social and cultural implications of the
genre’s success on the local music scene and upon the city itself. While the exclusion of Novoselic, Grohl and Cornell may not have been the film maker’s intention, but may instead reflect a decision made by the musicians, their management and/or record labels, it allows for differing perspectives and experiences associated with scene-based music popularity. As the film indicates, the success of grunge music not only resulted in a shift in its global popularity as a music genre but also triggered a wider cultural movement, leading to Seattle becoming a ‘brand’. Major labels started undertaking mass signings of new acts to ‘cash in’ on the hype of the local scene while grunge developed its own aesthetic and image, which was used to market non-musical products such as clothing and even cars.

A decade later, Kyle Anderson’s book Accidental revolution: The story of grunge (2007) examines the rise in popularity of grunge in the early 1990s. Exploring the ‘hair metal’ roots of the genre in the 1980s, the book then discusses ‘key’ bands which influenced the development of grunge sound – including both lesser known and very successful acts – as well as other socio-cultural aspects of the Seattle music scene. These other aspects include: films about grunge music, notably Singles; the impact of heroin use; the death of Kurt Cobain; and the impact of other bands moving to Seattle to start creating similar-sounding music in a bid to capitalise upon the interest in grunge and the Seattle music scene. Anderson’s book is a journalistic exploration of the success of a music industry and does not provide direct quotes. Nor does not acknowledge how the research was undertaken or provide sources concerning where the information drawn upon was obtained.

In comparison, Andy Greenwald’s book Nothing feels good: Punk rock, teenagers and emo (2003), explores the origins of emo music (short hand for ‘emotional hard core’), and its rise to worldwide popularity in the early 2000’s. Separated into four main sections, this book discusses: the genre’s key bands (Weezer, Jimmy eat world and Dashboard confessional in particular); the ‘do-it-yourself’ mentality present in the touring and distribution of the music, and the record labels key to the development of emo’s popularity. Underpinning this book is an analysis of the socio-cultural impact the music has had on teenagers (particularly in America), with Greenwald tackling his subject in an ethnographic manner – spending significant amounts of time with the musicians.
and fans of the genre. Similar to Anderson’s text, this book is also written from a journalistic rather than academic perspective.

Anderson’s and Greenwald’s texts are both useful in providing a basic template for how to structure explorations into contemporary music. Both authors are music journalists (incidentally writing for *Spin* magazine in America) and their texts are written to achieve mass appeal, with the intended audience being fans of the genres concerned. In contrast, the research reported in this thesis aims to draw upon the experiences and perspectives of artists and industry workers of the 1990s – 2000s Perth indie pop/rock music scene with the intention of analysing the relevance of both the city and the community of musicians to fostering the success and recognition of key local bands. Further, the aim is to examine the influence this success and recognition has upon the development of the local industry.

The academic work of Sara Cohen is in contrast to Anderson and Greenwald’s journalistic approaches to place-based music. Cohen’s work on the musical heritage and future of Liverpool has been useful to the research examined in this thesis both through rationalising the focus on more than just the ‘top tier’ bands, and in positioning the research within the broader Perth arts and cultural industries. In particular, her two books - *Rock culture in Liverpool: Popular music in the making* (1991) and *Decline, renewal and the city in popular music culture: Beyond the Beatles* (2007) - draw on significant ethnographic research undertaken in Liverpool throughout the 1980s and 1990s. These texts offer an example of how to analyse the functioning of the local music industry and scene within broader cultural and social contexts. Cohen’s first book, *Rock culture in Liverpool: Popular music in the making* (1991) explores the struggles experienced by the city’s bands in trying to ‘make it’. These struggles, Cohen explains, were not only in trying to reach a wider audience beyond Liverpool, but also in trying to sustain being a musician in Liverpool in the face of “economic decline, unemployment, dwindling audiences and [declining numbers of] performance venues” (p. 3). These localised difficulties, were taking place at a time when the national recording industry was struggling financially and subsequently signing fewer bands. Broadly, Cohen (p. 4) states that her book:
Discusses that struggle in detail within the context of the bands’ social and cultural lifestyle. In doing so it considers the interrelationships between art and society, attempting to explore the tension between creativity and commerce through description and analysis of the process of musical production and performance by the bands.

For the purpose of her book, Cohen focused on two specific bands, however she also conducted an unspecified number of unstructured interviews with additional musicians as well as key industry figures. Importantly she included musicians who did not have record contracts, effectively functioning on the periphery of the industry, to examine how these artists were influenced by cultural production at a national, mass media level (p. 5).

Similarly, Cohen’s second book, *Decline, renewal and the city in popular music culture: Beyond the Beatles* (2007) explores the music of Liverpool, going more deeply into the 1980s and 1990s. In this text, she tackles question of the impact of a collapsed economic infrastructure and the implication of music within its regeneration, as well as the effect of globalised capitalism on the relationship between the city and popular music (p. 3). In particular, Cohen’s work in this book examines the influence of economic restructuring and urban de-industrialisation on popular music culture. This, in turn, allows for the consideration of “how the specificity or distinctiveness of popular music might have an impact on the city” (pp. 3 – 4).

The research undertaken by Cohen proves useful to the work presented here as it examines the broader role of music within the city. This is important as it is illustrative of how local music activity does not exist in a vacuum and is certainly not immune to the influences of external factors such as urban renewal and the local economic. Such factors have certainly been influential to the way in which local music activity has taken place in Perth between 1998 – 2009.

The discussed of the works above, in relation to international music scenes help to identify a gap in the internationally focused field of popular music studies, while also providing a framework to the way in which this research has been undertaken. Such works have influenced the theoretical perspectives which are discussed in the next chapter, Theoretical perspectives. Additional scene focused works are also discussed in this next chapter.
Conclusion

A review of the literature examining contemporary music within the larger context of arts and culture in Perth as well as contemporary music making in Perth and from around the world reveals a significant gap in the field, making a study such as this particularly worthwhile. Further, this informs the approach taken for the research, as well as how the findings are presented. For example, and as discussed, the focus on interviews as being a source of rich data as well as the flow of the chapters has been informed by the works examined in the literature review.

Previous research and contemporary music texts on Perth music have been of both academic and non-academic focus. These works offer a useful basis to moving forward in this research. This is further supported by the approaches taken by those whose work examines other local music scenes and musical shifts. Overall, the texts discussed above inform the focus of the analysis, while supporting the breadth and scope of the study. In particular they inform the inclusion of musicians and industry members who have achieved varying levels of success and recognition, along with industry members who work within Perth’s local music industry, while also relying on interview data to tell the story of Perth’s indie pop/rock music between 1998 – 2009.
Theoretical Perspectives

Introduction
This chapter examines the main theoretical perspectives used in analysing of the research presented here. The purpose of examining these perspectives is to assist in contextualising the research within the field of music industry and scene research, and to provide grounding to the analysis presented in chapters three through five. Broadly, this examination of these theories complements the preceding Literature Review by further strengthening the rationale for undertaking this research, and the way in which it has been done. Generally speaking, the theories discussed in this chapter have been adopted for this research based on the varying ways in which other works have approached similar studies, as outlined in the Literature Review chapter as well as for the ability for such theories to support a well-rounded and comprehensive study.

This chapter begins with an exploration of the theories of: creativity; creativity as a form of capital; cultural spheres; and gatekeepers and cultural producers in the creative and cultural industries. Then, the ideas of place and space in relation to the creation and dissemination of music are examined before investigating the theories of: isolation; core-periphery dynamics; globalisation; community; and community of practice. Last, an exploration of the notion of music scenes is presented, including both the theoretical perspectives and the way in which scene analyses can be undertaken.

Creativity, creative capital, and gatekeepers and cultural producers in the creative and cultural industries
Creativity, as defined by Howkins (2002, p. ix), “is the ability to generate something new. It is the production by one or more people of ideas and inventions that are personal, original and meaningful.” Creativity occurs when “a person says does or makes something that is new, either in the sense of ‘something from nothing’ or in the sense of giving a new character to something” (p. ix). Creativity is not an economic activity however it “may become so when it produces an idea with economic implications or a tradable product” (Howkins, 2002, p. 1). Even so, the point at which
an idea becomes a product - and as such becomes a driver for possible capital acquisition - can be hard to define.

As Howkins (2002, p. 199) explains, capital is defined by economists as “something which is not, or not only, valued for current use but as an investment for the future”. Capital is “stock; it is stable; it has longevity” (p.199). The main types of capital have historically been monetary (financial capital) and buildings and equipment (physical capital) however, in recent decades, human abilities such as creativity and knowledge have also been identified as forms of capital.

Creativity can be considered capital because “it results from investment, which the owner may increase or vary; and it is a significant input to future creativity and creative products” (Howkins, 2002, p. 211). When creativity is converted to capital, it gains most value “when it is managed and made purposive” (p. 212). That is, by managing and giving creative capital a purpose, it has a much higher chance of gaining value than creative capital that is unmanaged or exists without a purpose. This value assigned to creativity can be of a financial nature or through its enrichment of culture.

As discussed further in Chapter Two: Contextualisation, this research is underpinned by an exploration into the processes involved in, and consequences of, turning creativity into capital. As Caves (2000, p. 21) explains:

> Each creative realm has its set of intermediaries who select artists. The intermediaries’ choices serve their own mixtures of motives. Dedication to advancing the arts is often present, but profit is usually sought, and the costs of humdrum [ordinary] inputs must be covered.

Importantly, this process involves exclusion beyond the artists’ control (p. 21). That is gatekeepers act as cultural vettors and as such, include and exclude different artists from being able to be a part of the production of culture within the creative industries. This act of inclusion/exclusion is at the gatekeepers’ discretion however as Holden (2009, p. 450) notes, there is a fluidity within the gatekeeper-cultural producers. This fluidity is examined in greater detail in Chapter two.
These notions and ideas surrounding: creativity; creativity as a form of capital; cultural spheres; and gatekeepers as cultural producers, are applied to analyses presented in Chapter two and in Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press. Broadly, these theories have been adopted in this research as they rationalise the process of examining how the creation and dissemination of music and its products has been approached, as well as providing a basis for the way in which the music industry operates when making decisions surrounding both the creative and business aspects of industry developments. Such ideas are influenced by the notions of place and space.

**Place and space in relation to the creation and dissemination of music**

The relationship between music and place is complex. According to Cohen (2007, p. 35), “The city is not simply a place in which music happens, or a container or inert setting for music activity. Instead music can be conceived as contributing to the making of ‘social production’ of the city.” A similar notion is raised by Hamm (1995, p. 57) which is that musicians write about what is happening in the world around them. For example, when researching the Liverpool music scene, Cohen (2007, p. 52) found that many of the musicians she spoke with would often “represent through their music aspects of the city in which they were based, and [this allowed] the music of local bands to be interpreted by audiences and critics in relation to the city and specific urban locations and experiences.” However, it is important to understand that the representation of a city or particular places within it is not always explicit. That is, the “sense of place” (Cornell & Gibson, 2003, p. 71) is not always conveyed in a song’s lyrics but may be referenced in the melody of the music.

Notions of place and space are examined in this research in four main ways: first through an exploration of whether or not musicians feel being based in Perth has influenced their musical style and creative processes; second, whether or not both musicians and industry workers feel any limitation in working from Perth; third, if being based in Perth has any distinct advantages and fourth, why they have stayed in or left the west.
A brief overview of the main findings with regards to these four aspects of place and space can be given as follows. First, many musicians say that being based in Perth influences their musical style and creative processes. However, there are differences in how musicians perceive this influence. Some responded that one’s environment is definitely an influence upon creative pursuits, while others questioned the extent to which this could be true, positing instead that it was more about the people, not the place in which one lived. Those who stated this, however, did believe that the place in which one is raised and lives undoubtedly influences the person that they are. Secondly, the isolation of Perth was viewed as being a barrier when trying to reach a wider audience due to the additional investments of time and money associated with travelling to the east coast and overseas. Third, the isolation of Perth was found to be advantageous for musicians in that the distance between themselves and the national music and media industries, based in the cities of Melbourne and Sydney, affords local musicians the opportunity to develop their music and hone their performance skills without feeling the same pressure of continuous scrutiny that their counterparts on the east coast experience. The relatively small population of Perth and its laidback lifestyle are also cited as being an advantage for those who spend a lot of time travelling for business and on tour. This, it is argued is because it allows them to relax and recharge outside the maelstrom of the national industry. Last, it was these foregoing factors, along with personal lifestyle choices, which largely influenced whether or not particular industry workers and musicians stay in Perth. Many interviewees cited family and friends as being the main reason for staying; with the culture of Perth and the need to expand professionally being the reasons for leaving. The notion of place and space and its influence on the functioning of the local music industry is examined in Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets.

Isolation
Due to Perth’s isolation, musicians are able to develop their music away from the “power bases” (Brabazon, 2005, p. 4) of Melbourne and Sydney. As Perth bands are perceived as being able to create and develop their music styles and skills away from the ‘prying eyes’ of major labels, this research explores the role, if any, that Perth’s geographical location – particularly its isolation – has played in the creation and dissemination of music, as well as the development of the local industry. Perth is a peripheral city and its isolation has arguably produced a unique environment in which
musicians can create music and the local industry can develop. When the isolation of Perth is examined in relation to ideas of place and space, its influence is more pronounced. This research argues that many musicians feel a sense of comfort due to the city’s isolation when it is time to create their music. For those who work in industry roles, a similar level of comfort is afforded in being able to undertake their work in the relatively unpressurised environment of a peripheral locale. However, for some interviewees, there came a time when they felt it best to leave Perth, in order to continue developing their careers.

While Perth’s sense of isolation has been somewhat diminished due to becoming better connected with the rest of the country and the world through air and road travel and telecommunication technologies - a point often raised by the interviews, and discussed as early as 1995 in Jones & Shaw (p. 4), the physical distance from other capitals has nonetheless resulted in a core-periphery relationship between the music industry heartlands of Sydney and Melbourne, and that which operates in Perth. As discussed in greater detail in chapters four and five, Perth musicians still face the very real hurdles of an additional financial burden due to the higher costs associated with travel to the east. In addition to this, they are also required to make a greater investment of time in order to make the most being away. Therefore, while improved infrastructure (such as improved road networks, the deregulation of the airline industry and communication technologies) can lessen some of these burdens, the geographical isolation of Perth still remains a hurdle for Perth musicians.

These challenges illustrate some similarities to others who work from isolated locales. Much of what is examined in the research presented here is based on the notion of the hurdle geographical isolation creates when attempting to connect with new audiences beyond the city. For musicians in Perth, this need is compounded by a relatively small local market, heightening the need to develop new audience bases. To compare this Scandinavia for example, musicians in these countries similarly need to connect with new audiences in order to continue developing (see: Power & Hallencreutz, 2002; Power, 2003). In other cases, a sense of cultural isolation can limit the ability for musicians to develop and shapes the way in which they engage with their local music scenes.
(Stahl, 2007). Using Montreal as an example, Stahl's work examines the way in which Anglophones are somewhat marginalised within this predominantly Francophone city.

Importantly, underlying and complementing the examination of isolation, is that of the core-periphery relationship between Perth's local music industry and that which operates on a national level out of the cities of Melbourne and Sydney.

**Core – Periphery**
The core-periphery distinction, according to Wallerstein (1979, p. 97) “differentiates those zones in which are concentrated high-profit, high-technology, high-wage diversified production [the core]... from those in which are concentrated low profit, low technology, low wage, less diversified (the peripheral).” While Wallerstein’s work focuses on the world economic system, his ideas can be applied to non-monetary ideas, such as the creative economy which characterises the music industry:

- **Melbourne and Sydney (the core):** These cities are home to the major labels as well as the national media industries. Due to this, there is more money available; more music-related technology, such as studios and recording equipment; and better links to the national and international media and creative industries.

- **Perth (the periphery):** There are less music services in the Perth music industry as, with the exception of distribution; the major labels generally no longer have bases in Perth. As a result of the distance from the ‘core’, Perth is also less integrated within wider national and international media and creative industries. It is important to understand here, that Perth is not the only peripheral capital in Australia. For example, Brisbane, another peripheral city experienced similar musical notoriety in the mid-1990s. As a consequence, Brisbane musicians similarly find themselves working on the periphery of national activity, and like Perth musicians must overcome the hurdles of distance and high financial costs (see: Rogers, 2012).
A relationship exists between the core and periphery as Perth musicians access industry resources available in Melbourne and Sydney while Melbourne and Sydney industry players develop and exploit the creative resources from Perth. While both the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ benefit from the relationship, there is a power differential in that the core can pick and choose as to which peripheries to favour, as well as deciding what constitutes a new and worthwhile ‘sound’ or musical scene. Importantly, this notion of core/periphery is not only being analysed from a business perspective but also with regards to core and peripheral culture. Another crucial aspect analysed in this research is when the core/peripheral relationship is reversed. For example, musicians can choose to not sign record contracts with certain labels while still being able to pursue their careers or they may decide to negotiate out of record contracts. The core-periphery relationship between Perth’s local music industry and the national, and sometimes international, industries is primarily examined in Chapter four. This reflects the importance of the recognition of Perth as a source of musical talent by the national industry. A further aspect of this notion of the core-periphery relationship, which exists between the east and west, is the influence of internationalisation on the functioning of Perth and, more broadly, Australia’s music industries.

Globalisation

When discussing the relationship between, and influence of, place and music, the question of who is being spoken to outside of the ‘place’ is raised. Additionally, while much is made about the isolation of Perth, it is important to remember that this isolation is of a geographical nature, not a cultural one. The global popularity of some musical genres and sounds has influences the music created by musicians included in this study, while also supporting the ability of the music of Perth to address audiences worldwide. The genre of music examined here is more aligned with ‘alternative’ rather than ‘pop’ music, which is in line with global musical shifts that occurred in the 1990s. As Trainer (2005, p. 129) explains:

With the commercialisation of grunge and ‘alternative’ music late last century, the nature of popular musical expression changed dramatically. Pop music once referred to the material in the charts, with the most organic forms of rock music being classified as ‘alternative’ because it was written and performed by individuals operating seemingly outside of the economically deterministic demands of the pop industry.
It is this rise in popularity of music outside the charts, which Trainer (2005, p. 129) argues, has “blurred” the lines between ‘pop’ and ‘alternative’ music. If this shift toward ‘alternative’ music entering the mainstream music charts had not occurred at an international level, the chances of Perth music’s greater success and recognition within the international music market would have been diminished. Additionally, the rise of globalisation has helped musicians enter international markets and promote their music. Technical advancements associated with this have not only helped Perth music enter mainstream music success, but have also allowed the business side of the local music industry to operate much more easily.

**Community of practice**

Given that many musicians in Perth perform across several bands, and industry workers often hold several different roles, Perth’s music industry and scene in many respects act as a community. This community can also be constructed as a ‘community of practice’ (COP). In the following section, definitions of both ‘community’ and COP are presented within a discussion as to how they reveal themselves in this research.

In discussing the meaning of the word ‘community’, Cohen (1995, p.12) suggests there are two related aspects. First, community members have something in common and second, what they have in common distinguishes them from other communities. The construction of a community is imagined, and communities are “distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness [sic], but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). As communities are imagined, their members construct their boundaries, in turn creating a consciousness of a community which is “encapsulated in [the] perception of its boundaries” (1995, p. 13). The boundaries are formed through community members interacting with one another (1995, p. 13).

Through their interactions, members of the Perth music industry – both musicians and those who work in behind-the-scenes (‘industry’) roles – have created their own community. Members of this community identify with their community through their interactions in creating, developing and promoting music from Perth. The notion of interaction extends into the idea of a COP.
As Wenger (2006, 1) explains the situation, a community is a COP when its members “engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour”. Wenger argues that three key aspects apply:

1. A ‘domain’: The members of a COP will be committed to a “shared domain of interest” (p. 1) while valuing “their collective competence and learning[ing] from each other” (p.2).
2. The ‘community’: In order for a community to be a COP, it is crucial that the members “engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information” (p. 2). Daily interaction is not necessary but a regular level of interaction is required.
3. The ‘practice’: The members of a COP are practitioners who develop a “shared repertoire of resources” (p. 2) through their interactions.

By interacting with one another to create, develop and promote Perth music, those involved directly in the process have developed a COP. This has been formed through the collective interactions of musicians and other industry players - which led to the development of a local industry and resources. While not all musicians work with each other, and not all industry players work with all musicians, in its collective capacity this community functions as a COP.

In addition to the insightful work of Wenger, Lave (2001) has also examined the role of, and the way in which, people learn within COP’s. Lave’s work proves useful when examining the way in which Perth’s local music sits within the COP framework because much of the way in which the musicians and industry members have developed their skills and expertise has been in-situ and outside of formal learning sites, such as schools and training facilities. While some musicians have taken music lessons, and formal learning opportunities such as those available through TAFE and the WA Music Business are highly valued, while also being representative of how this local industry has become more formalised and viewed to be more professional, much of the learning which takes place within this scene is through the informal social networks. Learning by doing is highly valued, if not more so, than the formal modes of learning. Musicians and industry members alike look to the behaviours and experiences of others when deciding how to navigate their careers. This is examined in greater detail in Chapter four.
The notion of community has been addressed in this study through consideration of the attitudes of musicians working together, and through an analysis of how these attitudes have developed. The notion of the COP is explored to see whether the local music industry operates in this way. For example, when asked how involved a person is in the music industry outside the role in which they were being interviewed, the majority of interviewees commented that their involvement included attending performances of other local bands. For some this was their only additional involvement and, of these interviewees, some did not even view attending performances as being a noteworthy involvement in local music activity. However the attendance of live performance it is still an important contribution to community construction as it supports the community whilst also developing and responding to a particularly Perth conception of live music, contributing to the cultural fabric of the local music scene. Importantly, while this notion of the COP could be applied to any creative community, when examining this notion in the context of Australian music scenes, the way in which Perth musicians and industry members interact within this COP is viewed as being distinct. This distinctness is in relation to the importance placed on supporting the creative and business endeavours of others within the community as well as the social networks and social capital which support its functioning. These attitudes and behaviours toward supporting, as opposed to competing with one another, are viewed as being distinctly different to that which is held on the east coast. They are examined in greater detail in Chapter four.

Social networks and social capital
Social networks are critical for sustaining the local music industry and scene. They support the function of the industry through continued and active engagement with its activities, which in turn help support the development of its members’ careers. Further, members’ engagement with the industry and scene influences the ways in which the scene operates and develops. This is because musicians and industry workers alike often look to the behaviours of others when making decisions regarding how to undertake business and creative pursuits. When all players are bound together in a social network, this leads to reciprocal ways of doing things. In this section, the social
network and social capital of Perth’s local music industry and scene are examined alongside an analysis of how networks constitute a community, and community of practice.

Social network and social capital theory illuminate the engagement occurring between the musicians and industry workers interviewed in this research. This is because interpersonal relationships are important to musicians in particular as they and provide support as they move up, in or between roles in the local music. Further, they also assist musicians seeking to connect with industry and audiences beyond Perth, while providing support to industry workers in their business endeavours within the contexts of national and international music industries.

Social networks function in building social capital. That is, the shared social capital developed through people interacting within social networks can only be identified if and when the network works. This form of capital is “seen as a social asset by virtue of actors’ connections and access to resources in the network or group of which they are members” (Lin, 2001, p. 19). Social capital is reliant upon shared resources (Lin, 2001, p. 29). These resources can be of a personal (material or symbolic) or social nature (access through social connections). A network’s members determine the significance of their resource by assigning a value to historical, geographical and collective experiences. This happens when certain things are celebrated for example, or forgotten.

Four aspects within a social network are considered when analysing how individuals access socially embedded resources. These are: the flows of information; the social credentials of members; the ability to influence others, for example in terms of valuing experiences; and the role of social relations in reinforcing network membership and status (Lin, 2001, pp. 19 – 20). These four aspects of accessing socially embedded materials are manifested in the ways in which a social network operates.

**The notion of the music scene**

The theoretical perspectives introduced above can be further examined in this research within the context of the notion of the music scene. This is because many of the aforementioned theories address the varying facets of music’s creation, production and dissemination in regards to the
physical location of its performance, including: how the activity takes place locally in regards to both local music product and national and international touring artists; and in relation to how Perth music reaches new audiences beyond WA. This relationship between music and place is inherently linked to the notion of the music scene.

As Johansson and Bell (2009, p. 220) explain, music scenes “range from local, i.e. based on proximity, to non-local in which fans and performers of a genre are scattered geographically but cohesive in their allegiance to the genre.” Bennett et al (2010) have reviewed the varying ways in which music scenes can be constructed, finding that the definition is complex and can be positioned within both place- and genre-based contexts. Further as Stratton (2008, p. 614) points out, “any [place-based] music scene is informed by the cultural understanding of the local space in which that scene functions.”

The work of Johansson and Bell (2009, pp. 221-225) proves useful in providing a model for examining local music scenes. Their 16-point framework brings together: physical and geographical factors (physical environment, relative location, size of place, urban redevelopment strategies and spatial flows of tourism); and socio-cultural factors (culturally open and permissive atmosphere, egalitarian social structure, local socio-economic environment, and ethnic and cultural characteristics) alongside music industry related factors (industry infrastructure, individual innovators and entrepreneurs, the type of local live scene, local audiences, supportive local media, and networks of learning). Together, these framework elements provide a well-rounded approach to exploring how local music industries and scenes operate in light of broader, non-music related factors. Further, they caution that one must question the role of non-local media in the mythologising of the local scene when locally-developed music starts to reach new audiences beyond its home locality.

As discussed in the Contextualisation chapter, the notion of the music scene is particularly useful in this research.

More broadly, however, it is worthwhile noting the strong literature surrounding this notion of the music scene, with works examining the varying facets the structure, membership and underlying
functioning of localised music industries. The work of Bennett et al (2008), as well as Shanks (1994), Stahl (2007; 2009), Stratton (2008) and Straw (1991) all illustrate the varying structure, membership categories and functioning of local music scenes as well as how they can be examined. Common within these works are aspects of local music production and dissemination which are critical to the functioning of local music scenes. This ranges from infrastructure such as live music venues, local studios and community radio, to the ways in which musicians navigate local music engagement and activity.

**Conclusion**

The theoretical perspectives examined support the approach taken and analysis presented for this research. These theories are applied in the analysis presented in chapters three through five. They are examined in light of how they relate to the functioning of Perth’s local music scene and its attempts to engage with those that operate at national and international levels.

More broadly, adopting these theories supports the capacity for this research to give Perth music a voice within the national and international field of popular music studies. To this end, Perth becomes a case study in which the creation and dissemination of music are examined within the context of place-based music popularity. By underpinning this research with such a broad range of theoretical perspectives, it allows for a breadth and depth to the work which further aids in giving this study a voice in popular music studies.
Chapter one: Background

Introduction
In constructing the background for this study, it became quickly apparent that there were no readily accessible overviews available. Local music histories exist, it was found, in the pages of newspapers and magazines; radio and television playlists; and in the memories of fans, musicians and music industry workers. Local music is ephemeral: musicians start and stop performing; bands break up, new bands form, bands go in and out of popularity, as do music styles; all the while, the venues which stage local music performances also change. Additionally, industry workers change roles or leave the industry altogether; and audience tastes change over time, along with their level of engagement with local music activity and product.

Of the 25 musicians interviewed for this research, a large majority have never been full time musicians at any stage, and some are no longer actively performing in bands. Many interviewees shared stories about the struggle of juggling working and/ or studying while creating and performing their music, and discussed how this impacted their ability to pursue their musicianship. It is not uncommon for artists, even those who were publically perceived to be ‘successful’, to survive for long stretches of time on a combination of part time employment, Centrelink (Social Security) payments, and shared ‘band money’. Such pressures are certainly not uncommon in the creative sector: exposure is often viewed as an acceptable substitute for monetary payment, and revenue streams are often skewed to favour the finances of record companies, not artists. Financial pressures such as these, coupled with relentless, gruelling tour schedules; lifestyle factors such as wanting to ‘put down roots’ (buy a house, start a family); and a loss of passion toward being a musician, have influenced the ephemeral nature of local music production, performance and general industry activity. Further, as musicians’ creative and performance skills develop, they often change their connections to and within the local music industry and scene. These connections, at times, result in musicians leaving one band to perform with another, leading to band break ups and the continuing cyclical informal and transitional nature of local music.
In comparison, the 20 local industry workers who have been interviewed for this research have also undergone changes throughout their careers. Some have left roles to take new ones; while others have expanded their skill sets to work in several positions at any given time. The ephemeral nature of local music scenes, where key venues and sites of activity come and go, influences the ability of industry workers to maintain employment in much the same way as it influences the ability of musicians to keep performing to, and connecting with, new local audiences.

The findings reported here all relate to Perth musicians and local industry workers between the years 1998 – 2009. Experiences such as those shared in this research are certainly not unique to a specific time or place in contemporary music histories. However, there are several reasons why this research is desirable. To establish this desirability it is useful to provide a rationale for focusing the field research on the years 1998 – 2009. Comparisons can be drawn between the success and experiences of key musicians in this time frame, and those active in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, the local music industry and scene also changed and developed during this time period. Encompassing a broader perspective such as that afforded by a decade or so of industry development also allows an examination of experiences of growing up in, or moving to, Perth from the 1970s through to the 1990s, as remembered by the interviewees.

The experience of living in Perth is critical to why and how musicians and industry workers get involved in the local music industry and scene. Such involvement ranges from fandom and consumerism, to creating and performing music and, working in music industry roles. Given that the majority of interviewees were born in the 1970s, it is a useful decade to establish as a starting point for the background to the study.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a background to the field research presented in the remainder of this thesis. This chapter draws on published interviews with select local, Perth musicians whose music attracted a following in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the field interviews conducted for this research. This chapter will first discuss the value of arts and culture in Perth throughout the 1970s – 1980s. It is a discussion grounded in the notion of needing to ‘break away’ from Perth in order to be considered successful in one’s musical pursuits. Next, the chapter
provides an overview of local music activity during this time, and into the early 1990s, as shared by the interviewees. This is followed by the presentation of an overview of local music industry infrastructure. Finally there is a discussion on the memories and experiences of growing up in, or moving to, Perth. This chapter also operates as a lead-in to *Chapter two: Contextualisation*, which offers a more detailed contextualisation and rationale for undertaking this research.

**Perth music in a pre - 1998 context and the need to ‘break away’**

A key rationale for undertaking this research is to investigate why and how bands from Perth found recognition or success on a national and, at times, international level between the years 1998 - 2009. Within this context, it becomes important whether musicians and industry workers decided to stay in or leave Perth to pursue their careers. This is because the development of creativity is shaped by forces in the culture within which it exists as is the way in which audiences respond to such creativity. Relevant forces include: creative traditions and conventions; historical references; and social and economic conditions (Negus & Pickering, 2004, p. 68). These three forces are examined in greater detail in *Chapter two* as they come into play in a Perth-specific context, as well as the broader national and international music industries.

When examining these three forces in a Perth-specific context, several patterns become apparent. Creative traditions and conventions influence both the artistic and business practices of musicians and industry workers. From a creative standpoint, these influences include the impact of other musicians on music being created, including the particular ‘sound’ which some interviewees say is apparent in Perth music; or, at the very least, amongst particular groups of artists. From a business perspective, creative traditions and conventions include how an aspiring musician goes about getting involved in local music activity, as well as how local artists connect with the broader national and international music industries and, in turn, new audiences beyond their home city. These traditions and conventions are influenced by how such activities were undertaken in the past by other local musicians and industry workers. Historical references similarly include learning from others about how to go about creative and music industry pursuits, and using experiences of previous musicians and industry workers to inform activities in the present. Such perceptions can be linked to creative traditions and conventions by musicians’ decisions about how they pursue
their musicianship based on what their role models did, when they were involved in the local music industry and scene prior to them. The social and economic conditions of Perth are also relevant. The city has historically been viewed as ‘poor’, with cheap rents and living costs, and this was particularly influential in the decision of some musicians to remain in Perth. However, once the ‘resources boom’ hit in 2006, there was a shift in attitude. The boom led to an increase in living costs and sky-rocketing housing prices, in addition to a shift in the culture of the city. On the one hand this made it less appealing to remain in Perth; and on the other, it led to an increase in disposable income resulting in some sectors of the local music industry flourishing due to an increase in audience numbers.

Different patterns appear when exploring the influence of creative traditions and conventions historical references and social and economic conditions within the national and international music industries. This is because the context is broader, encompassing the national and international, rather than just the local. Therefore, creative traditions and conventions start to become influenced by national and international music consumption and popularity trends. It was the attitudes of the national music industry which informed the ways in which Perth’s music started to be positioned within the national market in the mid-1990s. This shift in attitude, along with changes in local music consumption in Perth, supported the viability of being able to be a musician and music industry worker within a Perth context. As further examined in chapters four and five, Perth’s music industry, and particularly its musicians generally have targeted connections to the broader national and international music industries.

The desire to pursue musicianship, or work in the music industry, is generally informed by being a music fan. While following the local music scene is critical to a willingness to engage with the local industry, either as an industry worker or musician, all interviewees spoke of a passion for music which started when they were growing up. This fandom was not only for local music, but for contemporary music as a whole. Additionally, the universal industry conventions of releasing music in recorded formats, and undertaking live tours, informed the desire of Perth based musicians to do so too. For example, when asked about their decisions to record music, even when there was
no record label interest or release schedule, musicians often stated that it was simply what was done: they had music which they were proud of, and which they wanted to reach new audiences.

These unspoken influences and connections, along with national and international music consumption and popularity trends, increase the likelihood of music from Perth connecting with new audiences, while also influencing the way in which music from outside the locale enters the state, such as through live music touring, music festivals and recorded content.

A shift in audience tastes, a blurring between mainstream and alternative (which saw alternative music relabelled as a genre), and the nationalisation of triple j have been cited as critical to the capacity of Perth music to gain national traction. These key drivers are viewed as being particularly important given the hurdles which musicians face when attempting to connect with new audiences. Two hurdles, which are discussed in greater detail in the ensuing Contextualisation chapter and explored throughout this research, are the geographical isolation of Perth and its construction as being on the periphery of national music industry activity taking place in Sydney and Melbourne.

The social and economic trends of the national and international music industries, however, also influence decisions regarding the investment, marketing and selling of music products to audiences. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press, record labels’ investment in, and marketing of music to audiences is informed by numerous factors. These include: the overarching structure of the label (major versus independent); the type of deal in place between artist and label (full service, distribution or licensing); and the anticipated contribution the act will make to music culture.

Factors such as the ones examined above not only influence the way in which musicians and industry workers perform within their roles in the Perth and broader national and international music industries, but also impact upon the attitudes of existing and potential audiences for the music, particularly in Perth. As Perth born, and now UK-based musician, painter and television personality Rolf Harris (cited in Landers & O’Brien, 2009) explains, there is a level of cultural
cringe at work when examining whether one is successful and has gained recognition. This is harder for an artist to establish unless they achieve acclaim beyond Perth:

Most of us from West Australia, we sort of feel that we have to make that ‘break away’; we have to go somewhere else to achieve something. We have to make that enormous trek across that enormous Nullarbor Plain, we’ve gotta go ‘over there’. Or, the other way across all those miles of sea – have gotta go somewhere else to ‘crack it’ to ‘make it big’.

Examining selected high profile musicians and bands emerging from Perth’s music scene throughout the 1970s and 1980s reveals that those who found success often did so after relocating to the east coast of Australia or overseas. While some only relocated temporarily, the decision to move means that Perth becomes somewhat of a footnote to their stories. Evidence of Perth’s minor note can be found, not only in the actions of the bands, but also in the observations of interviewees who were first getting involved in local music as fans during this time period. Many spoke of going to see acts such as The Scientists, The Victims, The Triffids and The Stems, while also noting that the ‘cover band scene’ was much more prominent at that time. For example, recalling his early attendance at local music shows, promoter Jeff Halley (pers. comm.) says:

Back then original bands were very much fringe, on the outside. Stuff like The Scientists and The Victims and we used to go and see a couple of bands, one was called Scaramoush, that we used to go and see at the Cottesloe Hotel [...] We started to get into those kind of things and enjoy those bands but, [it] wasn’t until we were actually exposed to stuff like The Stems and The Triffids that our whole kind of life changed.

While cover bands still form part of music consumption patterns in Perth, many of the interviewees spoke of seeing a shift away from this in the early 1990s. Prior to that time, cover bands played a critical role in the dissemination of music and the development of musicians’ skills, and were used by record labels as a way to promote music to audiences. This was a particularly useful strategy within the small media market in Perth. Recalling the role cover bands played in music dissemination and promotion within Perth, promoter Ken Knight (pers. comm.) explains:

At the time there was this huge cover band scene [...] Record companies would] give products to DJs, they’d give new product to cover bands and give new product to radio
stations [...] a lot of the cover bands would get the new single, say of INXS, and they’d be playing it that night, before it actually came on the radio.

As examined in greater detail in the Contextualisation chapter, a shift in audience tastes toward original local music also supported a shift in attitude towards being a musician in Perth. In the 1970s, however, it was simply not expected that a musician could remain in Perth and be successful.

As Kim Salmon (cited in Walker, 1984, p. 126; Landers & O’Bryan, 2009) from The Scientists explains, in the late 1970s “[Perth] wasn’t a good environment... A real dead end.” Adding on another occasion, “[Perth] was so remote and so far from anything there was no possibility that you could ever amount to anything,” Alsy McDonald (cited in Landers & O’Bryan, 2009) from The Triffids view is that “in those days, if you stayed here and had higher ambitions, nothing could have come from it.” Further as the band’s lyricist and lead singer David McComb (cited in Walker, 1984, p. 138) says:

[We] couldn’t stay in Perth and remain the Triffids. There’s just too few people and they have too old an expectation of you. It’s like the people have such a vested interest in the band, an emotional vested interest, that they are part of you. I’m sure that happens to lots of so-called cult bands.

Perth’s 1970s – 80s attitudes towards art and culture, along with its cultural cringe, influenced the perception that in order to succeed a musician must leave the west. This attitude was further reinforced by the major record labels on the east coast of Australia. As Perth-born and now Sydney-based musician Dave Faulkner (cited in Landers & O’Bryan, 2009), a former member of The Victims and now lead singer of the Hoodoo Gurus, notes:

In those days it was far more myopic in the sense that they [the record labels] wouldn’t notice you unless you were in either of those two places [Sydney or Melbourne]. Everything had to come there - an act wasn’t taken seriously until they made a dint in either of those two markets.
Gaining the attention of the major labels was difficult at that time. This, it can be argued, is due to two main reasons. First, the lack of a national radio broadcaster, and particularly one focusing on Australian content; and second, the high costs associated with air travel, which is necessary as a consequence of Perth’s geographical isolation. In order to reach new audiences, and hopefully gain interest from record labels, bands had to physically take their music to towns around the country, which was (and still is) incredibly costly and very time consuming. These financial and temporal factors form a particular barrier for up and coming Perth bands and have done so for many decades. As Robert McComb (cited in Landers & O’Bryan, 2009) of The Triffids says:

I drove across Australia 11 times during the early 80s – [we] couldn’t afford to hop on the plane. [Well] we probably could’ve but it wouldn’t have happened for another two years or something.

Sharing a similar story, James Baker (cited in Landers & O’Bryan, 2009), drummer for The Victims and The Scientists, recalls:

We drove across [Australia] in a Kombi van that broke down in Ceduna [South Australia] I think [and] cracked the head [gasket], and all our money we had in a jar went on fixing the head, so we were penniless the whole tour. That was really hard. That was a hard tour; I’d never do a tour like that again.

Hurdles such as those faced by McComb and Baker are not restricted to the 1970 – 80s period. Several artists interviewed for this research also discuss life on the road, and the challenges associated with being based in an isolated city. Importantly however, these problems have lessened over the years with improved national infrastructure. As Shaw and Jones (1999, p. 4) explain:

By the early 1990s, Perth’s isolation had been diminished in a number of ways. It became better physically connected to the rest of the world and the nation through international travel, by the construction of a transcontinental railway with no brake gauge and at long last, an all-bituminised transcontinental highway.

In addition to the improved travel options, changing attitudes, audience tastes, increasing population and the continuing development of the music and media industries in Perth all
influence the way in which music products are disseminated locally and how they now connect with new audiences beyond the city.

**Local music activity and industry infrastructure pre-1998**

[In] the early 90s there was a lot of really interesting things, a lot of great bands in this town. Many of them disappeared without making a break. It was then more difficult to travel to the east coast, it was more difficult to record, [and] there was no state funding from [government arts] bodies... that makes those kind of things easier (Carroll, pers. comm.).

Pete Carroll is a Manchester native who relocated to Perth in the late 1980s to take up a position as the state manager of CBS Records (which later became Sony Music). Carroll (pers. comm.) explains that despite the hurdles described above, it was a priority for him to explore the music scene of Perth when he relocated, stating that “as soon as I got here I started to get a feel for what was going on [in] the Perth music scene.” Immediately recognising the potential of local artists, in 1994 Carroll convinced executives from Sony Music Australia’s east coast headquarters to come to Perth for two showcases, featuring eight local bands. As he (pers. comm.) says “I just decided it was [time], there hadn’t been an A and R person [artist and repertoire, the people responsible for the signing and development of music acts] in this town for years, if ever.” Ammonia was one of the bands performing in the showcase and they went on to become the first band signed to Sony’s independent offshoot label Murmur. As Al Balmont (pers. comm.), drummer for the band recalls: “Sony did a national showcasing bands, wanted to see local bands, and we got signed when they came over.” Having also made a connection with Jebediah, Carroll (pers. comm.) explains:

I saw Jebediah’s second gig and from the first moment I saw them I knew that they [were] very special and had the potential to be huge. I then spent a long time convincing Sony that they were a band that we needed to sign which we eventually did.

After the success of Ammonia’s and Jebediah’s releases in 1995 and 1997 respectively, Carroll (pers. comm.) says there was a change in the attitude of the eastern states record industry toward Perth music:
Jebediah’s first album sold, getting up to 200,000 records and when you sell that many records you can’t avoid it. I mean Ammonia sold a lot of their first album and went on to tour America with Silverchair and started to do well, and well you know, money in sales always generates an interest.

While these changing attitudes helped the music of Ammonia and Jebediah reach a national and international audience, it also signified new possibilities around being a musician and remaining in Perth. This is because, by staying Perth-based, Ammonia, and particularly Jebediah, demonstrated to other bands that they could remain in the city and still achieve a high level of national recognition and success. As Eskimo Joe drummer, Joel Quartermain (MacLeod et al, pers. comm.) explains: “Jebediah were like the blueprint to kind of follow, [that] you don’t actually have to move to Melbourne.”

Even so, this change in attitude came slowly for some record company executives. As Heath Bradby (pers. comm.), band manager for several Perth bands throughout the mid – late 1990s recalls, “[Effigy] signed to Roadrunner... but had to move to Melbourne as part of Roadrunner’s genius ideas about how to break bands.” Around this same time one of Bradby’s business partners also relocated to Melbourne when his band, No Intentional Lifeform, were signed by the same label.

While the decision to remain in, or leave, Perth was influenced by factors such as perceptions around the capacity to continue developing one’s musical career, along with the role of the national and international music industries, local music also exerted an important influence upon the industry infrastructure. Such infrastructure is critical to a musician’s ability to be able to develop creative and business skills.

For example, over the years, the location of key venues has become more concentrated on the CBD and surrounding areas, along with Fremantle, whereas back in the 1970s and 1980s interviewees were attending shows in pubs and clubs which operated between and outside these two hubs. Another point of difference can be found in the genres of music which were popular
during that time, along with a more prominent cover band scene which placed original local music performance as being on the fringe of commercially-sustainable music performance.

Further changes also occurred with the development of community radio station RTRfm, established in 1977, as well as the development of the West Australian Music Industry Association, developed in 1985, and the launch of X-Press Magazine in 1987. While these were not the only changes to take place in regards to industry infrastructure, they do represent significant developments which continue to assist the growth and development of Perth’s music industry. Such developments also represent changes in the value of arts and culture of Perth as discussed in Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets. In particular, artistic infrastructure not only supports the functioning and development of the local industry, they have also support the development of careers. This is particularly evident through the involvement and employment of artists by these organisations as well as the roles performed in the education of industry workers and musicians, and the dissemination and promotion of their activities and products.

While the current structure of Perth’s music scene reflects the national components of musicians, managers, labels, venues and audiences; the local music environment changed dramatically between the 1970s and the 2000s. Broadly speaking, however, Perth’s music industry throughout the 1970s – early 1990s has some similarities with that which existed developed between 1998 – 2009. Changes did occur to individual components of the industry, as well as to the perceived level of professionalism with which the industry operates. The development of the industry between 1998 – 2009 is examined in the following chapter, Contextualisation. This chapter illustrates the ways in which local music industries and scenes change and develop over time.

Growing up in, and moving to, Perth: An isolating suburbia
Where, when and under what circumstances a person grows up greatly influences the path they take in life. This idea is explored in more detail in Chapter two in relation to the notions of pursuing a career, as well as investigating differences in ideas of what constitutes success. In this section however, it is examined with regard to the perceived influence that growing up in Perth has
had on the musicians and industry worker participants who, apart for one were born, raised in, or moved to, Perth. Of particular focus here are the twin influences of the city’s isolation and its suburban sprawl. A discussion on the experiences of early engagement with local music then ensues, exploring the ways in which the interviewees have come to be introduced to local music.

Perth’s perceived isolation is one of the key themes examined in this research. *Chapter four* focuses on the influence of the city’s isolation upon the functioning and development of the local music industry and scene between the years 1998 – 2009. This includes consideration of Perth’s music industry and scene to the nationally and internationally focused markets and the shifting attitude toward the isolation of the city as the population grew and relative prosperity increased. The focus in this chapter, however, is on growing up, living in, or moving to, a city as isolated as Perth. Perth is examined with regards to both the perceived cultural isolation, and the geographical isolation of the city. Such forms of isolation are viewed by the musician interviewees as influencing their desire to pursue music and, from the perspective of the industry interviewees, impacting upon the development of the local industry. Further, the distance of Perth from the major Australian cities of the eastern seaboard dictates how music reaches new audiences and, arguably, this impacts on how music achieves success and how careers develops in the music industry.

There is a significant difference depending on whether interviewees were born in, or moved to, Perth. Further, their relationship with the city reflects the stage in their life when they arrived, and from where they relocated. For example, when discussing the isolation of Perth with those who were born and raised in the metropolitan area, interviewees often explain that they only became aware of the isolation of the city when they were older and in some cases they only began to feel isolated once they started to travel or tour with bands. This lack of awareness is due in part to not having constructed Perth as isolated as a result of not having looked beyond Perth to locate resources or recognition. As Julian Hewitt (pers. comm.), keyboardist for The Hampdens who now lives in Melbourne, explains: “at the time I don’t think [I realised the isolation]. [I] had nothing to compare it to.” Further End of Fashion vocalist Justin Burford (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) considers that:
I think that the isolation definitely comes into play more as you get older and you actually realise how kind of parochial Perth is... Just how difficult it makes it, just being so far away from everything.

Similarly, producer-engineer Andy Lawson (pers. comm.) says: “I don’t know whether you feel that so young, maybe when you’re 20, you start to feel isolated. I guess you’re still growing up then but, yeah not until then really.”

The interviewees who moved to Perth from regional Western Australia had a different relationship to the city as a result of Perth being bigger and more connected to the rest of Australia than the regional areas. As bassist for Red Jezebel, Mark Cruickshank (pers. comm.) recalls, moving from Port Hedland to Perth as a child:

I guess it was ‘the big city’ back then. I guess there were big cinemas and McDonalds and KFC and things like that, that you didn’t get in Port Hedland and lots of channels on telly

Similarly, band manager and label manager for Redline Records, Heath Bradby was raised in the southern part of Western Australia, after his family moved from Melbourne when he was three years old. Recalling going to boarding school in Ravensthorpe, some 530 kilometres south east of Perth, and then moving to the city in his late teens, he (pers. comm.) explains:

You know, my high school class at Ravensthorpe had 26 kids in it or something but, you know, when you grow [up] in that you kind of think it’s normal. When I did move to Perth...it was a pretty interesting kind of time there and it didn’t take me long to get pretty ensconced in the music thing which helped entertain me... everyone talked about Perth being really isolated, but given that I had moved from the middle of nowhere, I didn’t feel it at all.

In comparison, solo musician and former touring member of Eskimo Joe and The Sleepy Jackson, Dan Bull (pers. comm.), recalls that he did not feel very isolated living in Perth as he had extended family in Melbourne and often travelled there. Bull’s family located to Perth when he was only a few months old, but they would return east each year for Christmas:

I always had family on the east coast - being born in Melbourne - but I never felt that I was ‘out of the world’. But, on the other hand I didn’t think that there was much world other
than Perth, except that [time] once a year when I’d go over to Melbourne for Christmas or something like that.

Awareness of the isolation of Perth, and attitudes towards it, change when examining the experiences of interviewees born outside of WA, and located to the city at an age where they were more aware of their surroundings. For example, the family of Snowman singer and guitarist Joe McKee, relocated from London to Perth when he was six years old. His family lived in the ‘hills’ and as McKee (pers. comm.) explains, the isolation of the city was a key feature of his desire to pursue a career in music. His email response is presented fully below to give a sense of how he felt about where he grew up, and how this led him to become a musician:

I remember it fondly. All my memories are visual snapshots. Scorching white light. Space. Sparseness. Quiet. Peaceful. Lonely. Slow. Fresh, natural, clean. These sensations all occur in those snapshots. As for specific memories, it's hard to pin one down. I suppose I've had enough distance from the place to attempt to though...so here goes: As a kid I lived in the bush. On a six acre block. My family moved from London to complete isolation. No family, friends....just bush. Kangaroos hopping down the drive way, that sort of thing. Quite a change from what they knew in London [...] I remember that I loved all the space. The massive bush garden...but even at ten years old I felt removed from the world. We didn't even have a deli that was walking distance...we had more bush...we could only just see our neighbour’s house from our doorstep. That is why we moved to Lesmurdie... it was one step closer to civilisation. Roleystone was quite a dark place [...] Lesmurdie was a bit more beautiful [...] What I'm getting at here, is that the 'hills' were even more isolated than the suburbs of Perth...as a kid all you can do is walk somewhere,...and there was nowhere to walk. No Internet to connect me to any outside world. Nothing. A Hell of a lot of boredom. That is exactly why I began playing guitar. It was my golden ticket. It allowed me conjure up big dreams. After that everything was fine. Music became my obsession and sometimes unhealthy addiction. Perth became a playground for a while and a really exciting place and a great launching pad for music (emphasis in original).

McKee moved back to London in 2008. His perspective on his experience of moving to, and living in Perth until his mid-20s illustrates the perceived influence of Perth’s isolation on his desire to pursue music. As he explains, while metro Perth is physically isolated, the area known as the ‘hills’ was even more so and within this area, being a kid on a six acre block becomes a compounding isolated factor.
When investigating the memories of growing up in Perth, interviewees’ relationship to the isolation of the city is often linked to its suburban nature. As Sugar Army vocalist Patrick McLaughlin (pers. comm.) recalls, when asked if he felt isolated:

Not really ‘cause I don’t think I had much grasp of what else was out there. Like, I did grow up in suburban Perth so it’s kind of insular and that was my world. So it, it didn’t really mean anything to me.

When asked to recall their memories of growing up in, or moving to, Perth in their childhood or teen years, interviewees often spoke of Perth as being both innocent and suburban. Such perceptions must be contextualised in that they are based on the point of view of children or teenagers, and are being shared in the light of hindsight and general maturity. However, the memories and recollections offered by interviewees reveals how growing up in city influenced their desire to be a musician, or work in the music industry, as well as impacting upon early experiences of engaging with Perth’s local music industry and scene.

Perth sits to the periphery of national touring activity, as explored in greater detail in chapters four and five, and therefore, the experience of seeing bands perform live was often focused more on local bands active in the live scene, as opposed to national and international touring artists. As discussed in greater detail particularly in Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry, attendance at live shows remains critical to local music engagement. Attending shows with or of friends’ bands is a common aspect local music discovery, particularly in cases where acts are not receiving airplay. For example, as Mark Cruickshank (pers. comm.) says:

When I was 16 I went to school with a guy who played guitar in Yummy Fur and they used to do loads of all-ages shows at Club Original which then became the Grosvenor backroom [...] That was my first exposure [...] So, yeah sort of went to see a lot of bands when 16/17 and I guess Red Jez formed when I was about 20...but yeah, like I went to loads of gigs when I was a youngster.

Similarly discussing how the lines between fandom and musicianship can quickly blur, Kevin Mitchell (pers. comm.) of Jebediah and Bob Evans recalls, “I first started going to local all ages
shows around '93 and '94. Then when Jebediah formed in '95 it started to take over my life and by '96 it had become my job.”

During the early 1990s all-ages shows were prevalent, and played a critical role in the discovery of local music. As Perth acts would rarely get radio airplay beyond RTRfm, getting to attend such shows was integral to igniting the desire to pursue music and have it be an attainable goal. As discussed in greater detail in *Chapter four*, musicians perform in the same venues in which they attend live shows.

Further, for those growing up in Perth in the 1970s and 1980s, record stores which stocked local music also played an important role in music discovery. Due to a lack of a national radio station and an under developed local music media market, record stores helped inform music tastes. For example, as Ken Knight (pers. comm.) recalls:

> Being coached along by good old Marshall Martin, who at the time was a guru of Mills Records down in Fremantle, where our live tended to revolve because it went up towards Dada’s, 78s, White Riders and the other independent record stores where our whole life and culture was influenced by you know, English punk music, with a bit of American stuff thrown in.

Similarly, Simon Collins (pers. comm.) recalls:

> Harmony Music actually had [a] pretty good [selection], they were pretty good at getting in the sort of music I wanted to listen to. I think one of the guys from Ammonia used to work there. And then later on, or not even later on, I’d also take trips into the city and go to Dada’s in particular and 78s and also Mills down in Freo, because they’d be more, they’re the hard core music fan stores and they’d have you know, the latest singles in, you know the vinyl singles from the bands I liked in early and get the CDs in on time.

As the recollections of Cruickshank, Mitchell, Knight and Collins illustrate, music discovery in Perth is informed the way in which music is distributed and can be accessed. For local music, attending local live shows is critical to developing an awareness of the scope of music being created, supporting the development of connections within the local scene. The importance of these
connections is examined in greater detail in *Chapter four* in relation to social networks and social capital.

Interestingly, the isolation of Perth, the perceived innocence of the city and its suburban sprawl continue to influence the functioning of the local music industry as well as the creative lives of the musicians who live there. Such influences are addressed in the coming chapter, *Chapter two*, before being analysed in greater detail throughout chapters four and five.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the experience of living in Perth is critical to why and how the musicians and industry workers interviewed became involved in the local music industry and scene. Such involvement ranges from fandom and consumerism, to creating and performing music and working in music industry roles. Growing up in, or moving to, Perth influenced interviewees’ desires to pursue the creation and performance of their own music as well as the way in which industry workers go about becoming involved in the local music industry. Many contributors spoke about Perth as being an isolated and innocent suburbia when they were growing up, with the connections they made within the local music industry in their late teens crucial to the ways in which they continue to engage with the local scene.

In the past, the decision to stay in or leave Perth was been influenced by the attitude that it was necessary to ‘break away’ from Perth in order to be considered a successful musician, coupled with the perspective that the national music industry is based in the eastern states. From the 1970s through to the early 1990s, it was hard to gain the attention of eastern states-based music industry professionals. This was arguably due to the lack of a national radio broadcaster and the high costs associated with air travel, which is one consequence of Perth’s isolation. In light of this isolation, the local music industry and scene continued to grow and develop within the bubble of a local community of practice in order to continue to function. Broadly speaking, however, Perth’s music industry throughout the 1970s – early 1990s has many similarities with that which came into existence between the years 1998 – 2009. Changes did occur however to the individual
components of the industry, as well as an increase in the perceived level of professionalism with which the industry operates.

This change in attitude started to occur in the early to mid-1990s, with a number of Perth bands signed to record labels on the east coast. While some were required to relocate east as part of their terms of the record deal, others remained in Perth and made a significant contribution to the local music industry and scene. Most importantly, these musicians illustrated that music careers can be pursued at national, and at times, international levels without necessarily requiring a move away from Perth. This possibility of being Perth-based and internationally famous continues to support the development of Perth’s local music industry and scene. The changes and developments which occurred between the years 1998 – 2009 are examined in the next chapter.
Chapter two: Contextualisation

Introduction
This chapter presents the contextualisation for this research project. It expands upon the discussion presented in the preceding Chapter one: Background to examine not only the importance of this research, but also the key events and developments which took place in Perth’s music industry and scene between 1998 – 2009, as identified through research interviews.

Importantly, this contextualisation provides a framework for the analysis presented in chapters three through five, while also rationalising the critical decision to focus on this particular genre of music and the associated local music industry. Generally speaking, the importance of this research lies in its interrogation of notions of success and recognition as experienced by the musicians, as well as in the growth of the related local music industry during this study’s time frame.
Importantly, it is not simply the fact that Perth music entered the national consciousness that makes this research worthwhile - it is that this growth in energy and recognition occurred in spite of a myriad of real and imagined hurdles.

For many of the musicians interviewed, the success and recognition they have achieved in the past 10 – 15 years has occurred at a national level. This level of success is identified through: undertaking national tours; receiving airplay on triple j, and for a small few, commercial radio stations; appearing in the national airplay and sales charts; and being signed to eastern states-based (national) record labels. For other artists, the recognition of their music, whilst not restricted to Perth, has been largely experienced through the response of audiences in the local scene. The varying degrees of success and recognition examined in this research are important as they illustrate the differing levels and different ways in which artists’ careers develop, both locally and beyond the city. From the perspective of Perth’s local music industry, its growth has included: an expansion in the live music festival circuit, with both the development of WA-only events and the introduction of nationally franchised festivals into the WA market; the growth of organisations such as the West Australian Music Industry Association (WAM, formerly known as the West Australian Music Industry Association or WAMIA) and their annual WAMI Festival and Awards;
the allocation of government funding by way of a competitive grants scheme to support local musicians and industry workers, as well as funding to attract music-based cultural tourism to WA; the growth, and change in attitude of the local music press, particularly in print and broadcast outlets; and broadly, the development of the careers of those who work in music industry roles. Underwriting this has been ongoing cyclical changes to the local industry, such as the development of localised independent music labels, changes to key sites of production, and the opening – and closing – of new performance venues.

This chapter first discusses creativity and creative processes before examining how transforming these activities and outputs into tradable products results in the formation of creative capital. It then focuses more closely on the contextualisation of this research in a Perth-specific setting. This is underwritten by the examination of the cyclical nature of music consumption and popularity and hones in on the isolation of Perth and its peripheral relationship to the national industries based in Melbourne and Sydney.

Following on from the discussion around the music scene operating in Perth between 1998 - 2009, an evaluation of changes in perception of arts and culture in Perth at this time is then presented, leading into an overview of the economic contribution of the broader arts and culture sector in Perth. This is presented as a way of illustrating why economic factors cannot always be constructed as indicators of success, and then leads into a discussion around notions of, and reflections upon the nature of success as it relates to the creative and business activity undertaken by the musicians and industry worker participants. Finally, this chapter concludes by examining how the increasing value of arts and culture in Perth, and the key events, developments and levels of success, help rationalise the research focus as being upon the indie pop/rock genre of music.
Creativity and the creative process

As discussed in the *Theoretical perspectives* chapter, creativity “is the ability to generate something new. It is the production by one or more people of ideas and inventions that are personal, original and meaningful” (Howkins, 2002, p. ix). Creativity occurs when an individual or group say, do or make something that is new “either in the sense of ‘something from nothing’ or in the sense of giving a new character to something” (p. ix). Continuing with this notion, as Davis (1999, p. 41, emphasis in original) explains, there are four aspects to creativity, referred to by him as the ‘four p’s’. These are “the creative person, the creative process, the creative product and the creative press – the environment.” Simonton (cited in Davis, 1999, p. 41, emphasis in original) argues there is a fifth aspect to creativity – persuasion – which is used as a means “to emphasise the role of leadership in impressing others with one’s creativity.” This is done in order to gain the admiration of an audience, which legitimises a person and their creative expression as being, in fact, ‘creative’.

While creativity in essence may be the result of an individual’s sole endeavour, Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p. 325, emphasis in original), argues it is still a collaborative process:

This is because what we call creative is never the result of individual action alone; it is the product of three main shaping forces: a set of social institutions, or *field*, that selects from the variations produced by individuals that are worth preserving; a stable cultural *domain* that will preserve and transmit the selected new ideas or forms to the following generations; and finally the *individual*, who brings about some change in the domain, a change that the field will consider to be creative.

Creativity is also constructed as being shaped by forces which occur beyond cultural conventions and traditions. As Leman (2005 pp. 104–108) explains, these forces may be explained using a ‘romantic view’ or ‘rationalist view’. The romantic view (2005, p. 104) is based on the belief that creativity:

is driven by inspiration independent from the machinery of reason or the compulsions of instinct. Ultimately, musical creativity is believed to come from a muse or divine being, and it is much like a gift or talent to extraordinary people who serve their lives as a medium for a supernatural being’s immanent appearance in the world.
In comparison, the rationalist view (2005, p. 107) of creativity is that it is the, 

outcome of a rational process and sometimes even as a mechanical process[...]. A central idea of the rationalist approach is that if creativity is integral to reason, and reason can be formalised, then aspects of creativity can be formalised and ultimately captured in a formalised and computational system.

Leman (2005, p. 104) argues that the romantic view is favoured in discussion about musical creativity as many people believe their artistic expressions are driven by “irrational forces such as instinct, feelings [and] emotions.” It could be argued that, at a certain point of the creative process, romantically based creation will enter a rationalist realm. This is in order to turn the creative idea into a creative product.

For example, a musician’s inspiration to write a song may be driven by a creative impulse over which they have no rational control, but when they decide to record that song, they take a more rationalist approach to its production, actively deciding – and reasoning – how to arrange and record that song and with whom.

Leman (2005, p. 103) posits that creativity is ultimately “steered by historical, social, and economical conditions. When these conditions change over time, both creativity and our conception of it seem to follow a similar pace.” The success of creativity in the social realm is dependent on cultural factors. As Lubart (1999, p. 345) explains, this can involve creativity being channelled toward certain domains or social groups. Additionally, “culture may influence the overall level of creative activity. Creativity may be stimulated or hindered by cultural features such as worldview and the value placed on conformity or tradition.”

Similar to Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p. 325), Negus and Pickering (2004, p. 91) explain that creativity not only emerges out of culture but is also based on cultural traditions. This means “creative talent requires a tradition so that it can learn how to go further within it, or beyond it”. At the same time, however (2004, p. 68):
[Creativity] does not operate unbounded in an autonomous fashion. It is usually shaped by
convention. It is about giving form to the material we draw on and transform, and this
cannot be done without reference to existing rules, devices, codes and procedures.

While traditions and conventions provide the basis for new creative expressions to emerge,
Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p. 326) argues, they also provide the context in which their creative
legitimacy is decided:

It is impossible to tell whether or not an object or idea is creative by simply looking at it.
Without a historical context, one lacks the reference points necessary to determine if a
product is in fact an adaptive innovation.

As discussed in Chapter one and explored in greater detail in Chapter three: The structure of the
national and international music industries and the role of the music press with regards to the
creative development music traditions, conventions, historical, social, and economical conditions
not only shape the development of creativity but also the way in which it is received within a
culture. These concepts greatly influence whether or not an individual will find success in their
creative pursuits.

Subsequently, the way in which creative activity takes place in Perth, and the creative products
which are produced, are indubitably influenced by fact they are created in Perth. Subsequently,
being based in Perth has influenced the way in which musicians have created their music,
developed their ‘sound’ and made decisions regarding where to record and with whom,
particularly within the context of the local music industry. Further, working in and from Perth has
implications for the functioning of the business-related elements of the music industry. While the
consequences of being a Perth-based musician or industry worker are examined and analysed in
greater detail in Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the
national and international markets, the main findings can be summed up as follows.

Being a musician in Perth has been greatly influenced by the broader community of musicians and
industry workers which has developed through continued engagement with the local music scene.
This community is viewed by many as being distinctly different to that which exists in the larger
and more integrated Australian cities of Melbourne and Sydney. For example, as Panda Band bassist David Namour (pers. comm.) says:

I think the music community is much more of a ‘family’ vibe over in Perth, and most bands no matter what style they play, support each other and hang out etc., whereas from what I’ve notice in other cities it seems to be more competitive, or a little less supportive of each other.

Further this tight-knight community which can be viewed as developing as a consequence of the isolation of Perth is also a result of the understanding that in order to advance creatively and reach new audiences beyond the city musicians need to seek out opportunities and support each other in doing so. A similar perspective exists within the business sector of the music industry, as Sloan (pers. comm.) says:

Often when I’m out at night at shows, I’m introducing a person from Surry Hills who’s a manager, to an agent and they’ve never met. And it always freaks me out because I’m like ‘how the fuck do you not know each other?’ You know, but I forget again, my life is, I’m dealing with everybody, they’re all in competition there in some way or there’s some weirdness you know, so, I find it interesting that sometimes they just know the names of each other and what they do but have never met.

Further, while the purpose of this research is not to examine the specifics of song structure and melody, or the notion of a ‘Perth sound’, it is worthwhile mentioning that working together develops new variations and advances upon existing musical sounds. The new ‘sound’ is also influenced through many of the musicians sharing the same rehearsal spaces, recording studios and working with a relatively small number of producers within the local industry. Through engagement with the local industry and scene by way of working with one another, a shared pool of resources has been created and sustained which in turn supports the continuing development of the local music industry and scene. This dynamic also occurred between 1998 – 2009. The structure of the local music industry, musicians’ attitudes towards Perth as a site of musical inspiration and the city’s influence on creative practice are examined in Chapter four. This is presented alongside an examination of the attitudes toward supporting local music activity in Perth as well as in its attempts to connect with audiences beyond the state. In turn such activity is
positioned within an examination of the structure of the community and community of practice which supports this local industry, as well as the importance placed upon social networks and social capital.

Through creating music and related products and disseminating these to audiences both locally and beyond the city, creativity is transformed into what is broadly defined as ‘creative capital’ whereby it is viewed as having economic implications (Howkins, 2002, p. 1).

**Creative capital and music as a commodity**

Creativity is not an economic activity. However, it “may become so when it produces an idea with economic implications or a tradable product” (Howkins, 2002, p. 1). Even so; the point at which an idea becomes a product - and as such becomes capital - can be hard to define.

As Howkins, (2002, p. 199) explains, capital, as defined by economists, is “something which is not, or not only, valued for current use but as an investment for the future”. Capital is “stock; it is stable; it has longevity.” The main types of capital have historically been monetary (financial capital) and buildings and equipment (physical capital). However in recent decades, human ability, creativity and knowledge have also been identified as a form of capital, known as ‘creative capital’.

The two main tradable products factored into this research are songs and live music shows. The songs include those which are marketed as singles, and/ or included on extended and long players - otherwise referred to as EPs and LPs respectively - as well as given radio airplay. Live music shows range from performances at local venues to regional, national and international tours and larger, multi-stage festivals. These creative products form the basis of the music industry in the sense that they are the two primary tradable products resulting from the creative processes linked explicitly to music-making and the musical experience. As such, the processes involved in creating and partaking in the dissemination of these products was the primary focus of the musician interviews. In turn, industry workers were asked questions regarding their experiences of connecting these products with audiences.
Creativity can be considered capital because “it results from investment, which the owner may increase or vary; and it is a significant input to future creativity and creative products” (Howkins, 2002, p. 211). Investment in creativity can be financial and non-financial. Financial investment can range from investments in the development of creative products (such as advances paid by record labels to musicians), the purchasing of products and services to assist in the creative process (such as musical equipment, the services of producers and recording engineers as well as studio time), to the investment made when marketing a product to audiences.

Financial investment can also include the de facto investment made by musicians and industry workers when choosing a lifestyle which favours creative pursuits over full time paid employment, working in lower paying industry positions due to a passion and desire for making music, or by accepting a lower (or completely forfeiting a) profit margin in order to support music production. These dynamics are particularly visible in the case of local music venues, where opportunities for original local live music are often provided due to contribution they make to the culture of the venue, despite generating only a small revenue stream. Attitudes towards the support local music are discussed in greater detail in Chapter four.

Non-financial investments include the time and energy committed to the creative outputs. Many musicians speak of the juggle of pursuing their music while also holding down ‘day jobs’ which often sat outside the music industry; with industry workers sharing similar struggles in the early days in their roles. For example, in discussing working two jobs alongside pursuing music with his band, Sugar Army, vocalist, Patrick McLaughlin (pers. comm.) explains:

My life is generally a juggling act because I’m working a normal day job [and] I do the driving stuff as well to help pay the rent. And then to, to juggle the band is quite hard. Especially with touring, where it means I can’t work and I can’t get paid at all, that makes life very hard. Pretty much in my spare time, we either rehearse or I’m at home writing, trying to come up with something so, it’s, it’s one big juggling act really. But it’s never boring. It is quite hard I must admit.
In discussing the modest goals he had when starting in the music industry, and how he has built up to working the equivalent of a full time position, band manager and venue booker Luke Rinaldi (pers. comm.) explains:

It sort of got to a point where I was like ‘add these tiny little things up, it would be nice to, you know, one day, earn the equivalent of the dole [social security]’ and that was a realistic aim and that was, it sounds hilarious [...] So it was kind of like, once it got to that point I was like ‘great’ you know. Once it felt like you were earning the equivalent of the dole without having to go to the office it felt like, you know, you ‘made it’.

The financial sacrifices shared by McLaughlin and Rinaldi are certainly not uncommon in the music industry. Pursuing a music industry career in this way is a reality for most musicians, with their desire to work in music for low remuneration often outweighing their desire to work in stable, full time jobs. Several industry workers also shared this struggle, particularly in the early days of their careers, which also aligns with the characteristics of an underdeveloped local industry. As Heath Bradby (pers. comm.) recalls:

[It] was pretty limited if you weren’t a promoter in WA [back] then [...] From where I was coming from. I mean I was reduced to - [when] I was booking venues - I was DJ-ing at the same venues at night, I was working as the publicist at the venue [and] I was putting up their posters. [I] like kind of had to do just a bunch of things just to make ends meet.

Career trajectories related to working in the local music industry are discussed in Chapter four, with a particular focus on the experiences of industry workers. Musicians’ local experiences, and specifically their experiences of engaging with the national and international music industries, are examined in greater detail in Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry. An important component in developing a music career is being able to manage the process through which creativity, through music, becomes capital.

When creativity is converted to capital, it gains most value “when it is managed and made purposive” (2002, p. 212). That is, by managing and giving creative capital a definite purpose, it has a much higher chance of gaining value – whether that is financial value or value through its
enrichment of culture. This is in contrast to creative capital that is unmanaged and exists without a purpose. As Negus and Pickering (2004, pp. 57 - 58) explain, creative products such as songs:

Do not in general appear carrying definitive commercial qualities or characteristics. A process occurs whereby they are made commercial – and this is why modern economies employ so many people in marketing, publicity and public relations. Their aim is to connect the work of cultural producer with the lives of consumers.

As Attali (1985, p. 185) comments, however, in order for music to be seen as capital, it has to:

Acquire an autonomous status and monetary value, the labour of the creation and interpretation of music had to be assigned value [... and] it was necessary to establish a distinction between the value of the work and the value of its representation, the value of the program and that of its usage.

While connecting creative products, such as music, with audiences requires an understanding of the audience to which the products will be marketed, such connection can also be constructed as an “experience good”, with which “there is great uncertainty about how consumers will value a newly created product short of producing the good and placing it before them” (Caves, 2000, p. 2). Due to these market uncertainties, gatekeepers are critical to the process of transforming creativity into a form of creative capital.

Gatekeepers are important to the ways in which creativity is harnessed as a form of capital, not only because they determine what products will be produced and circulated to audiences, but also because they influence the conditions under which this will occur. This is particularly the case where financial investment is required and in instances where marketing strategies are concerned. The process of harnessing creativity and transforming it into a form of capital has many implications which are a particular focus of chapters four and five. These chapters examine the relationship between Perth’s local music industry and scene and those which exist outside Perth within national and international markets as well as the impact upon musicians and industry workers.
Cyclical nature of music consumption, and shifts in music popularity

An important factor to consider in the contextualisation of this research is the cyclical nature of music consumption, as well as the notion of the music scene. This is because the increase in interest in Perth music from the national music and media industries is aligned with other place- and genre-based booms in popularity. Music consumption is cyclical by nature, with the popularity of particular genres and music scenes changing over time. In the case of certain places, which are viewed as giving rise to particular music genres, such places can become sources of interest for music fans and the music industry alike. Over the past fifty years, booms in the popularity of musical genres tied to specific local scenes have occurred in cities such as: Seattle with Grunge (i.e. Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden); Manchester with Madchester (i.e. Joy Division, Happy Mondays and Stone Roses) and; Liverpool with Merseybeat (i.e. The Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers and Cilla Black). In an Australian context, Brisbane saw a boom in national interest in alternative rock music in the early-mid 90s with bands such as Powderfinger, Regurgitator, Spiderbait, and Custard breaking nationally (see: Stafford 2004). These cyclical booms in popularity not only help legitimise the shift in focus toward Perth as being a site of musical innovation, but also influence the music created by the people interviewed. Importantly, what makes this shift in interest toward Perth’s music as being marketable to mass audiences interesting is the real and imagined hurdles that have to be overcome in order for the music to connect with such an audience. Of these, the isolation of Perth and its positioning on the periphery of Australian music and media culture is a primary barrier.

The isolation of Perth and its peripheral relationship to the Australian music and media industries

With its closest neighbouring city, Adelaide, almost 3,000 kilometres away and 80% of its 2.2 million residents living in the metropolitan area (Stratton, 2007, p. 115; ABC, 2009), Perth is isolated from the other major centres around the country as well as being at the far western coastline of a sparsely populated state constituting one third of the land mass of Australia. The geographical isolation of Perth results in the city being positioned on the periphery of Australia’s music and media cultures. According to Wallerstein (1979, p. 97), the core-periphery distinction differentiates “zones in which are concentrated high-profit, high-technology, high-wage diversified
production [...] from those in which are concentrated low profit, low technology, low wage, less diversified [production].”

Melbourne and Sydney are home to the national recorded music and media industries. As such, these cities are the heart of national music and media infrastructure, and the point at which there is a concentration of the profits, business activities, technology, production and music-related media coverage. Further, this core has a high level of integration with the international music industry by way of being connected with music industries around the world as explained in the next chapter. In comparison, the industry which exists in Perth is at the periphery of such core activity.

In order to function within the national music market, it is crucial that those in the local music industry engage with the core. This is not to say that members of Perth’s music industry are not entrepreneurial and cannot subsist without the support of the core industry. Indeed, such relationships are mutually beneficial and at times mutually dependent. However, at times of peak interest and activity, such as that which occurred between the years 1998 – 2009, a power differential develops. This is because the core has been able to pick and choose to favour the periphery of Perth as an exciting musical scene in which a worthwhile and marketable ‘sound’ is being created. It is the shift of Perth from the periphery to becoming associated with the core of Australia’s music market which provides an interesting contextualisation for the research presented here.

Further, the geographical isolation of Perth provides benefits to musicians and industry workers as well as constituting a hurdle. To this end, the attitudes of the city’s musicians and industry workers toward the city’s isolation, in both cultural and geographical senses, provide an interesting backdrop to the development of careers and the ability for the local music industry to operate on a broader scale. The fact that musicians from Perth can connect with the national music and media industries, while industry workers can develop their businesses and associated careers in light of these hurdles, further legitimises an examination of shifts in attitude towards Perth as a site of musical innovation. Importantly, the isolation and core-peripheral relationship between Perth on
the west and the power-houses of the eastern seaboard influence the development of the local music industry and the way in which it operates.

**A shifting attitude towards music production and dissemination in Perth 1998 - 2009**

As touched upon in previously, a shift in attitude started to occur in the early - mid-1990s with regards to Perth’s indie pop/rock music scene being viewed as a source of talent for the national music industry. For some artists, this shift for the first time enabled them to pursue national and international music careers while remaining in Perth. This resulted in these highly-regarded artists continuing to make invaluable and crucial contributions to the local music industry and scene. Further, the local participation of musicians, industry workers and audiences within the Perth music scene also changed and developed. Such changes include a difference in the types of activities taking place, and development of local music industry infrastructure. These changes necessarily affected the audience. While it is impossible to know the individual attitudes towards arts and culture of every resident of Perth at that time, an examination of how musicians and industry workers engaged with the local scene provides some clues. Further, comments by interviewees with regards to how they saw local music activity change between 1998 – 2009 provide examples of a shifting attitude towards supporting this music scene and its products.

One of the most common changes discussed by interviewees has been the level of professionalism with which the local industry operates. This perceived rise in professionalism goes hand in hand with an increase in interest in Perth music, and its shift from being on the periphery of Australian music culture to forming a part of the core. Greater interest in Perth’s music scene resulted in continued visits from east coast music industry heavyweights. Coupled with the new phenomenon of acts remaining in Perth while pursuing their careers nationally, this further strengthened the realisation that musicians can be based in Perth and actively pursue their music careers. By remaining in Perth and continuing to engage with local music activity, even as a fan, successful musicians continue to provide invaluable support to the local music industry and scene.

The increasing critical mass of Perth’s music industry is reflected in the continued development of the West Australian Music Industry Association (WAM), a not-for-profit peak industry body.
WAM’s growth illustrates and supports a shift in attitude towards Perth as being an innovative music hub. The staging of events such as the annual WAMI Awards, WAMI Festival, Music Business Conference, Song of the Year Competition, and the WAMI Hall of Fame all help promote Perth music to local audiences and support musicians and industry workers as they navigate the local scene and attempt to make connections with the broader national and international music industries. Further, they provide the opportunity for networking, recognition and education of musicians and industry workers alike. Events such as these have been developed over the years by WAM since the late 1980s. Further, WAM also represents Perth music at key international trade fairs such as SXSW (South by Southwest), which is held each year in Austin, Texas, and to a lesser extent the CMJ (College Music Journal) Music Marathon, held in New York. Both CMJ and SXSW are music industry trade fairs which attract musicians, industry workers and music fans from around the world. These events facilitate formal and informal networking between their attendees in a variety of ways such as: the staging of live performances (including industry-only showcases, and general attendance shows), traditional networking events, and the broader engagement of attendees with the overall event such as attending other shows and conference panels. Further, they generate significant media coverage which can further assist musicians when attempting to make inroads into new music markets. The role of WAM in the Perth music industry and in representing this nationally and internationally is further examined in Chapter four.

In terms of music more broadly, the live sector has also undergone tremendous growth. In particular, between the years 1998 – 2009, large scale music festivals have increased in number and scale, supporting the opportunity for high profile international acts to tour west, exposing Perth local music scene to live performances from the best contemporary talent. Key sites of live performance, such as pubs and clubs, also changed over the years, with activity becoming more concentrated on the Central Business District (CBD), and surrounds, as well as Fremantle. Further, and as discussed through chapters four and five, Perth’s live music scene is highly valued by the interviewees beyond its role in music discovery and also provides a key income stream which supports the development of social networks between members. As discussed in Chapter
Five in particular, an interviewee’s engagement or disengagement with Perth’s live music scene is a key way of defining their support and involvement with local music.

Another interesting development between 1998 – 2009 is a shift from perceptions of Perth being a hotspot for music talent, to it being considered an integral organic component of national music activity, beyond any peaks in interest. Interviewees often spoke of how Perth bands continue to attract national and international followings, beyond any peaks in interest from the east. One downside to this, however, is a perceived attitude amongst up and coming acts that they will be, and have to be, a success beyond the local scene.

**Economic contribution of arts and culture to Perth**

At the same time as Perth’s music industry underwent significant growth as well as experienced a shift in attitude toward its legitimacy, the music and performing arts sector was one of the least productive creative sectors in terms of the creative industry sectors to the local economy.

According to the report *Perth’s creative industries: An analysis 2007* (Telesis Consulting, 2007), between the years 2001 – 2006 earnings in the creative industries’ grew 25% more than other industries, contributing $10.6bn to the state’s economy. Over the 2001 – 2006 period, the creative industries workforce grew 7.3%, four times faster than the state’s general workforce (p. 3). The chart below shows a break-down of the initial, flow-on, and total economic contributions of the city’s creative sectors between the years 2001 – 2006 (Telesis Consulting, 2007a, p.8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Output</th>
<th>Initial effects</th>
<th>Flow-on effects</th>
<th>Total effects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music and performing arts</td>
<td>$126m</td>
<td>$205m</td>
<td>$331m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film, TV and radio</td>
<td>$453m</td>
<td>$656m</td>
<td>$1,109m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising services</td>
<td>$298m</td>
<td>$443m</td>
<td>$741m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software and IMM</td>
<td>$2,310m</td>
<td>$2,802m</td>
<td>$5,112m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td>$690m</td>
<td>$802m</td>
<td>$1,572m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>$387m</td>
<td>$520m</td>
<td>$897m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts and Design</td>
<td>$355m</td>
<td>$494m</td>
<td>$848m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$4609m</td>
<td>$6,012m</td>
<td>$10,621m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Economic contributions of Perth’s creative sectors, 2001 – 2006.
Additionally, an important underlying factor within this research is the non-financial and unquantifiable cultural impact of local music. This is because often, and with musicians in particular, people with roles in the music industry will hold down ‘day’ jobs, live on Centrelink (social security) payments, and share band money to get by. This does not make their creative contributions to society any less valuable but it subsides the production of music and the performing arts, making the sector appear less significant. Creative people accept that it is difficult to make a living wage in Perth purely as a result of one’s creative practice due to the smaller scale industry, a smaller audience, and a relatively limited ability for career progression in industry roles. Consequently, many of those working in industry roles hold down several part-time positions at the same time so as to earn the equivalent of a full time wage. Music is traditionally a saturated market, but musicians place the importance and enjoyment of contributing to culture and society over personal financial gain, even preparing for a financial loss during their musical careers. This is reflected in the complex relationship between the creative industries and the wider social and cultural economy, resulting in a rage of different ideas and notions about what constitutes success.

Notions of success and recognition
Notions of success and recognition were important factors when determining who to interview for this research. A wide range of interviewees are included, representing the different levels at which musicians have successfully engaged with the national music industry and the breadth of industry workers’ roles in local music.

What constitutes success in the music industry varies greatly between musicians and industry workers, and is dependent on several factors. For the purposes of this research, success encompasses multiple aspects, with the notion of recognition also used to address the degree to which Perth’s indie pop/rock music scene attracted a following. These notions of success include: commercial success; independent success; and the positive reputation of the musicians and/or bands concerned; and the accomplishments of the industry interviewees. Factoring these aspects into the construction of ‘success’ allows a broad range of musicians and industry workers contribute to this research, which consequently also investigates the differing notions, and levels, of what constitutes success in the music industry. Further, exploring these variances in the idea of
success provides the basis for an analysis of the differing ways in which the music industry perceives and recognises achievement.

Commercial success: The notion of commercial success underpins this research with regard to three factors: chart position, sales data and radio airplay. Chartings and sales figures are compiled by the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA) based on data obtained from ARIA-accredited music outlets, including online retailers, who market music distributed by major and selected independent record labels. Commercial radio stations as well as the national public broadcast station triple j reach a large audience and, in the case of the commercial stations, also provide an additional revenue stream to the music industry. The major label recording industry uses chart positions, sales data and radio airplay form the basis as to whether or not an act is successful. The relative success of each band is assessed according to factors such as: the amount of financial and other resources the record label has invested in developing and marketing the artist and the rationale behind the ‘selling’ of the act to the audience.

Independent success: The judgement concerning whether or not a musician has succeeded as an ‘independent’ is based around sales and chartings in the Australian Independent Record Labels Association (AIR) charts. These charts are compiled from the data collected by ARIA, and only show sales for music released via independent record labels. As the AIR charts are based on the data presented in the ARIA charts, musicians who do not chart within the ARIA charts are excluded, even though they may sell enough units, for example at live performances or through non-ARIA accredited outlets, to be able to rank if they were counted (O’Byrne, pers. comm.). Similar to the commercial success discussed above, a number of artists interviewed have also achieved this kind of independent success as recognised by AIR.

Positive reputation of band or solo artist: The reputation of a band or solo artist is based around their ‘live’ performance (including but not reliant on ticket sales and reviews), as well as their musical reputation (critical reviews). This measure of success is useful for identifying activity which does not sit within the ARIA or AIR charts. Even without a chart ranking, some acts still have a strong local following and construct their success in unquantifiable terms – in particular via their
contributions to the enrichment of culture. Also relevant here is the impact of the listener-voted triple j Hottest 100 and WAMI Awards.

Another factor to consider in the recognition and accomplishments accorded the industry interviewees, and this is assessed in ways that differ from those relating to musicians. While many indicators of success and recognition are based around musicians’ creative outputs such as record sales and chartings, some industry workers develop their reputation and demonstrate their achievements through engagement with events such as the WAMI Music Conferences. They may also be recognised through nominations and awards granted to industry workers at the annual WAMI Awards and induction into the WAMI Hall of Fame.

Broadly speaking, all musician and key local industry workers have achieved success and recognition in one or more of the aspects described above. These success determinates can intersect due to the nature of how music careers do and do not develop. For musicians, they can, at any point in time, be considered commercially successful, while also sitting with the independent category due to the label they are signed to. More broadly, they can also have a positive reputation due to the reviews of the recorded music and live shows as well as having charted in the Hottest 100 while also being nominated for WAMI Awards. Additionally, this perspective can be influenced by the career-stage being examined, as they will often shift between these as careers develop and come to an end.

Due to the vagaries of success determinates and the shifts which can occur during careers, examining the inclusion of acts based on whether they have ‘made it’, ‘almost made it’ and being ‘underground/ up and coming’ further explains the scope of acts included. This perspective is based on the knowledge of the researcher, coupled with the success/ recognition definitions discussed above and can be broken down as follows:

Made it: These are acts who have pursued their music full-time, are considered to be in the upper-echelons of this scene and successfully engage with the national and at times international music industries at a particularly high profile level. Further, they are often referred to by other musicians
as being those they look up when making decisions about how to progress their careers. Acts which sit within this category are: Ammonia, Bob Evans, End of Fashion, Eskimo Joe, Jebediah, The Sleepy Jackson.

Almost made it: These are acts that had the potential to engage with the national and international music levels to the degree those considered to have made it have, but due to a variety of reasons such as difficulties with labels and managers as well as changes in band line ups did not. Often, these acts subsequently broke up or went on a lengthy hiatus between 1998 – 2009, and include: Adam Said Galore, Red Jezebel, Spencer Tracey, The Avenues, The Fergusons and Turnstyle.

Underground/ up and coming: These are acts whose success and recognition largely sits within the local music scene, or in the case of national and international engagement it sits outside the mainstream identifies described above. Further, this includes acts that were still developing and starting to attract a following in the later years of the time frame. Acts here include: Dan Bull, Nathan Gaunt, Snowman, The Hampdens, The Panda Band and The Panics.

Further, these varying facets of success as well as general attitudes towards the broader concept of success are not only influenced by the key indicators examined above, but also by the culture one belongs to. As Malcolm Gladwell (2008, p. 19) argues:

> It makes a difference when and where we grew up. The culture we belong to and the legacies passed down by our forebears shape the patterns of achievement in ways we cannot begin to imagine. It is not enough to ask what successful people are like, in other words. It is only by asking where they are from that we can unravel the logic behind who succeeds and who doesn’t.

Essentially, this research explores the experiences of being a musician or music industry worker in Perth between the years 1998 - 2009. As such, the influence of growing up, and living in, Perth is an important factor in determining the notions surrounding success and recognition. This is due to three key reasons: the influence of the accomplishments of other local musicians and industry workers, and the ways in which they achieved this; the differing attitudes between local, national and international players with regards to success and recognition; and the timing of when peaks of
interest and activity occurred in Perth music and the capacity of Perth bands to attract a following and capitalise on that interest.

As examined in Chapter one, the success of some members of Perth’s local music industry and scene influenced the attitudes of other members with regards to how much one can achieve while being from Perth and deciding to remain based there. This change in attitude has resulted in the ongoing development of the local industry and scene by way of encouraging musicians to remain in Perth, supporting the local scene and refinement and health of the music industry infrastructure.

Differing attitudes to what constitutes local, national and international success and recognition are largely based on investment and audience size. Such differences can be linked back to the discussion in Chapter one with regards to the need (or not) for bands to ‘break away’ from Perth to be considered successful. The capacity to stay in Perth and be successful has critical implications for those who choose to engage with the larger national and international music industries. The structure of the national and international music industries is discussed in Chapter three, and is followed by an examination of the relationship between Perth’s local music industry and the industries which function at national and international levels presented in Chapter four. The implications of engaging with these national and international industries, and importantly, the consequences of this upon the development of musical careers are examined in Chapter five.
Conclusion
In conclusion, this chapter has examined the concepts of creativity, creative processes as well as the notion of creative capital. These ideas have been explored in light of how they relate to the creation and dissemination of music. In particular, this chapter has examined these notions in light of the experiences of musicians and industry workers involved in Perth’s local indie pop/rock music industry.

The creation of music and the functioning of this local music industry are based on traditions and historical conventions. These traditions and conventions inform the way in which musicians and industry workers navigate careers and make creative and business decisions. Further, they influence the way in which creative products such as music are received by a culture.

Examining this within the context of Perth, musicians and industry workers are heavily influenced by the tight-knight music community that exists locally. This community is viewed to be distinctly different to that which exists in larger, better connected cities. It results in musicians and industry workers having a strong influence on others as well as supporting one another in their pursuits. Underpinning this, are the processes of turning music into a commodity and viewing it as having capital.

The creation of music becomes an economic activity when the process is managed and given purpose. Importantly, in order for music to be viewed as a form of capital, the labour involved in its music, as well as its interpretation had to be assigned value. More broadly, the financial investments as well as that of time and energy which are made in the creation and dissemination of music also enhance the view of music as having saleable value.

In order to pursue careers in music from Perth, musicians and industry workers alike spoke of having to hold down ‘day jobs’ while pursuing their music industry careers, taking on several roles in order to earn the equivalent of a full time wage. Such sacrifices coupled with the uncertainty of
how creative products such as music will do in the market make the management of creative and dissemination processes so vital.

More broadly, the context of this research study is in the degree to which selected indie pop/rock musicians from Perth have achieved success and recognition within the national, and at times, international music industries and scenes. The continued and ongoing growth of Perth’s local music industry between the years 1998 – 2009 complements this. Further, the idiosyncrasies of Perth, such as the attitude toward arts and culture and the geographical isolation of the city provides an interesting backdrop to examining how music activity takes place locally and in its attempts at connecting with audiences beyond the state. Underwriting this are the broader shifts in music popularity and consumption which all at once supports the ability for this music to connect with broad audiences, while also influencing the way in it does so.
Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press.

Introduction
Understanding the structure of the music industry at local, national and international levels is an important element of the context for this research. This is because local, national and international flows of culture and creativity have an influence upon the ways in which local music activity occurs. In turn, such flows can influence how the music is received by audiences beyond the city, as well as how it is positioned within a culture. Further, ancillary industries which support the music industry, such as the music press and music-related media outlets like radio, play a crucial role in connecting and promoting music to audiences.

This chapter provides an overview of the structure of the music industry with a particular focus on the recording and live performance sectors, while also exploring the way in which cultural texts, such as songs, are circulated and marketed to audiences. Further, it examines the specific role of the music press - both print and radio formats - in the marketing of music scenes and associated products to audiences. This overview acts as a lead-in to Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets which includes a more specific discussion regarding the structure of Perth’s local indie pop/rock music industry alongside an analysis of how this local industry interacts with those that operate in national and international contexts. For the purpose of the analysis presented in this chapter, the discussion is framed within the theory of gatekeeping (Caves, 2000, p. 21) and cultural production (2000, p. 21). Gatekeeping and cultural (creative) production form the basis of the functioning of the music industry, accounting for the ways in which creative expressions such as music are given purpose, considered to be valid tradable products and subsequently viewed as being a form of creative capital.

Gatekeepers and cultural producers
As mentioned in Chapter two: Contextualisation, each realm of creativity has a set of intermediaries - referred to as gatekeepers for the purpose of this discussion - who select artists whose work contributes to the production of culture within the creative industries (Caves, 2000, p.
21). Turning creative expressions into tradable products is a key component of creative capital, as discussed in *Chapter two*. Due to the uncertainty of these products within the market, however, decisions are often made on gut feelings and intuition (Wikstrom, 2009, p. 23). Further, they are sometimes made without the knowledge of the cultural producers (Jones, 2002, p. 154).

While Caves (2000, p. 21) argues the inclusion/exclusion process of gatekeepers is beyond the control of artists, gatekeepers are also likely to hold multiple roles in creative spheres and thus may be influenced, if not controlled, by the artists creating within these creative spheres. Further, this fluidity between positions illustrates the complex nature of music industry involvement in which members are at the most basic level music fans, with this fandom informing their desire to work in the industry, to pursue musicianship and to continue engaging with the music scene. As discussed in *Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry*, a loss of desire toward music as a fan, can burn-out which for the musicians may come about following an intense period of activity, or attempts to connect with the national music market.

The below chart shows the ‘gatekeeper’ and ‘cultural producer’ roles represented in this research, as well as where the two can overlap in certain instances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gatekeepers</th>
<th>Cultural producers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record label managers</td>
<td>Musicians (including singer/ songwriters and instrumentalists)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Band managers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live music promoters (live shows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Live music venues (live shows)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music journalists (articles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music producers (recorded songs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Gatekeepers and cultural producers represented in this research.

As the above chart illustrates, the majority of the industry sectors examined within this research fit either wholly or partially within the category of ‘gatekeepers’. This is because the music industry is
largely based around the exploitation of controlled products which dualistically sit within a creative realm (music) and the legally regulated copyright industries (see below for a discussion around how musicians sit within this model). As Wikstrom (2009, p. 17) explains, citing Negus (1992):

Copyright legislation is what makes it possible to commodify a musical work, be it a song, an arrangement, a recording etc. The core of the music industry is about ‘developing musical context and personalities’ [...] and to be able to licence the use of that content and those personalities to consumers and businesses they need to be protected by copyright legislation.

It is this process of commodification which makes gatekeepers so critical to the production of culture within the music industry. This is because they not only determine which artists and what musical sounds are worthy of being marketed en mass to audiences, they also control how this process occurs. As discussed further within an examination of the structure of the music industry, being able to control the process of music commodification is critical to succeeding in the music industry. At the same time, however, gatekeepers can dualistically function as cultural producers.

In the model presented here, musicians are positioned as cultural producers, although they can, and do, act as gatekeepers in their own right. This is by way of making decisions regarding with whom they choose to work. The focus of this discussion, however, is on the industry roles which are positioned either wholly or partially within the gatekeepers’ column. The experiences of musicians as cultural producers, and of people who engage with gatekeepers, is examined in chapters four and five.

**An overview of the recorded and live music industries**

The music industry primarily comprises two sectors – the recorded music sector and the live music sector. These two sectors operate on three levels – internationally, nationally and locally. Outside of the recorded and live music sectors, the broader music industry also intersects with the broader entertainment industries. These industries include, but are not limited to: film; television; theatre and dance performances; and video gaming. The recorded and live music sectors are the focus of this research, however, because it is within these two sectors that the music industry creates their primary tradable products. In addition, it is these two sectors which most heavily engage the
musicians in Perth’s music industry, and these are the sectors in which the industry workers work, or with which they have had the greatest interaction. Further, the recorded and live music sectors underwent tremendous changes during the period 1998 – 2009, not just nationally and internationally but also, and perhaps most importantly, locally. While the structure of the local recorded and live music sectors are touched upon in this chapter, the primary analysis of the local industry is undertaken in Chapter four with the implications of the local industry engaging with the national and international industries examined in Chapter five.

The structure of the recorded music industry: National and international contexts

With a value of $US 177B, the international recorded music industry comprises ‘major’ and ‘independent’ record labels. Over the last decade or so, these majors have condensed from five, (Sony, Universal, Warner, EMI and Polydor), to four (Sony, Universal, Warner and EMI), and now three (Sony, Universal and Warner). This sector of the recorded music industry has been responsible for 75% of the world’s commercial musical output since 2004 (IFPI, 2010a; Bishop, 2005, p. 443). As at 2009, more than 4,000 artists were signed to these labels, with tens of thousands more artists signed to independent labels, some of which are aligned with the majors, around the world (IFPI, 2010b, p. 6).

The primary distinction between majors and independents is whether they form part of a media conglomerate. Importantly, and in line with changes that have occurred within the broader media and entertainment industries, the structure of this sector has undergone tremendous changes over the last two decades. This is due in part to the buyouts and mergers mentioned above which have resulted from a changing media and music consumption landscape. Such buyouts are symptomatic of changes to the way in which music is paid for and consumed, as well as a shifting media and music industry landscape which is becoming more concentrated.

Activities of the majors impact upon the ways in which music from Perth connects with audiences in Australia and around the world. In turn, the experiences of musicians engaging with these industries is influenced by these buyouts. The specifics of these experiences are examined in Chapter five.
One constant of these changes, however, is the continuing importance of signing new artists and releasing new records. As the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) explains, “new signings, leading to new releases, are the lifeblood of record companies [...] Continually investing in new talent is a hugely risky business, as only a minority of the artists developed will be commercially successful in a highly competitive market” (2010a, p. 6). Arguably, the more these multi-national corporations have control, the higher chance they have of influencing who succeeds within the music industries. Perth musicians have also been subjected to the controlling tactics of record companies, including within the international market.

While the aforementioned buyouts have influenced the structure of the Australian music industry, at a more basic level, the controlling tactics of record labels, such as the specifics of the contracts which artists must sign, as well as the industry’s desire to position them within a music market, influence the development of musicians’ careers. As mentioned in Chapter four, national and international flows of music popularity and consumption influence the operations of the music industry and scene within Perth.

Knowing how to recognise and nurture talent is a key element to succeeding in the music industry. It requires record labels “to read the consumer market and identify how different sorts of music might work for different audiences” (Market Equity, 2002, p. 15). Record labels bridge the gap between musicians and music consumers. This space is also filled with a multitude of media, retail outlets and live music venues through which music is marketed and distributed. Essentially, the role of the music industry workers employed by/ operating through the labels is to finance, develop, market and distribute music to consumers (Borg, 2008, p. 172). The capacity of labels to undertake these aspects of music production and dissemination is underpinned by the size, structure and underlying characteristics of the label. In explaining the difference between the ‘majors’ and ‘independents’, Wikstrom (2009, p. 28) states:

A ‘major’ is usually the term used to represent a large copyright firm with operations in several countries and in control of well-established distribution machinery. The major is usually publically traded or is part of an entertainment conglomerate. This should be
compared with ‘independent (companies)’ or ‘indies’, which usually are the opposite of everything above, and have a stronger focus on the text, the creativity and the art, rather than the commerce.

At the same time as being driven by the artistic dimensions of music production, indies often offer only a limited range of services to the artists they sign. The two main services they offer are to act as a ‘shop front’ in connecting artists directly to local retailers or to larger distribution firms (which often form a part of the majors) and the marketing of artists’ releases.

Artists can be signed to different deals by industry professionals working within the majors. These deals can range from full service, where the label is entirely responsible for financing the development, marketing and distribution of music products, to deals in which the label is only responsible for one component. Such partial deals include distribution and licensing as well as publishing. Based predominantly in Europe, the international recorded music industry has regional, nationally-based offices which have a degree of autonomy in the signings and marketing of acts within these country-specific markets. Having regional offices is important due to local, regional, and international flows in music taste and consumption and artists popularity. These popularity trends, particularly within regional markets, influence the decisions made by record labels in the signing of artists and the marketing of music to audiences.

The Australian music industry operates as an extension of the international music industry. To this end, all majors have offices in Australia. These national offices are responsible for distributing international product within the Australian and New Zealand music markets, while also developing acts specific to this region. These labels can also negotiate the promotion and marketing of Australian artists and their releases within international markets. As with the international recorded music industry, Australia is home to a strong sector of independent record labels. The independent labels operating in Australia vary in size, structure and underlying characteristics. Interestingly, much of the engagement between the Perth musicians interviewed and the wider music industry has been with the independent sector. Key national independent labels which have engaged with musician interviewees and the labels developed by local industry workers include:

While most of the musicians interviewed are or have been signed to the independents mentioned above, in some cases these labels are also connected to the majors. These connections are by way of distribution and/or funding. On occasion this connection is the result of buyouts and mergers between companies within Australia. Additionally, a small number of independent labels have been started by the majors, as what is usually referred to as an ‘imprint’ or ‘subsidiary’ label, and then absorbed back into the larger company. In other cases, acts have signed to majors by way of a licensing deal, or through the buyout or absorption of their independent label into the major. At the same time, however, some acts have decided to negotiate out of deals with particular labels and sign with others, or even start their own. Such changes to the landscape of the Australian music industry and the relationships musicians have with labels is in line with international shifts as discussed above, while also being a result of Australia operating as a relatively smaller market.

Explaining how independents have continued to develop a reputation within the international music industry as being able to bring acts to prominence in the market, general manager of the Australian Independent Record Label Association (AIR), Nick O’Byrne (pers. comm.) says:

They are having more power [...] Independents can actually release music [themselves now] but, one of the real issues is that major labels are buying into, I suppose, the pathways that get the music from the independent label to the consumer. So, they’re buying into things like MySpace [...] and the Independent Distribution Organisation [...] The majors are] changing their model a bit. The interesting exciting part of the music industry – the A and R – is being done by indies but, majors are buying into it before you know, a real commercial return has been made.

The influence of these shifting attitudes and the experiences of musicians’ engagement with a music industry in a constant state of flux are examined in much greater detail in chapters four and five.
Importantly, while the Australian music industry operates as an extension of the international industry, local, regional and international trends in music popularity and consumption influence the signings that occur. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter five, several interviewees spoke of being signed following not only the success of other Perth bands within the Australian and international markets but, also of other Australian acts from beyond Perth. Such flows of popularity influenced a shift in focus with labels looking to Perth as a viable talent pool. In turn this led to a peak in interest around the local scene. More broadly, however, a shift in the popularity of alternative music within the Australian market further influenced the signings and market positioning of groups from Perth who could fill this niche. As a flow-on from this success, Australian acts within the international music market further influenced the signing of local groups. Overall, while the popularity of, and interest in, Perth music within the Australian market has spearheaded its integration into the broader market, but even at times of peak interest, this dynamic remains at the mercy of broader popularity trends. As touched upon later in this chapter, and explored in greater detail in Chapter five, intra and inter – label competition and prioritisation reflect these broader trends, and influence the way in which musicians’ careers have and have not developed.

The reason these flows of public popularity and product consumption are influential is because they indicate whether or not a label will be able to recoup the financial costs associated with artist development and marketing, resulting in a profit. Given the uncertainty around ‘the next big thing’, historical trends of musical production and artist development provide the model for how to move forward. Further, as musical tastes and musical influences are interconnected, popularity trends and musical consumption inevitably influence the music created and presented to audiences.

When discussing their musical influences, the musicians interviewed always cited the music they were fans of. Examining this in an early 1990s context, a time when most interviewees were in their teens or their early 20s, interviewees tended to discuss this in relation to the music they heard on youth broadcaster triple j. The nationalisation of triple j, which went hand in hand with the national expansion of the touring music festival The Big Day Out, influenced not only the music which Perth musicians were exposed to but also supported the ability of the Perth music scene to connect with national audiences.
The role of radio, and more broadly the music press are discussed in greater detail in this chapter, in relation to their contribution to the promotion of music to audiences. An important factor to consider within this dynamic is the role of record labels within the music industry and the commodification of music.

**The role of record labels in the music industry and the commodification of music**

Record labels have traditionally acted as the ‘tastemakers’ of the music industry (Frere-Jones, 2010), providing musicians with finance, marketing nous and access to distribution channels, facilitating their music connecting with audiences. In the last two decades, however, the role of record labels has shifted. This shift has occurred as a result of technological advances which have made it easier and cheaper for musicians to record, promote, release and distribute their music themselves, while also changing the ways in which audiences pay for and consume music. As a result, the majors have changed their level of investment in new bands and their models of financial recoupment.

In part, record labels would recoup their costs through the sale of records, with artists making their profits predominantly through live performances and sales of merchandise. Nowadays, however, shifting revenue streams have led to the development of a ‘360 model’ (or multiple rights deal) in which labels take a percentage of profits from all of an artists’ revenue streams (Stahl, 2011).

Further, due to the international success of acts signed to independents, the role of these types of labels has also changed. Independents have merged or been acquired to form a part of the majors, being positioned as imprints or subsidiaries of the larger labels, which in some cases involves being taken over. As touched upon previously, Perth artists have had deals with these types of labels. Of particular interest are cases where the majors provide finances and distribution services to the smaller labels. In these instances, independents often have some or considerable autonomy over the selection of acts they sign and develop. Where majors continue to have the control, this tends to reflect instances in which they provide financial investment and backing. As discussed in
Chapter five, complex contracts between labels, as well as take-overs, can impact significantly upon the acts already signed to a label.

Developing musical acts for a commercial market is a risky business. As IFPI (2012, p. 11) explains, only a small number of acts signed to major labels will achieve significant success. While there is some conjecture as to the ratio of investment versus success, recent estimates are around one in five, having increased from one in ten a decade ago. While this success rate may have increased, it is important to understand the shifts in the way in which record labels make money, which have likely resulted in a decline in the number of acts they are investing in.

Due to this risk, artist development is highly mediated, with the record industry largely concerned with the controlling and exploiting of musical products (Wikstrom, 2009; Stahl, 2011). Therefore, while the role of the record labels may have changed over the last two decades, being able to control the ways in which music is marketed and distributed remains critical to being able to succeed in the music industry. As examined in Chapter five, attempting to have control over a market can see labels keeping acts on their roster which they have no desire to market to audiences but do not want to risk having another label having success with them; placing a higher emphasis on acts within their roster which they believe will make a profit; and deciding to release acts from their contracts once they feel they are no longer likely to succeed commercially.

While record labels can take control over acts in terms of marketing, they can also influence decisions as to where the artists record. Such decisions are based on the anticipated goals of marketing the band, as well as the amount of money the label are willing to invest in recording.

Another reason control is so important in the music industry is because of the position of music production as part of the copyright industry. In order to work to a strategy, and to position acts within the market in a way they see fit, record labels must control as much as they can across the spectrum of artists’ outputs (Jones, 2002, p. 150). This includes owning rights to the music created, the distribution channels and to the ways in which artists are marketed. As Jones (2002, p. 15) explains:
What each [act] possess is their own, unique combination of the sounds they make and the way they look, together with the potential for stories to be told about how and why they make the sounds they do. What record companies attempt to create through the process of record manufacture is not simply ‘faithful’ or even an ‘enhanced’ recording of an original performance, they seek to create a commodity that is marketable as sound, print and vision.

Linking back to the previous discussion around gatekeepers and cultural producers in *Chapter two: Contextualisation*, the music industry mediates the process of music commodification.

Discussing the atypical process of a band signing with a major record label, Jones (2002, p. 153) explains that musicians are often “represented to the label by a manager, to the company by a team within the label, and to the mass market by the company.” Caves (2000, p. 146, emphasis in original) offers a similar perspective, which he links to the uncertain performance of creative products within the market:

> As complete creative products are assembled and dispatched towards consumers, they usually pass between one or more pairs of independent enterprises [...] Because nobody knows, but the maker and retailer work in great uncertainty about demand for the individual creative product [...] there is a small problem of selecting and dealing in small quantities of the infinite variety of close-substitute products.

It is this degree of uncertainty which makes control of the commodification process critical to the marketing of music to audiences. Musicians are often in the dark about much of how this commodification process occurs, or at the very least, are required to relinquish control of it. Jones (2002, p. 154) puts forth an interesting reason for this, in that keeping artists hidebound reflects the act’s prioritisation within a label’s roster of artists:

> Record company intermediaries are continuously reassessing the likely fortunes of their signed acts for the very basic reason that they never have sufficient resources to give each act the same degree of support and attention. Consequently, they operate on a system of ‘prioritisation’, but it is a system largely hidden from the view of the act, and as far as possible, from the act’s manager.
The reason for this constant re-evaluation is due to the fundamental nature of the music industry, which is viewed commercially as being a “rights industry”:

It is important to recognise that the music industry is not like other industries. It is not a manufacturing industry. It does not involve discrete inputs and outputs [...] It is structured around the management and exploitation of talent. It is unique in that it requires the application of a rational management process to integrate the two irrational concepts of talent and taste (Market Equity, 2002, p. 14)

To this end, and as discussed in chapters four and five, the uncertain nature of the processes of music commodification require musicians to believe “that the relationships they enter into with intermediary figures will result in their own successful commodification” (Jones, 2002, p. 153). A combination of their desire to pursue music, which is often informed by their own music tastes and fandom, coupled with being in the dark about the commodification process makes acts “operationally disempowered” in this process, leaving them vulnerable (2002, pp. 153 - 154).

The reason that trust is critical to the process of commodification within the music industry is because those involved are operating within a ‘future state’ in which it is not known whether the act will be successful when it is eventually marketed to audiences. Throughout this process, each and every person involved in the signing, creation, development and marketing of the music must have trust and faith that the others can undertake their roles competently. Due to having to relinquish control, acts must trust that their assigned managers, associates and employees have their best interests at heart. Regardless of these trustworthy relationships, however, the operation and prioritisation principles can result in intra-label competition due to a lack of equality within record company departments (Jones, 2002, p. 154).

The implications of this intra-label competition for Perth musicians is expanded upon in Chapter five. In short, however, while an act may sign with a record label, and be fully supported by the gatekeepers assigned to them, the label’s employees outside this core group can still influence how an act is developed and marketed, and may choose not to invest the level of resources required to bring the act to market prominence. This can be due to pressure to achieve other sales targets, to make a particular impression within a particular market, or in cases where prioritisation decisions
favour other acts. The result of this intra-label competition can range from changing release dates of records in order to focus on other, more high profile acts; to a label’s sole focus being placed on an act, or a small group of acts which they believe will sell the most records. The result for lesser known acts, and acts at a critical developmental stage, is that they are left unsupported due to a lack of attention. Importantly for Perth musicians, signed at times in which there was a particular interest in Perth music, or through their association with other acts, shifts in prioritisation have sometimes overridden this scene-based interest, favouring broader national and international music consumption trends.

The reason these gatekeeper-guarded flows of culture are influential is that, in cases where a particular genre of music, or at the very least a particular format of musical group, become popular, labels will often try to position a slew of similar acts in the marketplace to cash in on this interest. This can see labels placing a focus on acts within their roster, or looking to sign groups with a particular sound or aesthetic which aligns with current trends. While these shifts in popularity have been driven by and supported an increase of interest in Perth music between 1998 – 2009, being picked up by a label, or being on the receiving end of media coverage, does not result in guaranteed success or ongoing success. In cases where Perth acts have benefited from being picked up as part of this interest, the test of support lies in the ease with which this public attention is gained.

A further complication of the music commodification process is the competition which exists when an act engages with distribution and promotional channels beyond the label’s control. As discussed later in this chapter, with regards to the role of the music press and music-related media such as radio, in order to engage with these external players, the record label can be required to relinquish control in the same way musicians are required to do when signing with labels. The reason for this relinquishment is due to the uncertain market forces in which labels try to position musical acts. This degree of uncertainty is evident in the levels of success discussed above as well as the shifts in music consumption trends. This uncertainty can also be illustrated through the ‘superstar model’ which exists in the creative and entertainment industries.
The superstar model
As Caves (2000, p. 74) explains, the superstar model “supplies a framework for thinking about the consequences of achieving top rank in different creative activities.” This model helps provide a deeper understanding of the way in which creative capital is both accumulated and circulated within the music industry. ‘Superstars’ are those who rise to the top of their field, often dominating the market and earning significantly higher wages than their peers (Rosen, 1981, p. 845). This model provides a framework through which the competitive nature of the music industry can be examined, alongside differing levels of success and the ways in which acts are marketed.

Examinations of scene-based music popularity, such as that experienced by many Perth musicians in this research can find this idea particularly useful because it helps explain the disparities between the different levels of success and recognition achieved by musicians. As discussed in Chapter two, several aspects of success and recognition have been adopted for this research so as to allow examination of a broad range of musicians’ and industry workers’ experiences. While a particular music scene may attract a great deal of attention, the ways in which musicians navigate their way through this scene and share the attention differ greatly, along with the levels of success achieved. Chapter five details how close association with higher profile acts do not necessarily result in a similar degree of success for lesser known artists. Where such a connection can be of benefit is in helping a less successful act develop their performance skills, inspiring them to continue pursuing their goals and providing them with experiences they might otherwise not have. Further, even for artists who have risen through the ranks of Perth’s local music scene, and connected successfully with the national and even international markets, they remain susceptible to broader music consumption trends, shifting success benchmarks and a waning interest toward music as a profession.

Linking back to the earlier discussion regarding the competitive prioritisation of acts within record label rosters, even during times of peak interest, Perth musicians have still had to compete with other bands across Australia. Such competition is not only in terms of market share but also with regards to which artists will be offered recording contracts, as well as which will be given priority in release schedules. The superstar model provides a way in which to rationalise this prioritisation
process and reflects the particular importance and influence of the relationships musicians have with the gatekeepers at their record label. Which artist will be favoured and at what time is not only informed by music consumption trends, but by the people and networks within which the musicians and their managers work. These relationships, in turn, influence the ways in which musicians’ careers develop. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter four, engaging with the national music industry is as much about being able to build a wide audience base as it is about an artist sustaining and developing their musical pursuits. Within this, the live music industry plays a particularly important role and this is especially true in a city such as Perth where live music activity is heavily concentrated, and exists alongside an underdeveloped regional touring circuit.

**The role of the live music sector in the development of musicians’ careers**

Live music performances are widely accepted as playing a crucial role in the development of musicians’ careers. Performing live facilitates relationships between musicians and audiences and between musicians and music industry workers. Performances also provide artists with a crucial income stream and aid in the creative development of music and in the refinement of performance skills (Johnson & Homan 2003; Ballico 2009). As Johnson and Homan (2003 p. 3) argue, the live music circuit is:

> Regarded as an ‘incubator’ for artists seeking international success [...] Musicians, managers and recording companies share the belief in the value of the [...] live circuit in preparing artists for regional/global success.

Triple j music director Richard Kingsmill explains that live performances are “a testing of the band by the audience and the audience by the band” *(Wide open road, 2008)*. Performances take place in a variety of venues ranging from pubs and clubs to theatres and outdoor venues. This touring circuit is complemented by, and functions in conjunction with, the live music festival industry.

Stand-alone performances generally feature one ‘headline’ act and up to two support acts. Such events take place over a few hours while music festivals in comparison are larger in size, scale and duration. Festivals often take place over one to several days, and are programmed with a plethora of artists ranging from local up and coming bands, to national and international acts. Both stand-
alone concerts and festivals can involve audience sizes from several hundred people up to 30,000 or more. The artist's career trajectory and stage influences the frequency, scale and format of their live performances.

For example, when musicians first start performing, they often do so several times a week. This is considered vital to the development of their ‘sound’ and their performance skills, while also supporting their ability to build connections within the local scene. As careers progress, however, and artists start releasing material in recorded formats, performing live becomes a promotional tool through which they can market newly-released music. The majority of their later-career performances are influenced by release schedules. The size and scale of these performances in turn reflect their level of popularity, as well as the finances available from the label and elsewhere to invest in the staging of their performances.

When acts are more heavily engaged with the local, as opposed to the national and international, music scenes performances tend to be staged at local pubs and clubs, with smaller scale east coast tours undertaken only if the act feels it worthwhile to promote the band beyond the state. For artists who are successful within the national market, larger scale national tours are undertaken to promote their records and releases providing them with an income stream, as opposed to simply (and hopefully) covering their costs. Throughout this career progression, however, musicians traverse the live sector in a variety of ways. These include performing as support acts for higher profile national and international artists performing in Perth, undertaking tours around the country in support of other higher profile artists, and performing at music festivals within WA and around Australia. One constant factor in determining these opportunities is the influence of the popularity of their music in the national and international stage and music consumption trends.

In the same way that the recorded music sector reflects national and international music consumption trends, so does the live industry. At any given time, the national live music sector plays host to local national and international artists. As a result of changes in the ways in which music is (or perhaps is not) paid for, the live music industry underwent a transformation between 1998 – 2009. Most significantly, this has been felt in the WA festival market. Once consisting
solely of the Big Day Out touring festival, the market now comprises a myriad of state-based and national touring events. This is addressed further in *Chapter four*.

**The role of the music press and music-related media in the music industry**

The services of the music press and music-related media are used to connect music with audiences via the marketing and promotional strategies of the recorded and live music industries. This section discusses the roles of print music journalism as well as public and community radio, in light of their use as promotional vehicles for music and associated activities as well as their roles of discovering and breaking new musical talent. The analysis presented here prepares the ground for further discussion in *Chapter four* which examines the relationships between the local, national and international music press, and in *Chapter five* in which the experiences and implications of taking part in marketing and promotional activities.

As Shuker (2008, p. 161-162) explains, the music press encompasses a wide range of print, and now online, publications, with music coverage also featured in general interest and traditional news-focused publications. The term ‘music press’, however, generally refers to the specialised fanzines, consumer and lifestyle magazines and trade papers whose primary purpose is the editorial coverage of music.

The music press encompasses a variety of forms and styles, with CD and gig reviews; feature articles, gig listings and news articles the most prominent content. As Lindberg (2005, p. 77) explains, it took several decades for the field of music journalism to develop, and be recognised as a promotional tool for the music industry:

It should be kept in mind that the music industry looked very different in the early 1960s than it did in the 1980s and 1990s. Before the Beatles, and even into the 1970s, not only [music] critics but the industry as a whole was more naïve in the sense that promotional campaigns and economic investments in artists were of an altogether different dimension, if they existed at all.

In the same way that the music press market has grown and changed over time, so too has its role as a promotional tool of the music industry. Such changes occur as part of a reflection of the
diversity of music journalism featured in the music press which encompasses a variety of styles and forms. Music journalism has some parallels with the traditional news industry, but each aspect of the profession differs in its aims objectives and attitudes. Explaining the differences in objectives and attitudes, Brennan (2005, 4) states:

Generally speaking, news journalism aims to perform an objective reporting service based on truth. The discourse of music journalism is one concerned with consumer guidance and it undertakes this role through a notion of trust.

Positioning music journalism in this way illuminates differences in audiences, objectives and arguments about journalistic professionalism. Furthermore, as Lobato and Fletcher (2013, p. 113) explain, music journalism can serve a variety of purposes depending on the style and form of coverage granted to the journalistic presses, along with the publications which feature it:

Each genre of music writing – from the 100-word CD review to the 10,000-word in-depth artist interview – can be the vehicle for public relations, advocacy, or cultural criticism, depending on how it is executed. As a result, there is much debate within music writer circles as to whether the role of the writer is to report on current events, to provide objective critique, to support local music industries, to guide consumers in their choices, to champion emerging genres, or to foster elite modes of music appreciation.

This confusion of role is further complicated by the co-dependent relationship which exists between the music press and the music industry. The music industry needs to work with the music press in order to have their products (e.g. new music releases and live shows) promoted, and the music press works with the music industry to gain access to artists for interviews as well as receiving free CDs and tickets for the reviews which appear in their pages. It is through variances in the types of coverage and its purpose, coupled with the integral role of the music industry in providing access for such coverage that the music press plays a crucial role in promoting of music and associated activities to audiences.

Music reviews inform readers of new releases and encourage them to attend gigs, while feature articles delve deeply into topics such as a band’s background, their connections with their local scene, their musical influences, recording processes and so on. News style items can work across
all aspects of music promotion to inform readers of anything from an upcoming gig, new release or band signing while gig listings help promote local performances. Given that any or all of these types of coverage may be offered in the context of advertorial, whereby editorial coverage is guaranteed as part of the purchasing of advertising, the focus here is on editorial coverage which reflects the independent and critical opinion of the music journalist. While Jones and Featherly (2002, p. 4) state that “it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to assess directly the impact a [music] critic has on the sales of recordings and concert tickets” the independent editorial coverage of local music is highly valued by local audiences and musicians alike. Street press is often the first stop for bands struggling to receive radio support. As Groth (2010, xiv) points out, street presses frequently champion new bands “before radio has even had a whiff.” Celebrating the freedom of street press to offer such content, Groth (2010, xii) explains:

Sure, flyers, word-of-mouth and radio worked, but people wanted to read about artists and hear what they had to say, and, frankly, the benefit of having very little advertising [in comparison to that which is offered at larger publications] meant street press could devote reams of text to its favourite performers. These magazines presented an expanse of blank pages [which] writers could fill with an artist’s musings, often with little editorial interference.

While street press are able to offer a variety of editorial coverage, radio plays a critical role in promoting music. As with the focus of the music press discussion presented above, the focus here is on the free coverage offered by radio outlets. Radio airplay is considered a benchmark of success the musicians and industry interviewees alike. This is due to its ability to promote the music to broader audiences by using the music itself – i.e. songs - as a way to do so.

Public and community radio have played an important role in promoting the music by the acts included in this research as well as exposing them to music which has influenced the music they create. These two sectors of the radio industry have been favoured by the interviewees when looking to connect with new, or maintain relationships with, audiences. This is due to the lower barriers of entry afforded in these two radio formats as well as their integration within other sectors of the industry such as live music. Examining the role of radio in the music industry in a broader sense, Allen (2010, p. 168) explains that:
The two industries share a mutual dependence on each other for mutual benefit. Radio depends on the recording industry to provide elements of its entertainment programming for its listeners, and the recording industry depends on radio to expose its products to consumers.

Leaving aside the commercial considerations made in relation to the programming of music in the commercial radio sector, the role of music in the public and community sectors is slightly different. Where commercial radio stations are more interested in giving airplay to acts that are already popular, as Green (cited in Eltham, 2009) explains: “They’re looking for stuff that’s going to have a high familiarity rating with the listeners, something that’s not too hard to break”, public and community radio place a higher importance on supporting up-and-coming acts and those who do not receive airplay on commercial stations. This distinction is not always clear-cut, however, and it is not uncommon for there to be a cross over between the music played on commercial and public/community stations. The blurring of these playlists has arguably occurred in line with the shifts between mainstream and alternative music which occurred in the late 1990s. As discussed in Chapter five, this blurring influenced the music Perth musicians were exposed to when they first started creating, while also supporting the ability for this music to connect with broad audiences.

Triple j is one of Australia’s prominent national radio broadcasters. Sitting within the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the station was established in Sydney in the late 1970s, and went national in 1993 (Mathieson, 2000, p. 109). It has historically been aligned with ‘youth’ and ‘alternative’ music and culture. Prior to triple j’s nationalisation, the Australian radio market consisted of commercial stations – predominantly AM stations as FM radio was still in its relative infancy – along national and regional outlets of the ABC and a plethora of community radio stations across the country. With triple j’s expansion into the national market, and keeping in mind this was in a pre-Internet era, music fans were able to more easily access music outside of the mainstream charts. Recalling how triple j expanded his musical tastes beyond his parents’ music collection and top 40 pop radio, Rodney Aravena (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) says:

A lot of the mainstream sort of alternative acts you got to hear for the first time. I remember hearing Primus and all these other bands on triple j and [the radio show] Two
Hours of Power with Helen Razer, I remember [...] putting my tape in and pressing record and like, sometimes falling asleep and just seeing what my tape recorded and listening to it the next day [...] finding out what the bands were and you know, if I could, by hook or by crook, get the CDs or the tapes.

Barriers to entry for triple j airplay are such that acts without label representation can get airplay. Explaining its commitment to supporting Australian music, music director Richard Kingsmill (cited in Eltham, 2009) says:

The station has always remained pretty fixed in its ideals. One is be a strong supporter of Australian music. We set a benchmark of 40 per cent Australian music, day in, day out, throughout the month [...] That commitment to Australian music is still there after thirty years, that hasn’t changed. We’ve got a commitment to live music that hasn’t changed in thirty years. We’ve got a commitment to discovering and fostering new Australian talent and bringing them up through the ranks, and it’s also about trying to expose as much of the exciting overseas music as much as we can in amongst that as well.

Community radio also plays a critical role in supporting local music product, with even lower barriers to entry than triple j. Supporting and developing local arts and forms part of the guiding principles of community broadcasting in Australia (CBAA, 2010, p. 3). Additionally, due to the broader positioning of such stations within the music industry, community radio not only provides a way through which musicians can find airplay and develop their PR and media skills but, also a way in which industry workers can become further involved in local music, share their skills and knowledge of music (CBAA, 2010, p. 11).

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the structure of the music industry in national and international contexts. This examination has been undertaken in light of the notion of gatekeepers and cultural producers who form the basis of creative sectors such as the music industry. Further, it has also examined the specific role record labels play within this industry as well as the music press and broadcast radio in the marketing of music to audiences.

The functioning of the music industry is heavily mediated and interconnected at national and international levels. Within this, gatekeepers - which for the purpose of this discussion include
band managers, government funding agencies, live music promoters, media outlets, music
journalists and music producers – work to develop and connect the work of cultural producers,
that being musicians with audiences. Due to the nature of the music industry, in which music is a
commodity marketed to audiences, some gatekeeping roles overlap with that of cultural producers.

A particular focus here has been placed on the recorded and live music sectors due to the
interaction Perth musicians and industry workers have with these two sectors. Further, the specific
role of record labels has been discussed here in order to understand the importance placed on
engaging with these firms and the changes which have occurred over the last two decades in the
landscape of the major and independent label sector. Within this, the process through which labels
commodify music has also been discussed as this is critical to understanding the ways in which
musicians careers do and do not develop, as examined in the ensuing chapters. Further, the
superstar model has provided a useful framework for understanding the ways in which record
labels in particular prioritise artists within their roster.

Broadly speaking, and most importantly, despite the changes which have occurred in the music
industry over the last two decades, musicians remain key to the functioning of this industry, and
despite the risks associated with the investing in new talent, labels will continue to invest in new
artists. Additionally, the live sector has been examined in relation to the role it plays in the
development of musicians’ careers, with a particular focus on the ways in which musicians navigate
this aspect of the music industry as their audience numbers increase.

More broadly, the role of the music press and broadcast radio has been examined in light of the
role they play in connecting music with audiences. Further, how they enhance the ability of the
music industry as whole to transform music into a commodity and support the development of
musician and industry workers’ careers has also been examined. Central to this discussion has
been the notion of control and exploitation which makes the roles of gatekeepers so critical to this
industry, as well as providing a way of understanding the position that those in the music industry
can find themselves which trying to connect music with audiences.
Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets.

Introduction

Continuing on from the discussion presented in Chapter three: The structure of the national and international music industries and the role of the music press, international and national contexts, this chapter examines the structure of the local music industry and scene and its relationship with the wider industry and scene operating at national and international levels. Examining the structure of the local music industry, particularly in light of the notion of the local scene, results in a more in-depth examination of how the interviewees’ success, recognition and accomplishments have influenced and supported the development of the industry and the careers of those who work within it.

Of particular focus here are the components of the local music industry in relation to the infrastructure developed, sustained and utilised by the interviewees. Importantly, where Chapter three focused predominantly on the recorded and live sectors as well as exploring the role of record labels, music press and broadcast radio in a very broad sense, this chapter examines a wider range of aspects of music production and dissemination in relation to how they function in Perth.

In addition, this chapter also investigates the influence of Perth’s geographical isolation on the structure and functioning of the industry, as well as on musical creativity. More broadly, through an examination of attitudes toward supporting local music, this chapter also discusses the critical role of social networks and the social capital that forms a part of the community of practice. Further, and in light of the notion of the core-periphery, this chapter examines the connections between Perth’s local music industry, the east coast based national one, and industries that operate within international markets such as Europe and USA.

This chapter begins by examining the structure of the local music industry, by placing a particular focus on the roles of industry worker interviewees, and the infrastructure they develop, sustain and utilise when undertaking these roles. Further, it examines how musicians engage with the expertise
and infrastructure within this locale as well as the points at which they outsource expertise and resources from to the east coast based national, and at times the international, music industries.

This chapter also goes on to consider the influence of Perth’s geographical isolation on the functioning of its local industry, the development of careers and on musical creativity. This leads into an examination of attitudes toward supporting local music infrastructure and activities as well as the critical role of social networks and social capital that form a part of the community of practice that underpins the functioning of this industry and the development of careers within it.

The implications of Perth’s music engaging with national and international industries and markets is examined in Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry.

**An overview of Perth’s indie pop/rock music industry 1998 – 2009.**

As discussed in the *Contextualisation* chapter, it is the geographical isolation of Perth, coupled with the positioning of the city as being on the periphery of the national music and media activity which makes the national interest in Perth music between 1998 – 2009 particularly remarkable. Long distances to the east coast and a lack of integration within the national industry have resulted in a unique environment in which the local pop/rock music industry has developed and functions. To get an understanding of the distances between Perth and other capital cities around Australia in relation to the distances between select cities in Europe and the USA, see *Appendix four: Driving distances and duration*. Further, this local industry is highly concentrated in terms of performance and production spaces as well as the industry workers who support and facilitate the functioning of this industry.

The distance from the east and the historical lack of integration within the national industry has influenced the development of a largely self-sustaining local industry. Additionally, this has resulted in a strong work ethic amongst members. This ethic is in relation to supporting one another in musical pursuits locally and in cases where musicians and industry members seeking out opportunities to connect with the national and international industries.
Further, the local industry is highly concentrated on a small number of key sites of production and dissemination as well as industry workers. As discussed later in this chapter, the concentration of these sites and workers is dualistically responsible for and supported by the social networks which exist between members.

Despite this self-sufficiency, however, relationships exist with the national music industries in Melbourne and Sydney due to Perth artists having management and/or recording contracts with companies in these cities, as well as interacting with the national media, major record labels, some managers, and larger-scale festival promoters which are predominantly based in the east. These relationships result from an understanding that in order to be marketed to national audiences, Perth musicians need to engage with the larger, nationally focused industries. To this end, the aforementioned isolation and core-peripheral relationship is relevant to an examination of the local industry. One of its key effects is to make members highly dependent upon one another, for example where musicians from various bands collaborate, swap players and tour together. The tight-knit and concentrated nature of this industry is highly valued by its members and supports and facilitates networks of learning which assist career development. Across these roles and their associated local sectors, the live industry is one of the most developed, diverse and critical facets of the local music scene in Perth.

**The local live music sector: Venues, tours and festivals**

The live sector is particularly critical to the functioning of Perth’s music industry since this is how many of the interviewees discovered and/or first engaged with the local industry. Attending live performances has been found to support early and ongoing involvement with broader local music activity, as well as developing interpersonal relationships between members. Further, when musicians come to the end of intense periods of engagement with the national and international music industries, they often enter a period in which they lose the desire for music, and stop attending local live shows. They view this as being a period in which they are not an active member of the local music community. This dynamic is further explored in *Chapter five*, through a discussion regarding the loss of passion and desire for music and the implications of this for the continued development of careers in music. Nonetheless, musicians and industry workers view
participation as an audience member for live music as the starting point for community involvement.

Local indie pop/rock music is mainly performed in metro pubs and clubs, with larger scale events taking place at outdoor amphitheatres, and sports arenas. Some regional touring does occur, largely in the state’s comparatively populous south west (Ballico, 2010). It’s a three day drive from the south west to the north west; and four days from the south west to the north east of the state and less than 20% of the state’s population lives in an area one-third the size of Australia (ABC, 2009). Consequently, touring in greater WA is rarely profitable. Instead, musicians largely perform in Perth’s local pubs and clubs. The chart below shows key venues for local music performance and consumption between 1998 - 2009 as well as their location and venue type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Location (Suburb)</th>
<th>Venue type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amplifier</td>
<td>Perth (CBD)</td>
<td>Nightclub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mojos</td>
<td>North Fremantle</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planet Nightclub</td>
<td>North Perth</td>
<td>Nightclub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape</td>
<td>East Perth</td>
<td>Nightclub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grosvenor Hotel</td>
<td>East Perth</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hyde Park Hotel</td>
<td>West Perth</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rosemount Hotel</td>
<td>North Perth</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Railway Hotel</td>
<td>North Fremantle</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Swan Basement</td>
<td>North Fremantle</td>
<td>Pub</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: The venues (including location and type), which form a part to the functioning of this local industry.

These venues are those for which some of the industry interviewees work with as venue bookers, as well as being frequented by musicians and industry workers. Each venue has, to varying degrees, supported the capacity for musicians to perform live, while also providing an avenue in which industry workers can find employment. For some, hosting of local live music only occurred for a short space of time, and in other cases, a focus on lesser known acts is prevalent. Further, some venues have undergone redevelopments which have helped or hindered their ability to support local live music. Such changes reflect the cyclical nature of music consumption and production (see: Ballico, 2011).
The venue type, as shown above, determines the way in which the venue functions on a broader basis, that is, without live music or some kind of entertainment. With most of these venues broadly operating as pubs, live music forms part of larger mix of hospitality options.

Booking live venues is one of the most common entry points for people wanting to work in industry roles, in much the same way that performing live precedes recording experiences for musicians. More broadly, venues such as Amplifier, the Grosvenor Hotel, Hyde Park Hotel, Mojos, Planet Nightclub and the Rosemount Hotel have also formed a part of national and international touring circuits, being used by national and international artists when they perform in Perth. In comparison, Shape, the Railway Hotel and the Swan Basement have provided support to predominantly local music activity. In cases where live music is no longer hosted – such as at the Grosvenor Hotel, Planet Nightclub and Shape – these spaces continue to operate as entertainment and hospitality venues in some form or another.

Linking back to the discussions presented in the Background chapter and Chapter three, in regards to the role of the live music sector in the development of careers, the local live circuit is valued highly by musicians and industry workers alike. This is due to its role in supporting the activities of musicians as well as facilitating ongoing scene engagement with the scene. Despite this critical role, the high level of concentration in the industry can result in audience saturation for local music. As a result, it is possible for acts in Perth to ‘over gig’ having played to all the sectors of the audience interested in their music, and therefore the act looks to tour other cities in order to continue being able to develop and sustain their musical pursuits.

In line with the cyclical nature of music consumption, Perth’s music industry has undergone a raft of changes. These changes relate to the venues support local live music activity and, in turn, those which are key to its functioning. Of particular note here is the concentration of live music venues around the CBD and Fremantle areas. Very little notable activity takes place in the suburban areas of Perth while the corridor between Perth and Fremantle, which was once home to a thriving live music scene, is now devoid of local live music activity.
Given that Perth is a limited market, musicians need to engage with the national music scene, be that across the nation as a whole or in other local scenes around the country. This is where success and recognition in markets beyond Perth become particularly relevant since they help ensure an audience. Connecting with new audiences is inevitably easier when an act is receiving media attention in the market with which they wish to connect. Triple j airplay is especially important for artists wishing to attract a national audience. Recognising this, musicians often spoke of the role of triple j, and how in the early days of their careers they worked hard to achieve airplay on the station. Triple j’s influence is examined later in this chapter in a discussion regarding the structure of the local music-related media sector.

Touring around Australia supports both the formation and continued engagement with audiences. For musicians from Perth, connecting with new audiences beyond the city is made more challenging due to the long distances and higher costs which results from the city’s geographical isolation. At the same time, however, Perth’s live music circuit is valued by the east coast, and recognised as a viable market in which national and international acts can tour. Despite recognising its viability, the geographical isolation of Perth is reflected in a degree of cultural isolation. This is because the distance impacts upon the capacity of artists to tour from or into the west. As such, when international artists tour the west, they often do so as part of a large scale music festival. This is discussed later in this chapter in relation to the growth of the music festival circuit.

While the population spread on the east coast of Australia supports a higher degree of regional touring than occurs in WA, the concentration of Perth’s live circuit is credited with helping musicians form support networks and in linking musicians and industry workers within in the local industry. For example, recalling how he became involved in local music as a fan and then in making websites for local bands, web developer Craig Harman (pers. comm.) says:

I just really enjoyed going to shows and then being lucky to work with some of the bands I went and saw, to get to know them as people. That’s [also] where I found a lot of friends and what I’d be doing on a Friday or Saturday night – [I] would be going out and seeing bands so, you know, I guess it’s everyone’s dream to be able to make a career out of what they enjoy doing. It all sort of really just happened by accident and all of a sudden I was doing this job with Jebediah originally just because I thought they were a great band and I
enjoyed hanging out with them and going to see them play and for it to then, and from
doing that, I was fortunate in that Jebediah did very well for themselves so I was able to be
known, and again with Perth being so small, word gets around you know ‘this is the guy
doing Jebediah’s website’ and then more bands come to you and ask you to do it.

Attending live performances inspired and encouraged many of the musicians to continue engaging
with, and discovering, local music product with the live scene also supporting them during their
early performance days. For musicians, live performance allows them to develop connections with
audiences, industry workers and other bands with whom they can perform and collaborate. For
industry workers, it allows them to develop relationships with bands they can work with, and in
some cases led to opportunities to work in the same venues. Discussing the importance of live
performances to his decision to work with acts, band manager Heath Bradby (pers. comm.) says:

I'll hear something that I think is good and then I'll go see the band a couple of times and
if they don’t suck live and if they’re not dickheads and I like the music and feel that there’s
kind of a connection there then maybe we’ll do something.

From the perspective of musicians, continuing to engage with local live music is reliant on their
continued passion for music. Given that attendance at live shows is crucial to engagement with the
local scene, forgoing attendance at local shows is the primary way in which musicians indicate they
have lost their passion for music. This is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter with regard
to attitudes toward supporting local music activity and product.

While the key venues in which local music activity takes place have changed over the years, the
high concentration of these sites supports the ongoing facilitation of performances over time and
builds audience attendance. While this presents a challenge for the local industry, in that it can
essentially limit the viability of repeat performances, the lack of a suburban-specific audience
supports the capacity for large scale events to be scattered around the metropolitan area. As
promoter Ken Knight (pers. comm.) explains:

If you live in a city like Sydney for example, and you want to promote something, you have
to be really suburb eccentric with it. To the [point] that if you want something to work on
the north shore, you know that people are not gonna cross that bridge for example,
because it’s too hard, traffic’s too much of a pain in the butt [...] Whereas in Perth it doesn’t really matter... geographically quite so much where you put it. And a lot of that’s also come from the fact of, you know, Western Australia, people have cars. You know, when you go to Melbourne and stuff, people become linked to their suburb. So St Kilda people never leave St Kilda, and they shop, clothe, entertain themselves, go see bands, do whatever they do, and they live in St Kilda. They don’t have a car because it’s just all too hard, and then you might have a Brunswick person on the other side of town, and they shop Brunswick, artistically bent towards Brunswick [...] Perth being of the size that it is, doesn’t really have those barriers that come with moving across large cities.

While a high concentration of venues, and the ease with which audiences can get around to events such as festivals, has supported the capacity for this sector to function effectively, its ability to actually do so is influenced by the broader entertainment and hospitality industries in which it operates.

For example, in the case of performances at pubs and clubs, these take place in spaces which function within, and primarily operate to cater for, the broader entertainment and hospitality industry. This is evidenced in the licensing of the sale of liquor at such venues. To this end, venue bookers may experience pressure in trying to support local original music in cases where other formats of entertainment, such as DJs or cover bands, may be more financially profitable for the venue. In the case of live music festivals, which are staged in public parks and sporting arenas, they are also vulnerable to the policies of local councils and other government bodies which music approve the use of such sites.

Despite these challenges for the live sector, this is one of the areas in which the greatest growth occurred between 1998 – 2009. In particular, this is reflected in the continued development of the festival circuit, which sits in line with broader national and international trends. Its growth illustrates the degree to which Perth’s local music sector is ingrained within the national industry. The chart below illustrates how the circuit has grown in relation to events which include local indie pop/rock acts in their line ups:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Festivals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>In The Pines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It; Rollercoaster; Southbound; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It; Rollercoaster; Southbound; Wave Rock Weekender; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Big Day Out; Blackjack; In The Pines; Rollercoaster; Southbound; Wave Rock Weekender; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rollercoaster; Southbound; Wave Rock Weekender; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Big Day Out; In The Pines; Rock-It; St Jerome’s Laneway Festival; Southbound; Wave Rock Weekender; West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Key live music festivals staged between the years 1998 - 2009.

As the chart above illustrates, this section of the live music activity experienced tremendous growth between 1998 - 2009. While this growth reflects a shift in the way in which music is paid for and consumed, the viability of festivals within WA is heightened due them being recognised as a viable model through which high profile international acts can tour the west. In some cases, festivals such as Rollercoaster and Rock-it were only staged for a few years, or went on hiatus for a period of time when the festival market started to become crowded. To get a broader perspective of how this festival activity sits in relation to events such as the WAMI Festival, Music Business Conference and One Movement for Music Festival, see Appendix five: Festivals/Conferences: 1998 - 2009. All festivals bar In The Pines, are staged in partnership with similar events on the east coast, or occur alongside eastern states based club shows, taking advantage of periodic Australian visits by international headline acts.

The chart below shows how the separate events listed previously sit within the national festival and live music touring industry:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Partner event/ tour/ company</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>National franchise festival (same name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackjack</td>
<td>East coast concert tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In The Pines</td>
<td>Not applicable (local artists only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock-It</td>
<td>East coast concert tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rollercoaster</td>
<td>Not applicable (local and national artists only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Jerome’s Laneway Festival</td>
<td>East coast franchise festival (same name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southbound</td>
<td>East coast partnered festivals (Falls Festival /Sunset Sounds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wave Rock Weekender</td>
<td>East coast concert tours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Coast Blues n Roots</td>
<td>East coast partnered festival (East Coast Blues n Roots)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Relationship between WA festivals and the national festival circuit.

As the above chart illustrates, many of these festivals are staged in WA via strong links with the national festival and live music touring industry. Arguably, without these links, such events become financially unviable or the promoters would experience difficulties in being able to attract high profile artists to perform in WA. For example, as promoter David Chitty (pers. comm.) explains, in its first year Southbound was not programmed in conjunction with an eastern states festival:

> In our first year we had to put acts on and I think the response from that, the numbers we got from the line-up we had was very encouraging...People then became more interested in supplying the acts to Southbound because they thought it would be a long term viable relationship.

For Chitty, it was the isolation of Perth that lead his company to work with eastern states’ promoters, and, in the case of Southbound, work with the promoters behind the Falls Festival (Victoria and Tasmania) and Sunset Sounds (Queensland) which hold their events at a similar time of the year. As he explains “it wouldn’t have been [easy] had we tried to bring in acts on our own” (pers. comm.). Similarly, as Sloan (pers. comm.) comments, WA has grown to become a viable market for international touring artists and music festivals within the Australian context. Engagement with eastern states activity is required for this to work since “making [artists] come to WA’s not difficult, making them come here exclusively is almost impossible.”
Importantly, events such as the Big Day Out, Southbound and West Coast Blues n Roots are programmed in conjunction with eastern states festivals but in general do not feature the full line up of the eastern states events. In explaining the programming of Southbound in conjunction with the Falls and Sunset Sounds festivals, Chitty (pers. comm.) notes that:

There’s a lot of the key international and national acts are offered collectively and then we can sort of add our own acts around it and our own you know, other festival activity.

Chitty’s view is that the West Coast Blues n Roots festival has, over the years, become more integrated with the East Coast Blues n Roots event. While not all artists perform at both festivals, Chitty says (pers. comm.) that “it makes sense for the artists and the events that we work together, because the acts get more gigs and more money and it’s better for the events ‘cause we get better acts.”

In comparison, the Big Day Out is a national touring event which visits Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, and Auckland in New Zealand. Due to the isolation of Perth, Knight (pers. comm.) comments that, “it costs you more money to bring the Big Day Out to Perth than it does to go Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne [and] Adelaide [combined].” Knight says that due to the larger cost associated with bringing the festival to Perth, a smaller scale event takes place in the state, with at least one stage fewer than the eastern states legs, and some smaller stages.

On the other hand, in some instances, festivals have been staged in the west whereas in the east the headlining artists have undertaken their own, smaller club-based shows. In one example, the events staged by Sloan – Blackjack, Rock-It and Wave Rock Weekender – are WA- only, however the headlining acts for these events will undertake their own tours on the east coast. Using the example of the 2007 Blackjack event he explains, “I got asked by someone to do The Pixies and they had some [other] bands available to do it, so I did it.” (pers. comm.). Similarly, Rock-It was staged in 2009, after a two year hiatus, and headlined by Kings of Leon. The band performed their own headlining concerts on the east coast. As he (pers. comm.) explains:
[Their] agent rang me and said ‘do you want to do Rock-It with Kings of Leon?’ and I said ‘sure let’s do that’... they were massive at the time right? And it allowed me to deliver the biggest show of their national tour and the band was happy.

As touched upon in Chapter three, performing live plays a critical role in the development and sustenance of musicians’ careers. Changes are experienced over the term of a career, however, in regards to the frequency, duration and scale of performances. As acts continue to move up and through the local scene, and particularly when they start releasing music in recorded formats, live performance shifts from being a way to develop skills and connections with audiences, as well as attract the attention of industry figures, to forming a part of a broader promotional strategy. Further, the scale and duration of performances also changes as artists gain more popularity.

For example, for acts which are very established within the Australian market, performing in Perth is often undertaken as part of a national tour, and take place in venues with larger audience capacities. To this end, while Perth’s live music sector is on the periphery of national activity, and its geographical isolation influences the way in which it connects with the national and international live sectors, live music within and beyond the city is important and is linked to the development of audiences through word of mouth and through recorded products. Due to the interconnectedness of the live and recorded sectors access to recording studios in which musicians can record their music supports them in continuing to develop audiences.

The local recording sector: Producer-engineers and studios
Local recording studios and the producer-engineers who work within these spaces provide vital opportunities for musicians to record their music. In particular, access to local studios is especially important for musicians on small budgets, without the support of larger (external) record labels, and who are generally at the earlier stages of their music careers. Even so, acts that are established within the national market often continue to access local studios in the initial stages of working on a new release, before heading east or overseas to formally work on their latest recording.

The demand for local recording studios has driven the development of this sector, and in turn supported the development of producer-engineer careers within it. For example, the two studios
and their associated producer-engineers included in this research have been used by the majority of musicians interviewed. These are Blackbird Studios which is run by Dave Parkin; and Debaser Studios which is run by Andy Lawson. Due to their reputation within local music and the ready access to their skills, expertise and resources, artists support the continued functioning of these studios. The development of these particular spaces is a result of previous gaps within the industry, as well as reflecting the producer-engineers’ commitment to seizing opportunities that may arise.

Considering Parkin, for example, he established Blackbird after spending two years working at another recording studio. Deciding to leave that studio as a result of not agreeing with how it was being run, Parkin (pers. comm.) recalls:

I made [a] crazy offer on all their equipment and they said ‘no’ and then they said ‘yes’. So I called up my old man and went ‘I think I just brought a studio’ and he was over the moon. He’s was, it was kind of hard to fathom because it was everything that I needed – sure the gear wasn’t top notch and whatnot [but] that was enough just to start – and then the owners of the old place had a quote to rip the old place apart and it was way too much cash so I said ‘oh me and my friends will tear it down if we can keep all the big piece of glass [sic] and all the acoustic tiles and the walls and stuff”. So I got to recycle a fair amount of that studio to build this place so pretty much I set this place up on an absolute shoe-string and just over the years it’s kind of just grown.

In contrast, Lawson spent several years working under the Debaser name before finding a more permanent studio base. Debaser was originally established in 2002 as a production group. Around that time Lawson and Joel Quartermain of Eskimo Joe, and Rodney Aravena of End of Fashion, were working on releases for other local bands. In these early days they worked out of a backyard shed in Fremantle. Lawson also did some production work from home, as well as in other established studios, such as Blackbird. Explaining why it took so long to establish a permanent recording space, Lawson says:

It’s pretty expensive to have a studio... Yeah, I guess you’ve gotta buy gear and slowly [...] collect everything you’ve got. Find a space, like, I was very lucky to land this place, otherwise I still wouldn’t have a studio. And you know, I guess going in and working at Blackbird a lot was kind of good, was a pretty good learning experience learning from Dave... it was always fun, like everything I needed was there, like could just go in and record a band and take the rest home and do little bits and bobs at home.
Access to local studios is critical for musicians in their early careers. If they have to travel far to record, this involves the additional costs associated with flights and accommodation. While it can be expensive to book studio time, recording with local producers in local studios builds networks and community and is informed by the reputation of the producers, their capacity for producing high quality recordings, and the activities of other musicians within the local scene. Musicians often choose particular local producers based on their work with other local acts they know and follow, and existing networks of relationships.

McLaughlin (pers. comm.), in discussing how his band first came to record with Lawson, who was recording out of a home studio, before going on to work with Parkin at Blackbird, says:

[Our manager at the time] had worked with Andy in various formats [...] He was like ‘I know a guy, go see this guy’ and we went there and we enjoyed that. It was one way of working, and I guess when we went to Dave [...] I remember Snowman had just released their album and we really liked what he was doing there, and the production on Red Jezebel’s album at the time was really good as well and we thought ‘let’s give this guy a try because I think he’s doing some good things’. So, and after speaking and meeting with him we got along with him really well, he’s a very easy guy to work with, and it just felt like it was the right thing do. [We found a] difference in the recording [process] too.

Stories such as this one shared by McLaughlin are common amongst musicians who work with local producers and in local studios. The ease with which musicians access such spaces and expertise reflects the high concentration of activity in the local music industry and scene. Further, while technological advances have led to musicians being able to produce high quality recordings themselves, working with a producer is still highly valued. At the same time, there are a range of attitudes toward working in high end, and very expensive, spaces.

Acts which first started recording their music in the mid-late 90s, often spoke of needing to work in professional, costly studios with established producers. At that time, EPs were common, due in large part to the expenses associated with recording. Recalling their motivations for recording their third EP at a high end studio in Perth, Cruickshank (pers. comm.) from Red Jezebel says:
We were really going ‘right we’ve spent loads of cash’ [...] We felt like we had to go to a really, really good studio to get a quality recording that would get played on triple j, which is really what we were trying to do.

Cruickshank semi-jokingly explains the band was initially recording EPs (they would release three before a debut album) due to the cheaper costs, and they were essentially just trying “get a song on the radio and to get picked up by a record label.”

Once acts start to engage with the national recording sector, in terms of heading east or even overseas to record, this reflects their financial ability to do so and their capacity to access higher profile producers and studios. To this end, while musicians value the ability to record in their home town, and will often continue to access local studios when creating new material, the opportunity to leave Perth to record is as much about the goals they have for their music, as it is about working with interstate/ overseas producers they admire as well as in the studios their favourite bands have recorded in. This is demonstrated in an exchange between MacLeod et al (pers. comm.) of Eskimo Joe:

Quartermain: For us it’s sort of been about getting out of [Perth and], getting away.
MacLeod: Yeah.
Quartermain: Getting away from you know, distractions, friends calling or whatever.
MacLeod: Also, I guess initially the reason you go away is the studios. We weren’t ever aware of any studios in WA that we wanted to particularly record in.
Quartermain: The record company [also] like to have you in a certain place.
Temperley: Yeah.
Quartermain: So they can monitor what is going on.
Temperley: There’s also an element of opportunity as well [...] If you’re offered a chance, like our first record we went to Sing Sing which is like a really famous studio [in Melbourne] and I think when as a young band to go to Sing Sing and record you’re like ‘Hell yeah that’s gonna be awesome!’ So I think every time we’ve decided to go record somewhere [...] it’s been [about] the location and the romance. You know, we’re still very romantic about the idea of making records and I think the romance of going away and making that perfect record in the perfect location has always been alluring.

Linking back to the discussion presented in Chapter three, regarding the role of record labels in the music industry and commodification of music, when acts sign with national record labels, the goals of the label can also influence where and with whom an act will record. Often, labels prefer
acts to leave Perth in order to record, and in some cases, will connect artists with producers they believe will give them the best chance of getting a return on their investment.

For example, End of Fashion recorded their 2005 debut self-titled album in the US. This was because their then label, EMI, wanted to market the band as ‘the next big Australian music export’, with the particular aim of breaking into the American market. With this in mind, the band recorded the self-titled release in Oxford, Mississippi, with producer Dennis Herring. While the group signed an international contract with EMI, if they wanted to be marketed to US audiences, they needed to catch the attention of Ron Laffite, the then head of A and R at EMI US. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter five.

While musicians appreciated the opportunity to record with producers and in studios on the east coast of Australia or overseas, the ability to record in Perth is still highly valued. While, the cheaper costs is one reason and not having to travel, the geographical isolation of Perth also allows musicians to work on their recordings without the constant interference of record labels. These benefits are expanded upon later in this chapter. Further supporting these local studios, and more broadly the local industry, are the local label that support the releasing of new music.

The local recorded sector: Local record labels
As discussed in Chapter three, many artists included in this research have connections with labels on the east coast, through full service, distribution or licensing deals with majors or independents. Even so, local labels are also crucial in supporting the dissemination of local music. These labels differ from the larger ones in that they often act as ‘shop fronts’ for their artists, requiring musicians to front the cash for the recordings as well as the pressing (physical production) of CDs, but will occasionally invest some money of their own in marketing the releases. The local label’s role is to link the artist to distribution labels or direct to retail outlets. In contrast, the majors and large independents on the east coast pay for all or any of the following: the production of the recordings, the pressing of CDs, and all marketing and distribution costs.
When it comes to majors and independents, the main difference between them is the financial backing and scope of services each can provide to artists. For localised independents, a further point of difference is having even less financial backing and a minimal scope of services. Local labels are often set up with little to no money and for the primary purpose of supporting specific artists within the local scene, as well as in helping them connect with audiences beyond WA.

While much of the engagement between musicians and record labels is with labels based on the east coast, as discussed in Chapter three, it is still worthwhile noting the desire of local industry workers to develop and run their own localised independents. The seven labels included here – Good Cop, Bad Cop, Little BigMan, Love Is My Velocity, Offworld Sounds, Redline Records, and QStick – have operated to varying levels within Perth’s local music industry. They were established with little to no financial investment, and with a much smaller investment of time. As such, they operate much more informally, rarely seeking to sign acts outside their existing networks, and often close down as quickly as they are established. For example, discussing the life-cycle of QStick Records, label manager Scott Adam (pers. comm.) says:

It ran for ten years [... and] it wasn’t just acoustic acts anymore. I kind of went and got side tracked and started working with indie-pop and it went from there. It still exists on paper, it still has CDs in the shops around the place it still has an account with MGM but, it doesn’t actually have an A and R policy of actually going out and scouting talent.

Due to operating on a smaller scale, with less financial backing, and subsequently less financial risk, these labels often form a part of a broader set of services offered by those who run them. Love Is My Velocity is an organisation which has developed live music and niche arts events and operated as a book publisher. Taking on functions of a record label occurred out of a desire to support particular artists in the Perth scene. As Helen McLean (Giles et al, pers. comm.) says:

Originally, [the] whole point of that was because it was fun and we thought it would be good to do. And also I know Institut Polaire were one of those bands who had been around for ages and never put anything out so [it] was like a good way of getting [them to...] I [also] know the Bank Holidays so I thought they would be on it and they seemed pretty excited to be putting out, like, an actual record. That turned out really well, that was, like,
probably our highest selling single still and you know, Institut Polaire as a result of that basically ended up getting signed by Popfrenzy [Records based in Sydney].

Local independents can also facilitate niche genres being accessible to audiences in Perth and Australia. Explaining this, manager of Offworld Sounds, Pete Carroll (pers. comm.) says:

It was a consequence of recognising in the mid-90s that there [were] a lot of electronic producers in Perth and there was an emerging scene of electronic music that was completely disregarded or not recognised generally. So, we started a label called Off World Sounds to release local producers of electronic music. We put out records of many of the, the great electronic producers in this town and we also released records from people in Sydney; we released a record by a hip hop act in New York; we released a couple of records from electronic acts in the UK.

It is not uncommon for a band to work with a local label in the early stages of their career and then negotiate with an eastern states based company when they feel their label needs have changed. Conversely, when artists feel they have had enough of working within an eastern states based recording contract, they may decide to seek such a label out or even establish their own local independent. Redline Records, established in the late 1990s, came to fruition when the band Jebediah felt it was time to end their contract with Sony Music. As label manager Heath Bradby recalls:

We’d kind of done it with a view to the fact that the band might be independent at some point in the near future so it wouldn’t be a bad idea to have a label getting around [...] It also was through touring with them in US and dealing with a bunch of indie labels over there that were putting out really good music and doing good things and having a pretty DIY aesthetic and us being like ‘fuck, we could do that. Some of our friends have really good records that they don’t have the right label for’. So naively enough we thought we could be that label.

Importantly, while local labels are often developed out of a desire to support acts reaching new audiences as well as to be able to come to the attention of the national music and media industries, an interest in Perth music at a national level has also played a role. For example, Good Cop Bad Cop was established in the mid-2000s following interest from an independent music distributor on the east. As label manager Steph Edwardes (pers. comm.) recalls:
One of the partners (there are three) was approached by Inertia to set up a label in Perth. Everyone knows Perth is a pool of music talent and Inertia just got proactive and did something about it. Personally it was born out of frustration with being ignored by the East Coast heavy weights and getting sick of waiting for people to be interested, so we took the bull by the horns.

Local labels support the dissemination of local music product to local consumers, but the capacity for this local industry to promote itself to audiences within WA has been greatly expanded by a developing music media market.

**Local music media sector: Street press, online and community radio**

As established previously, the music press and music-related media play a crucial role in the promotion of music and associated activities and products to local audiences. In Perth, there are relatively few media outlets which support and promote local music activity. Therefore, media which do offer support are vital. Commercial radio stations only give airplay to well-established and popular Perth artists, but one of the many community radio stations operating in Perth, RTRfm, champions local music to a significant degree. This station gives local musicians airplay, provides editorially focused promotional opportunities through on-air interviews as well as provides them with opportunities to perform at RTRfm-run events, most notably In The Pines.

The inclusion of music outside the mainstream charts is critical in building audiences and a fan base for local product and live performances, and this was especially true in a pre-triple j and pre-Internet era. Further, several industry workers have volunteered and worked/ or at RTRfm. As such, the station not only plays a critical role in promoting local music but, also in supporting the development of industry careers. As an organisation, RTRfm is held in high regard by musicians and industry interviewees. This recognition results in an attitude that an involvement in the station will be positive, and in some cases, a worthwhile career move.

For example, Pete Carroll was the station’s general manager for roughly three years in the early 2000s. Discussing the vitality of the station to local music, and explaining his longstanding relationship with RTR prior to his employment with them Carroll (pers. comm.) says:
I’d known [about] RTR for years since arriving in Perth [in the late 1980s]. I always considered it to be, you know, the most the important, the driver of local independent music. In the 90s I used to go on air with Mark Genge and play some records. Then in the late 90s I started a program called Soulsides [...] I’d always had a lot of respect and a lot of passion for what RTR do and the opportunity to be more involved with them, in the level of managing the station was one that was hard to pass.

As RTR plays a critical role in exposure of local music to audiences, an involvement with the station often occurs due to being a fan of local music along with the station itself, with local industry workers often maintaining a strong association with the station over a number of years. For example, Dave Cutbush (pers. comm.), who was employed by the station in a part-time then full-time capacity for several years in the mid-2000s recalls:

1993 was the first time I started volunteering although 1991 was the first time I actually did a show [...] 93 I became a volunteer at RTR and so I’ve been associated with the station for a long time.

Due to the place RTRfm holds in the local music scene – at the intersection of music promotion, musical discovery and live music activity – the station plays a critical role in supporting ongoing local music activity.

While artists often use broadcast and print media for promotional purposes the music press, and particularly the three publications included in this research – Drum Media Perth, X-Press Magazine and The West Australian – are responsible for most of the promotion of local music in Perth. The development of music media in Perth is largely driven by a desire to support local product but also reflects Perth’s peripheral status within the national market. As Bob Gordon (pers. comm.), editor of X-Press recalls, throughout the 1990s there was a strongly articulated attitude of Perth being ‘over there’, distant from the core of the national music industry:

We did seem to be ‘over here’ and even the way you spoke to people in the industry from over east it was always a very much kind of thing ‘oh how is it over there?’ ‘I’d love to get over there sometime’ ‘would love to come over there but, it’s too expensive’ or ‘[I’d go] over there but it’s too far away’.
The access local musicians and their managers have to local media helps them to promote their activities and product, and also supports the development of critical media and PR skills for use in wider markets.

The growth of WA music media has been supported by the continued success of Perth music since 1998. While numerous music presses have come and gone over the years, it was not until 2006 that the eastern states music media decided that they could establish a new title in Perth. Drum Perth entered the market later that year. As Aaron Wilson, editor of the paper says:

> It was basically set up by two brothers who took over a couple of mags over east and then they brought it over [to Perth] and they basically just have a really strong ethical sense of supporting local music and supporting independent music so they brought [the magazine] to Perth with that in mind [...] They’re just two dudes that love music.

While much of the coverage of local music activity in Perth is taken up by the street presses and RTRfm as discussed above, it is worthwhile noting the online coverage offered to local artists. Of interest here is Perthbands, a promotional website and user-generated forum as well as Rockus, an online magazine. These two outlets have supported local music activity by providing an alternate outlet for coverage, and exist in a much more fluid manner. These two sites offer a range of coverage similar to the aforementioned outlets and were established due to their creators and successors, Edwardes and Harman respectively, being fans of local and/ or Australian music.

At the same time, through connections with the national music press, these publications and their writers contribute to eastern states and nationally focused music coverage. Such contributions include encouraging national outlets to feature Perth artists as well as conducting interviews with Perth acts breaking at a national level. As Wilson (pers. comm.) explains, through the Street Press Australia network within which Drum operates, he has encouraged eastern states publications to give high profile coverage to Perth artists:

> We have editorial meetings with all the [editors in] different states so we all kind of argue for this and that. So say for instance Sugar Army were breaking over here and I - like some
of the editors didn’t really know that much about Sugar Army - you know, they weren’t kind of on triple j at that stage, they’d had maybe one track [on air] and I sort of put it forth to them [that] ‘Sugar Army would make an awesome cover [and] we’re gonna get some awesome shots done’...Then a couple of them ended up doing covers for Sugar Army and so vice versa you know, if there’s a band breaking over there then we’ll kind of look into that.

Similarly, Bob Gordon writes on a freelance basis for numerous eastern states and international publications, most notably Australian Rolling Stone. This is a result of developing contacts and skills during his time at X-Press. As Gordon (pers. comm.) explains:

I’ve been lucky enough, staying [in Perth] and trying to make a living out of what I also passionately like and that has included Perth music. So I’ve been able to take that [to] national publications and occasionally international.

Gordon (pers. comm.) says that by remaining in Perth he has been able to write some of the first nationally published articles on high profile local artists. Initially he had to pitch a lot of his story ideas however, through the increasing popularity of Perth artists at a national level, he was increasingly commissioned to produce journalism. The “proliferation of Perth bands being featured in national publications or in a national sense is far more common than it was 15 or [even] ten years ago” (Gordon, pers. comm.).

This increase in national media coverage of Perth artists also influences the independent editorial coverage of local music within Perth based publications. As Simon Collins (pers. comm.) explains, since coming to write for The West in 2002:

[The coverage has] grown a lot. There’s always been an interest... I’d say my coverage of local music’s been increased on my predecessor but I think it’s also gone hand in hand with a boom... I’ve been here, writing for the paper for the last decade... [and] that time has seen a boom and I think whilst I might be giving it more coverage, it’s going hand in hand with an increase in stuff to cover, or stuff that deserves to be covered.

The increase in the overall amount of editorial coverage for WA artists along with a higher profile both locally and nationally, reflects an increase in the standard of activity occurring within Perth and also illustrates the ability of Perth music to attract national media attention. Coverage at this
national level supports and encourages local coverage in the Perth-based music publications as it legitimises supporting local music, while also non-specialist news and current affairs to include music coverage in their publications.

**Ancillary support organisations and government funding**

While much of the focus here is on the development and use of local music infrastructure, including the relationships with the national and international industries and scenes, it is interesting to note the level of ancillary support and government funding available to Perth musicians and industry members. Of particular note is the funding through the WA State Government’s Department of Culture and the Arts’ (DCA) Contemporary Music Grants Program (CMGP) and through Eventscorp, the government tourism events development arm, which sits within Tourism WA. WAM also provides representation to assist Perth music locally, and in connecting with audiences beyond the state.

The purpose of this section is to discuss the degree to which Perth music is recognised as being worthy of such support. It does not evaluate the effectiveness of this funding. The worthiness of Perth music to receive this funding is evidence of recognition by policy makers and public servants that musicians and industry members need to connect with audiences and peers beyond the state in order to continue their creative and professional development. Effective connections of this nature often require significant investments of time and money, given the expense of venturing beyond the state. The provision of financial and representational support for activities and attendance at industry events beyond the state supports musicians in their endeavours to make connections and helps develop broad audiences.

The CMGP was established as a competitive grants scheme in 2002 and provides funding in the categories of: recording; regional, national and international touring; and mentorship and skills development (Guazzelli, pers. comm.; DCA, 2006, pp. 10 - 11). More broadly, multi-year funding can be sought by arts organisations to support their operations. Such funding has been acquired by WAM as well as RTRfm to support the employment of a local music producer at the station. In comparison, the MEF was established in the mid-1980s in the lead up to the 1987 America’s Cup.
Prior to the mid-2000s it had solely been used to attract international sporting events to WA (van Ooran, pers. comm.).

There are two fundamental differences between the MEF and the CMGP. The first difference is the portfolios they are positioned in. Due to a difference in portfolio positioning, the two programs differ in their focus and the way in which funding allocations are made. The MEF sits within a portfolio responsible for the development of WA as a tourist destination, whereas the CMGP is largely driven by a focus of fostering arts and culture at a local level, and helping artists connect with new markets (van Ooran, pers. comm.; DCA, n.d.).

A second difference is the way in which applications are made and assessed. The CMGP operates via a competitive grants system, whereby applications are made to coincide with funding rounds, and assessed by industry peers. In comparison, applications under the MEF are assessed via feasibility studies and negotiations with EventsCorp, with the final funding decision sitting with the Tourism WA Board. Additionally, EventsCorp are also able to tender for and seek out events for the state. Neither of these programs will fund 100% of the costs associated with any given project or event (DCA, n.d.; van Ooran pers. comm.).

The allocation of funding through these two programs signifies an understanding and willingness to support Perth music in its attempts to connect with new audiences and supports capacity-building for industry members to connect with peers beyond the state. Musicians and industry members alike have accessed funding through the CMGP, including many who were interviewed for this research. Further, the initial allocation of government funding, which eventually resulted in the CMGP scheme, also included an allocation to be made for staging a touring museum exhibition showcasing a history of Perth’s contemporary music from the 1970s to early 2000s. Bob Gordon (pers. comm.), who was involved in the exhibition, recalls:

There were a lot of ephemera. It was audio, video, posters, text panels, everything. So there was audio booths that you could go in - various themed audio booths whether they be kind of [about] the ones that got away or the ones who made it or whatever [...] scanned posters and things on the wall paper and was covered, touch screens – so audio and visual things –
there was [sic] people’s guitars, there were mannequins with stage outfits, there were handwritten lyrics [...] So there were things like that, stuff behind glass, there was a whole thing of bean bags and like a 24 hour clip, probably about ten hours of video of Perth bands - going back to 1970 obviously more from the later era than before - that was just constantly on loop so people could just go in there and spend half a day in there. So it was pretty exhaustive.

Funding was also made available on a triennial basis to support the activities of WAM, as discussed in greater detail below.

In comparison, due to the structure and positioning of the MEF, funding for music events in Perth has been limited. Money granted through the MEF for the development and staging of the One Movement for Music (OMFM) event, which was first staged in 2009 following the cancellation of the In The City AAA event, was initially slated to fund an event to take place in Perth in 2007. Instead, it was staged two years later and OMFM would subsequently be cancelled after only two years. These two MEF-funded events were trade fairs, much like the CMJ Music Marathon and SXSW which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter five (see: Ballico, 2012).

WAM has also supported the functioning of Perth’s local music industry and its attempts to connect beyond the state. As discussed in the Contextualisation chapter, the activities of WAM, along with its growth, illustrate the degree to which the Perth music industry has developed, and become more integrated within the national and international industries. Events such as the WA Music Business Conference, WAMI Awards, WA Song of the Year, WAM Hall of Fame and WAM’s efforts in representing Perth music at international trade fairs such as CMJ and SXSW all encourage Perth music activity locally, and the attempts of musicians and industry workers to connect nationally and internationally.

Representation at CMJ and SXSW are examined in greater detail in Chapter five, in a discussion regarding the building of international audiences for Perth music. The remainder of the discussion here focuses on WAM’s positioning within Perth’s local music industry and the development of the organisation between 1998 – 2009.
The key growth at WAM occurred from 2001 onwards. This growth is evidence of a commitment to funding contemporary music funding on the part of the WA State Government. Having subsisted on project-based funding, Bodlovich (pers. comm.) explains that once WAM were granted funding on a triennial basis the organisation was able to undertake more forward planning, and employed staff to support the organisation and the ongoing staging of events and projects. As a result, WAM has continued building its status within the local music industry and has gained a reputation for representing Perth music nationally and internationally. Further, through its continued engagement in national and international contexts, WAM is now recognised as an industry peak body. As Bodlovich (pers. comm.) explains:

I think that the organisation has a really strong, a really strong brand and an incredibly strong reputation for being one of the best organisations of its kind that’s around [...] it’s really a perspective that you get on the east coast and even internationally.

Further, and as is the case with RTRfm, a number of interviewees have been involved with WAM on a volunteer or employed basis. As such, WAM performs an additional role in being a way in which musicians and industry members can develop skills and share their knowledge of the music industry. Additionally, musicians perform at WAM events such as the WAMI Music Festival, and are recognised at the WAMI Awards and Song of the Year Competition. Industry members present to the WA Music Business Conference. Engagement with WAM and its associated events further strengthens the organisation’s position in local music, and validates its continued functioning. Time and time again, the growth of WAM was cited by interviewees as being one of the most significant changes in the local scene occurring between the years 1998 – 2009.

Despite WAM being developed as an organisation locally, and building a reputation nationally and internationally, there are still a range of people who hold negative perceptions about its role. While WAM is recognised as providing support to local music, questions are sometimes asked about the focus of such support. For example, in discussing the programming of the WAMI Festival, which is often heavy on indie pop/rock acts, Bodlovich (pers. comm.) says:
That’s the thing that gets thrown at us. And I think that that’s probably one of our biggest challenges at the moment is that genre sort of… lack of genre diversity if you like. We call for submissions, and we call for them as broadly as we can […] If you look at the submission form, I think we specify nine pretty broad, sort of, genre groups. Which are sort of you know, there’s rock and there’s heavy and there’s jazz and there’s world/folk and there’s country and there’s sort of roots and hip hop/ RnB and funk and all those sorts of things. What we find is the vast majority of the submissions that we get are in that sort of indie rock kind of genre […] I mean it’s an issue that our Board is becoming quite vocal about […] We’re sort of in a situation where we don’t want that perception to be there. We don’t view ourselves as being you know, particularly aligned to a certain genre or anything of the sort.

The challenges experienced by WAM in trying to support a wide range of genres are symptomatic of the business of music production and dissemination. In the same way that musicians and industry members experience differing levels of success and recognition, so too do different genres of music and associated scenes. It is not that other genres of music are not represented in Perth, as touched upon the Limitations discussion in the introductory chapter, it is perhaps that those in the indie pop/rock genre seek such opportunities out, and feel more supported when doing so due to the alignment of this music within a broader, more mainstream, culture.

As addressed in greater detail later in this chapter, within a discussion about the benefits and limitations of working in Perth, the high concentration of workers in the music scene, along with the range of roles held and limited performance spaces, results in the need to manage conflicts of interests and negative perceptions about the way the industry functions. One critical area which is yet to be considered, however, are the local and localised music audiences.

**Local (and localised) music audiences**

The audience contribution to the production of local music is always critical. As Johansson and Bell (2009, pp. 221 - 223) explain, audiences are key to the functioning of local music scenes:

A local *audience* exists in a dialectic relationship with local bands. A sophisticated audience creates fertile grounds for new musical expressions as well as impulses from the outside world via artists that are likely to schedule concerts there (emphasis in original).
This dialectic relationship includes audiences who specifically wish to connect with local music, as well as consume ancillary media products, such as the radio and street press discussed above. Even, audiences who are fans of national and international music are important in integrating Perth within the national and international live music sectors.

Local audiences are also important for the success of local industry workers, particularly where they are developing products for local consumption. This is because, taking music festivals as an example, these events will be consumed by local audiences, with the local market absolutely critical to their viability. Further, bringing events to the west, and developing a sustainable local scene requires local support to be able to cover the costs and generate a profit. The entrepreneurialistic attitude of industry workers underwrites these large events which are made even more risky by Perth’s isolation and enables the building of better connections with the east coast. Perth is an inescapable influence on the functioning of the music industry and this in turn, influences the music created.

**Perth as a place of musical inspiration**

Examining the connections between music and place inevitably raises the question of place-based musical inspiration. While the purpose of this research is not to examine musical expression in relation to sonic structure, form and sound, it is still worth noting the attitudes toward Perth as a site of musical inspiration. This is because these attitudes bring to light broader points of view toward cultural isolation (or lack thereof) and the role of community which exists within and between this group of musicians.

Few musicians viewed Perth as a city which conferred upon them the distinct advantage of being creatively inspired. Even when discussing this with lyricists and singer-songwriters, it seems it was the groups of musicians they found themselves creating with, or personal experiences they found themselves writing about, that were more influential than Perth’s environment and landscape. While creative processes are intrinsically and undeniably influenced by living in Perth, musicians often questioned whether or not this would be any different had they grown up elsewhere.
For example, as Jae Laffer (pers. comm.) lyricist for the band The Panics, explains regarding his lyrical style and the influence of Perth on his lyrics:

I was very in awe of great storytellers. The great Australian type story tellers, people like Paul Kelly and David McComb [who is] from Perth, and these kind of guys and I realised that was more of the path I wanted to go down [...] as soon as I started being inspired like that I started you know, taking a lot more of my environment in around me [...] I was [then] being far more descriptive and I found the environment of WA and Perth and the whole place was very inspiring. I don’t know how I would have interpreted my world if I’d lived in you know, Queensland or New South Wales somewhere, but I found it was very hard to judge when Perth is your whole world but at the time it was very much, you know, became a great backdrop for you know, all the stories and subjects in our songs.

At the same time, however, musicians such as Aravena & Burford (pers. comm.) question the role of Perth in musical inspiration explaining that, for them, it is more about the group of musicians they work with:

Burford: Well it has to, it has to be, it’s just, it’s environmental. Like, but, what does that actually mean? I don’t know like, cause it’s sunny? [...]  
Aravena: There’s beaches?  
Burford: There’s beaches?  
Aravena: We’re far away? Nah.  
Burford: It’s a more laid back lifestyle? [...]  
Aravena: The ocean?  
Burford: Who knows? I think that was far more relevant probably a few years ago, like once you know I kind of, well me and Rod both found our niche in a group of people back then, the Sleepies, Eskies. As much as people think Sleepy Jackson and Eskimo Joe for instance are worlds apart musically, they’re not actually, they’re both just striving to write really good songs and that’s what it came down to and there was a culture developing in Perth that’s kind of waned a little bit in - from my point of view - that everyone was striving to write really good songs - really good pop songs - and that was really fashionable for a certain period of time and then, naturally the people that kind of came after us and the bands that came were sort of I guess, kind of reactionary, whether it’s intentional or not, and then we had like Perth gave birth to this hell psychedelic blues movement and then, roots and stuff is kind of taking hold again.  
Aravena: It’s more, it’s more about sound and vibe and look than it is about the science of writing a song.  
Burford: Yeah. But, that’s where if, and this could have happened, I guess it could happen anywhere in the world, I don’t think it’s necessarily a symptom like of living in Perth it’s just because the, kind of musical culture that we came from was geared to do a certain thing - and we all wanted to do a certain thing. That was definitely influential.
Similarly, Ryan (pers. comm.) says:

There’s a Perth sound, like amongst my friends [...] Yeah, like the scales of vocal melodies that are shared between [us] the kind of vocal melodies that we all sing, our, they’re all off the same tree.

Reflecting on this notion of a ‘Perth sound’ Kerimnofska (pers. comm.) says:

Yeah, definitely. There was definitely a pop community in Perth, so ... I’m possibly one of the people responsible for Perth’s pop tag. I don’t know if it still has that tag but, just when Jebediah and Ammonia and Turnstyle and all these other pop bands that sort of came and went.... Yeah, I mean we never really wanted to be a band like Jebediah but we definitely felt like we were in a bit of competition with bands like that as far as wanting [to] write better songs. Not that we wanted to be massive but, that we wanted to write better songs.

Further explaining the interconnectedness of groups of bands in Perth, the members of The Fergusons (Beadon et al, pers. comm.) had this exchange:

Nistelberger: The people that go to watch bands are the people that are watching the bands that are going to watch other bands. So it kind of just works out [of] that.
Beadon: My biggest influences in those late 1990s, were all Perth bands. It was Anodine, Nistelberger: I loved Turnstyle.
We, I just thought they were like.
Joyce: You get a bill with Turnstyle, Anodine and Red Jez and you’re just like ‘yes!’
Nistelberger: Especially if Mach Pelican were on it. Was amazing.

Broadly speaking, lyricists often spoke of their lyrics as being inspired by their personal experiences of living in Perth. As Bull (pers. comm.) says:

It’s a personal experience, it’s not like ‘here’s my anthem to Perth’. I did do that once and it went badly. I write about personal stuff and I’ve never written about my life in other places other than Perth but, it is very personal.
Echoing a similar sentiment, McLaughlin (pers. comm.) says, “[Our songs are] all kind of about Perth, all [of] our experiences in Perth and our experiences with people that we engage with day-to-day in Perth.”

While there were many who questioned the connection between Perth as a site of musical inspiration and band lyrics some groups, such as Eskimo Joe, felt a strong connection. When asked about this, the band mates (MacLeod et al, pers. comm.) had the following exchange in which they also mention comments made by external players regarding the idea of an Australian sound:

Temperley: Yeah definitely.  
MacLeod: Lyrically yeah. Kav writes a lot about home.  
Temperley: Yeah and about the ocean and there’s definitely something magical about, that kind of harbour ocean situation I think. But, I like, I refuse to believe that you can’t be influenced by the land as well. Like I definitely think there is a spirit and an energy that comes from the land wherever you are and you can hear that in any type of music from any part of the world and I think that you get it here as well.  
Quartermain: People comment, [I] was just saying the other day in another interview people like, when we go overseas, and overseas people hear our music, they’re like ‘oh this sounds so Australian’ and we’re like ‘really?’

In comparison, Kevin Mitchell of the band Jebediah and solo outfit Bob Evans says that his lyrics and music style are more influenced by the music he listens to than where he is living. At the same time, however, Perth is viewed as providing a unique advantage for musicians, as discussed in greater detail in the following section. Reflecting on this, Mitchell comments (pers. comm.):

My lyrics and musical style have always been most influenced by the music I have been listening to at the time and that has generally been made by people who come from other parts of the world. The one thing I will say though is that being able to develop musically and also on stage whilst living in Perth did have an influence because there was no national media around to critique you as you went along. If Rolling Stone had have seen any of Jebediah’s or Bob Evan’s first few shows I probably would have been finished before anything happened!

While opinion is divided regarding whether or not Perth is critical to the inspiration of music, it is interesting to note its influence on the creative processes which take place in the west.
Creative processes within Perth’s music industry and scene

Creative processes undoubtedly reflect a musician being based in Perth. All musician interviewees spoke about the benefits of Perth in relation both to its distance, and its isolation, from the east coast music industry players. Being able to develop their music without constant industry interference is a particular creative benefit. Further, the critical mass of energy concentrated within Perth’s creation, production and performance sites benefit musicians in leading to collaborations and mutually-advantageous skill-development and the generation of new sounds.

For example, in recalling the informal nature in which he worked with musicians, including those in other bands, and how this informed the recording of two EPs, Turnston (pers. comm.) explains:

We recorded the first EP in a shed in Fremantle [...] We did it in a tin shed and over about a week and a half and I mean that’s what you do. You write songs and then you record them and get them out... and it was very, very quick and it was very, very easy, and a lot of fun because we were basically in a tin shed and it was [out] the back of Rod’s house [...] Kav was living there with Rod [...] so there was lots of gear there all the time and all the Eskies stuff was stuffed in the corner, and a lot of Sleepy Jackson stuff [...] it felt like it was in the middle of something. It was lots of excitement and stuff going on. It wasn’t everybody had to go somewhere to do something, you went to a house and everyone was living there so there was like a centre in Fremantle and a centre in North Perth and you’d sort of go between the two of them and the second EP was recorded in that house in North Perth. So it was pretty laid back, very laid back really.

Many participating musicians credit these informal networks with supporting their ability to create and perform music locally. The ease with which musicians involve themselves in local music activity, connect with other bands, and work away from the spotlight of the east coast are cited as particularly influencing the music created. As Sibbes (pers. comm.) explains, the people with whom one creates influence the resulting music more than the place itself:

I think it’s definitely influenced by...the people that are around us. But, I’m not sure whether if we were in another city we would’ve found a similar group of people kind of thing [...] It’s probably a lot more to do with the people that are around than rather the location. But, then I don’t know whether if we were in another location those people would be there.
Being based in Perth influences the way in which musicians go about their creative practice, and this also includes the impact of the distance from Perth to the east. This distance, which artists construct as permitting them freedom to develop their sound and performance skills away from the east coast gatekeepers’ prying eyes, helps musicians create music that sounds fresh and new. For example, as MacLeod (MacLeod et al, pers. comm.) explains:

We appreciate the isolation these days because you’re just free to create without anyone looking over your shoulder or checking up on you or imposing any sort of hand in what you do. We’ve been pretty lucky that our record companies have always been, you know, quite generous with the creative freedom they give us and yeah, I think being that far away definitely helps because if we lived in Melbourne or Sydney they’d always been someone that was like ‘oh I was just driving by’ or they’d stop in and see how you guys were going.

Having been sent to the States to record their debut album, End of Fashion appreciated being able to record a subsequent album at home:

Burford: We went all the way to America to record our first album and spent all of this money and, you know, it got, it did us okay [...] the end didn’t justify the means, it really didn’t, so I just think we were pretty confident that we could make an album of similar quality, if not better.
Aravena: Well a different record.
Burford: At home. And we were going for something completely different with that second record.
Aravena: We were going for a different record. We were going with a different sound because with every record you want to try to you know, improve on something and make it - your goals change and that kind of stuff. Like we wanted to have a bit more, you know, of a, in some ways a rawer sound but, in other ways more expansive. It felt like, the first record was tight and controlled. This one was a bit more broader and slightly messier [in its sound]. So we’re just going for that. And the record company didn’t disagree. I mean they talked about producers, like overseas producers and stuff like that but, you know, we convinced them that we had a good thing with Magoo and Andy [Lawson]. So you know, if they totally disagree I think they’re the ones paying it, so they would go ‘no’. So they had confidence in our decisions as well.

Musicians appreciate the opportunity to be able to work and create within Perth, and recognise the role of networks between players in the creative processes within this scene. Such influences are considered a benefit by musicians as well as the distance from the east coast, as discussed below.
Limitations and benefits of working in and from Perth.

As discussed above and in the Contextualisation chapter Perth’s isolation, and its core-peripheral relationship to the mainstream Australian music and media industries, provides an interesting backdrop to examining the success of Perth music within the Australian market. In this context, musicians and industry members find themselves experiencing a variety of limits and benefits as a result of being based in Perth.

For example, due to the level of professional concentration within the creative environment, musicians have to find a balance between developing a local audience and not over gig. This is a challenge that all artists will come up against at some point in their careers, whether it is within a local or national market. For Perth musicians, however, a high concentration of venues and, consequently, of audiences means that musicians often start to look beyond the state for new markets. In doing this, musicians find themselves facing the additional hurdle of the state’s geographical isolation.

As discussed in the Contextualisation chapter, Perth’s geographical location provides a unique yet challenging environment in which to be inspired to create music and go about developing a career. The city’s isolation results in Perth’s musicians having to invest higher amounts of time and money to connect with new markets. As a result, musicians recognise the importance of supporting one another in audience development, as is discussed later in this chapter within the context of an examination of attitudes toward promoting local music. Due to a lack of day-to-day interaction between Perth musicians and the east coast based music scenes, however, acts can display a lack of perspective when making attempts to engage with larger markets. As former band manager Scott Adam (pers. comm.) says:

They really need to move [away from Perth] into something. I mean there’s the [acts] that go before their time and it doesn’t work out that well for them. There’s the ones that get lured over [east] by a contract - that tends to happen still [...] I suppose once the house is built and you move into it over east, that’s when it’s a good time because you can turn what is essentially a hobby in Perth or a lot of motivated and wellbeing bands, you know, they’ve got goals, so they want to achieve [them] and they want to turn the hobby into a career. It’s
incredibly difficult [to do that] in Perth, whereas over east it’s like, well it’s a lot more economically feasible to actually make money from touring and play shows and so on - [the] population’s greater, distances are shorter, you know, that sort of thing [...] Something over there has to exist for them. Like they’ve got to be getting radio airplay, they’ve got to have CDs in the shops.

Linking back at the level of concentration evident within Perth’s music industry and associated scene, this not only causes hurdles for musicians, but also for industry members. This is particularly the case when industry workers hold more than one role at a time. This level of concentration, resulting from the number of workers and the number of roles that need to be filled, can result in a person with more than one role having actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Trying to manage these conflicts of interest has various consequences for the industry member involved and the people they work with. These consequences range from influencing artists to change labels, to industry members who forgo taking on additional roles, or who leave one role in order to concentrate on another.

For example, Steph Edwardes is the former label manager for Good Cop Bad Cop (GCBC) and she currently manages several bands signed to that label, including Sugar Army. Explaining how she tries to manage conflicts of interest, Edwardes (pers. comm.) says:

Initially [in GCBC] I was just meant to be in a behind the scenes role due to being a manager for a couple of the acts as well, and not wanting any conflicts of interest to occur... which always were going to occur, but trying to minimise them. But it didn’t work out that way, and I pretty much ran the thing.

Despite trying to minimise these perceived conflicts of interest, and Steph having taken on a more prominent role within the label than originally anticipated, when the time came for Sugar Army to start work on their debut album, she experienced some difficulties. As Patrick McLaughlin (pers. comm.), the band’s lead singer recalls:

We were having all these interesting conversations where Steph was like ‘from a band perspective you need to do this but, from my perspective I wanna do this’ and it just got a little weird and, cause she had two interests in it.
In order to manage the conflict of interest arising as a result of being both a label manager and band manager, Edwardes (pers. comm.) explains that she “tried to make sure everything she did was very open and understood by all parties”. When the band decided to leave GCBC, it resulted in a major conflict between the label and the band’s distributor, who decided to cut ties with GCBC. As Edwardes (pers. comm.) remembers:

As the manager of that band, I had to look out for their best interests above all even at the detriment of the future of the label and the relationship with our distributor, who GCBC is no longer affiliated with.

In this case the conflict of interest between having a band manager who is also part of the label management was minimised by Sugar Army changing record labels. In other cases, industry members will avoid finding themselves in similar situations by refusing to take on additional roles in local music. For example, and as discussed in Chapter three, Simon Collins is the music editor at The West Australian, WA’s only state-wide daily newspaper. When asked about any further involvement in local music outside of his journalist role, Collins (pers. comm.) says:

I haven’t actually felt the need to step over that barrier and become a player or manage a band... It would be impossible for me to do that... I couldn’t manage a band because I’d actually be holding them back because it would be a massive conflict of interest to do a story on them in The West...There’s a lot of people that do a bit of everything you know, that may manage bands and write about bands - and that’s interesting from my point of view because the editors - myself and the editors of the other publications around town - have got to make sure they’re aware of where those conflicts lie and how to avoid them.

While Collins forgoes holding multiple roles in Perth’s music industry, in other instances people also have to leave certain roles to take on others as a result of trying to avoid conflicts of interest. One example is Luke Rinaldi, a venue booker. He’s also a band manager, and the Chair of the WA Contemporary Music Panel, which makes decisions – on behalf of the Department of Culture and the Arts – regarding applications for funding via the Contemporary Music Program. Blackbird Studios is run by Dave Parkin and is one of the busiest studios in Perth, with many bands recording there with the assistance of WA Contemporary Music Grants Program [CMGP] funding. Rinaldi (pers. comm.) explains that as the Chair of the peer assessment he essentially just
convenes the meetings but may not be able to contribute any more to certain specific funding applications since if they are successful he will be taking on the booking for Blackbird Studios:

I’m not sort of really meant to comment on too much which also takes away a lot of any kind of conflict, guilt, anything like that. It’s more about just keeping the meeting in order. If it comes down to a big tiebreaker or something like that then I’ll probably weigh in, or if it’s something that it’s my area of expertise compared to everyone else then I’ll probably go ‘alright, here’s what I think of this one’. But I don’t know if I’ll be able to be Chair for too much longer just because I’ll soon [be] taking over, or booking Parko’s Blackbird Studios.

Beyond the conflicts of interest which inherently arise when there is a high concentration of workers, some interviewees also express a dislike toward the interconnectedness of this local industry and, despite working in industry roles, discuss not feeling a part of the industry.

For example, when reflecting on the influence of the isolation of the city from the core cities of Sydney and Melbourne, Heath Brady (pers. comm.) says:

There was a pretty intense kind of cultural wasteland thing going on for a while. It’s always been fairly strong musically, but certainly not as strong as most people in Perth keep telling each other and I think that isolation is a blessing and a curse sometimes. Like it’s been really good for bands to be able to be a little bit more unique than bands would normally be on the east coast kind of thing ‘cause you’re a little bit removed from what’s kind of going on [...] but, it also leads to nepotism and insular mindsets.

The interconnectedness of the local scene and the high importance placed on social networks can result in some industry workers feeling as though they are not connected, or perhaps are not a part of this industry. For example, when discussing this, the members of Love Is My Velocity (Giles et al, pers. comm.) had this exchange:

Lenanton: I don’t know if I really even feel like I’m part of the music industry in a way. And like I think that’s dictated in a way by the structure of WAM and like their [perceived] kind of claiming to be representative of you know, WA music as a whole. But, then like we’re not considered industry - like we’re not on their voting email list despite like having been nominated for like Best Label or whatever [at the WAMI Awards] and programming and doing the Festival, well elements of the Festival for the past two years. Like we’re just not on that industry list so [...]
McLean: I guess it’s probably maybe it is a little bit more than that. Cause we don’t consider ourselves maybe? [...] Whereas I think other people do.

Giles: Yeah, I don’t think we do. But also with WAM, I don’t really think WAM controls [the local music industry].

Lenanton: But you know what I mean [...] McLean: I guess [networking is] not something we really had a priority on.

Giles: No, no.

McLean: For any of us.

Giles: And not very much aptitude with either.

Lenanton: Yeah. I guess, I think of the industry as this group of middle aged dudes you know.

Giles: With big bellies.

Lenanton: And you know they, yeah, they don’t really include us.

McLean: Yeah.

Lenanton: And we’re not included in that and I like have no real desire to like hang out and have a beer with them.

Giles: Yeah.

Lenanton: Or anything like that. Like, I’m pretty happy being what we are.

McLean: Yeah.

Giles: And then like engaging with the, with the few members of the industry who we do kind of like on a personal level.

The purpose of including this exchange is to illustrate the ways in which industry workers, and even musicians, define their membership to the local scene. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter five regarding the loss of desire and passion for music, the crux on which local music scene engagement hinges is attendance at live shows.

While the high concentration of industry workers and roles can cause difficulties, as discussed above, there are some benefits to this level of concentration and the isolation of the city. These benefits include: an ease with which activities can take place; a strong sense of community; and a strong entrepreneurial ethic.

The high concentration of industry workers and associated roles, leads to an ease with which musicians and industry workers can get activities happening. This is because who is to be contacted (venue booker, producer, music journalist and so on) is easily found and accessed. Another result of this high concentration is the strong community mindset present amongst the interviewees. This exists through an understanding that it is in their collective that local music and associated activities...
can be nurtured and supported. Further, and as a result of the community attitude coupled with the city’s isolation, a strong entrepreneurial ethic in developing events and resources locally and in reaching new audiences beyond the state. Given the significance of this and the community mindset, they are examined in greater detail later in this chapter.

Innovation and entrepreneurship are evident in the attitudes and behaviours of live music promoters, particularly those who tour national and international acts to the state. The promoters included in this research - Chitty, Halley, Knight and Sloan - all discuss how they established their businesses as a result of recognising a gap in the live music market, and deciding to respond to that gap from a Perth base instead of relying on external players to do so. As Sloan (pers. comm.) points out, explaining his business:

> 95% of the industry here is franchised from the east coast. So it’s people working for other people. So, look at my business, I’m doing stuff I’m in charge of the Australian territory and New Zealand. So, when I’m offering Arcade Fire or Bon Iver or Nick Cave or Death Cab For Cutie, all reasonable scale international bands, when I’m offering them out to other people, I’m doing it with authority, and I didn’t used to and I guess that’s what I’m sort of, well I get the most pride out of what I’ve done, is move from being a sort of a minion of an east coast person who’s here to help out and I still do that sort of work but, I’m doing it with much more authority because I’m, the same person dealing with me knows I also run a festival myself and look after Nick Cave and do all these other things that they, is probably bigger than the things they do is some ways. So, it’s sort of, being in control of it, I’ve always had this thing about WA people, it’s like why I started Rock-It.

As Sloan explains above, connecting with eastern states peers is an important part of developing business ventures, particularly with a business focused on the live music sector. At the same time, through being proactive, these promoters businesses sit comfortably within the national industry and, in the case of Sloan, the international one.

More broadly, however, due to the distance between Perth and the east coast, a strong work ethic exists locally and in connecting with the larger national industry. For example, despite the hurdles associated with connecting with the east coast for example, musician interviewees recognised that overcoming these hurdles was achievable, and adopted their approaches accordingly. Such
approaches included taking other acts on the road and being very focused when touring east. For example, as Temperley (MacLeod et al, pers. comm.) says:

> It conditions you to travel longer hours and you know, [you] worked harder to be away. Like the first couple of tours we did were ten week tours because we couldn’t afford to go back home so, we just went up and down the east coast and people would generally go home in those times [...] It would be a definite make or break for any kind of band and for us we, we survived it. So, so as far as advantages go, I think you become really conditioned on travelling, so when you start hitting Europe and overseas you just kind of like, the travel, the distance and everything, you’re kind of a bit more used to [it].

Further, when examining the development of industry resources locally, this has come through an understanding that the resource is needed and that they are more than capable to develop it locally and not rely on external players. For example, discussing the diversity of roles he has taken on in local music Ryan (pers. comm.) says:

> It's my responsibility as a general rule, my radio show [on RTRfm], bookings, doing my mail out, they're all roles that must be carried out in any city, no matter how isolated or whatnot, and they should be carried out by people who are capable of them [...] It must be done well. So that’s what drives me.

The isolation of Perth and the positioning of its music industry as being on the periphery of national activity has spurred its growth and development. Further, this distance is viewed as giving industry workers an advantage when engaging with the national industry due to a different perspective. For example, as Sloan (pers. comm.) says, “I feel like my perspective on Australia is assisted by living in Perth because I’m not tied up in the industry maelstrom if you like, or the, the fizz of it all.” Sloan says this provides him with an advantage when it comes to booking national tours for Australian and international artists.

Driven by being a fan of local music, and the social networks that exist within the local scene, industry workers and musicians alike develop a strong ethic toward being entrepreneurial and supportive of local music activity. These ideas are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter within an examination of the attitudes toward supporting local music.
In the same way working in and from Perth develops a work ethic and attitude toward overcoming hurdles, while also providing the advantage of a differing perspective, as well as developing local resources and supporting local music, the creative processes are also influenced by being based in the west.

**Perth’s music industry as a community of practice, and the role of social networks and social capital**

The isolation of Perth, coupled with the positioning of music industry and scene as being on the periphery of national activity, has resulted in the development of a largely self-sustaining local industry in which a unique community and community of practice exist. This is particularly evident in the fact that many musicians perform across several bands, and industry workers often hold several roles concurrently on different projects. The music community in Perth can also be constructed as a ‘community of practice’ since members of this community develop and share a repertoire of resources through participating in their practice; working and performing in the music industry.

In discussing the meaning of the word ‘community’, Cohen (1995, p.12) suggests there are two related aspects. First, community members have something in common and second, what they have in common distinguishes them from other communities. The construction of a community is imagined, and communities are “distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuiness [sic], but by the style in which they are imagined” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6). As communities are imagined, their members construct their boundaries, in turn creating a consciousness of a community which is “encapsulated in [the] perception of its boundaries” (1995, p. 13). These boundaries are formed through community members interacting with one another (1995, p. 13).

Through their interactions, the members of the Perth music industry – both musicians and those who work in industry roles – have created their own community. The members of this community identify with their community through their interactions in creating, developing and promoting music in and from Perth. The notion of interaction extends into the idea of a community of practice. As Wenger (2006, 1) explains the situation, a community functions as a community of
practice when its members “engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavour”. Wenger argues that three key aspects apply in this instance, being a: domain; community; and a practice.

The domain is, broadly speaking, the local music industry. Within this domain there are sub domains such as: the live music domain; music creation domain; music production and recording domain; and music publicity domain. Essentially, domains can be viewed as being specific to certain roles and functions of the music industry and, while they may exist somewhat separately, there are intersections between them. The intersections exist when the same musicians or industry workers work in different domains, thereby linking them.

The practice within this specific community of practice is working and performing in the local music industry. As with the domain, there is more than one practice in place in the music industry. These practices are linked to the domains through the activities and practices involved in touring; live music venue and festival booking; creating, recording and producing music; and through promoting music to audiences through music media outlets.

It is within these domains and through these practices that a shared repertoire of resources is developed. Such resources include: audiences; live music venues; recording studios; and music media outlets. Additionally, through participating in domains, undertaking practice, and engaging in shared repertoires of resources, the members of Perth’s community of practice learn from and help each other. Importantly, daily interaction is not required. Even though members only engage with one another at certain times, when they do engage with the community it is through participating in the domain, undertaking the practice, and developing their repertoire of shared resources. This chart illustrates the domains, practices and resource-development which occur within Perth’s local indie pop/rock music community:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Shared repertoire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live music industry</td>
<td>Venue, tour and music festival promoting/booking</td>
<td>Audiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performing live</td>
<td>Venues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music creation</td>
<td>Creating music: jamming, rehearsing and demo-ing.</td>
<td>Recording studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music production and recording</td>
<td>Recording/producing songs (subsequent EPs/albums)</td>
<td>Recording studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music publicity</td>
<td>Music PR, publicity/ interviews</td>
<td>Music media outlets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Music consumption</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: The manifestation of the community of practice in Perth’s indie pop/rock scene.

The local music industry has developed through industry workers’ participation in the local music community and the allied community of practice. Further, community members assist other musicians to reach new audiences beyond the city, and the critical mass of so many industry workers collaborating and working together also increases the likelihood that the national music and related media industries will pay attention to the west.

Social networks are critical to the way in which Perth’s music industry operates. The effectiveness of these networks is indicated in the number of community members who ‘move up’ in the local scene, and the resources they use and share at any given time. This mutual support is partly a result of the importance assigned to the opinions and experiences of others. The more established and successful industry workers are the more they are constructed as demonstrating their credentials to offer guidance in their creative and business pursuits. The more the members of Perth’s industry become key players nationally and internationally, the more they are looked up to as an example of how to function within the industry, and how to connect with audiences and industry players beyond the state. This dynamic of credentialing is further buoyed by the prevalent attitude held by industry workers in Perth that it is through their collective endeavours that the industry continues to function, and careers develop. Participants’ attitudes towards supporting Perth’s music activity are explored later in this chapter, while Chapter five includes an examination of the ways in which careers have, and have not, developed.
To link back to the gatekeeping and cultural production discussion presented in Chapter three, social networks enable cultural producers, as well as selected gatekeepers, to undertake their roles in the music industry through the provision of, and access to, music industry resources. The chart below illustrates these roles and their associated resources, while also referring back to the earlier discussion in Chapter two: Contextualisation, regarding creative capital:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role/ Function</th>
<th>Resources accessed</th>
<th>Resources provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Record label management/ A and R (Artist and Repertoire)</td>
<td>*Creative talent; Music business knowledge; Record label infrastructure/ resources</td>
<td>Finances/ production support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist management</td>
<td>Record label infrastructure/ resources</td>
<td>*Guidance; Music business knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government funding administration</td>
<td>Government allocated funding</td>
<td>Finances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music journalism</td>
<td>*Creative talent</td>
<td>Media coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio programming</td>
<td>Media equipment; Recordings</td>
<td>Media coverage/ music promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue booking</td>
<td>Live music venues; * Live music knowledge and expertise</td>
<td>Live music venue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival/ tour promotion</td>
<td>Festival/ large scale venue facilities</td>
<td>Festival/ touring experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music producer</td>
<td>Musical equipment; Recording spaces</td>
<td>Record studios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music creation</td>
<td>Finances; Musical equipment; Recording studios; Post-production facilities; * Creative talent</td>
<td>*Creative expertise and ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music performance</td>
<td>Live music venues; Musical equipment</td>
<td>*Performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Italicised resources form part of creative capital, as opposed to social capital.

Figure 7: The manifestation of the social networks in Perth’s indie/pop scene.

As the chart above illustrates, members of these social networks both contribute to the local music industry, and access resources generated within it through performance, recordings etc. These
activities are embedded in social structures and it is the social aspect of the structure that inform which resources will be accessed, and by whom.

For example, when performing live, musicians share the resources of their creative talent and performance skills. In doing this, they access resources held by the local industry as a whole including: the live music venue; the musical equipment with which they perform; and the talents of other bands they perform alongside. Performing live requires musicians to make decisions in all these areas, with this decision-making process also influenced by decisions made by other members of the social network, as well as by trends in local music consumption.

Musicians spoke of venues within which they watch local bands perform, and where they perform themselves. Often these were the same venues in each case. Memorable local performances inspired musicians to create their own music with the goal of performing at the same venues in which they had experienced career-developing shows. For example, many musician interviewees spoke of attending live shows at the Grosvenor Hotel. The venue hosted live music for around 20 years, with all ages’ gigs an important part of the mix during the 1990s. Performing at the Grosvenor became a modest and attainable goal to which many musicians aspired, with several industry workers also working at the venue in differing capacities.

Reprising the earlier discussion regarding communities of practice and social networks facilitate both the functioning of the local music industry and the continued development of this community. In turn, the community supports the milieu within which the social networks operate.

Musicians often spoke of how they learned from others the skills and competencies required to participate in Perth’s music industry. Such participation includes: how to undertake tours; what musical equipment to use; and which local producers to work with and why. In sharing this information and assigning it weight, community members consider the credentials of the person offering the suggestion, and such credentials are reinforced, or weakened, according to the results obtained. In turn, such experiences support the functioning of particular domains within the COP. The social credentials of industry workers influence the perceptions of others, and are in turn
influenced by them. The more successful and experienced a member of the social network and COP is, be that a musician or industry worker, the more likely others are to look to them for advice.

In one example Mark Cruickshank, bassist for Red Jezebel, recalls (pers. comm.) how Jebediah bassist Vanessa Thornton influenced his choice of musical equipment:

[She’s] been a huge influence on me. Like, she gave a set of strings, this is going back fuck, five years ago, and she’s like ‘try these’ [...] So Vanessa gave me these [strings] and I still use them to this day [...] I’d definitely say like yeah just learning about equipment and sharing ideas would have to have had an influence for sure.

As exemplified in Cruickshank’s experience, these learning networks and musicians’ attitudes toward both their community of practice and the importance of social networks impact upon the functioning of Perth’s local music industry, and influence members’ attitudes towards supporting local music.

**Attitudes toward supporting local music**

A positive and supportive attitude toward the local music industry, the competency of its members and the capacity of the music to engage audiences, beyond the state are all critical for the everyday operation of Perth’s indie pop/rock music scene. To this end, a willingness to support local music activity within the local market, while also supporting others in their endeavours to connect with new audiences, is highly valued by interviewees. Continued engagement with the local music industry is critical to its survival and sustains supports and encourages its development. This engagement extends beyond the audiences who consume the music, to the musicians and industry workers who work and perform in the industry, from taking on positions in addition to their own area of expertise because there is no one better qualified to do so, to supporting the consumption of local music products by attending live shows. This attitude extends beyond the belief of supporting a collective endeavour, however, to encompass the ideal of ‘giving back’ to the scene. More broadly, supporting local music within a mix of national and international focused music activity, such as when local bands tour live with international acts that may (or may not) come from
Perth, further legitimises the consumption of the local scene as it is held almost on a par with these broader music sectors. Because of this, those who achieved success and recognition beyond Perth, and particularly to the degree that it afforded them the opportunity to tour nationally, would often take local bands and local session musicians on the road with them.

As Vanessa Thornton (pers. comm.), bassist from Jebediah says, in the early days it was important to the band to take other local acts on their Australian tours:

We were really into the local scene and also, we just felt really lucky and really grateful that we were the band that had been picked up and [that the label] helped out with all our touring [...] If that hadn’t have happened we knew we would’ve been in the position of all the other bands in Perth [...] It costs so much to get everyone over east and you know, be on the road [for] however long. I think we just felt really grateful for everything that had happened to us [...] we just wanted to share it with all our mates.

Taking other local artists on national tours can help raise audience awareness of the local scene, and gives recognition to lower profile artists, but it does not guarantee widespread success or ongoing recognition. Where this support is of particular benefit, however, is through providing an opportunity to develop higher level performance skills, a solid work ethic and helping artists establish connections on the east coast. This is expanded upon in Chapter five, in a discussion about career development.

Bookers and promoters argue that it is important to support local musicians in performances at pubs and clubs, as well as facilitate their access to higher profile national and international touring opportunities in festivals and large scale Perth shows. In the case of booking pubs and clubs, the desire to support local activity was an important motivation, alongside recognition of the contribution such performances make to enriching and developing the local music scene. This support is provided even though it can entail financial sacrifices, and may not be economically sustainable from either the bands’, or the booker’s, or the venue’s perspective.
Promoters and bookers of live music venues often spoke of the financial risks and losses associated with supporting local original music. As part-owner and promoter of Mojos Bar, a longstanding live music venue located in Fremantle, Andrew Ryan (pers. comm.) explains:

> The venue feels like it’s contributing something but... it’s a completely two-way street... To a degree. Mojos could put DJs and cover bands [on] and do enormously better monetary wise but, I wouldn’t be involved.

Recognising the contribution local live music makes to the venue, and in turn, the venue makes to the culture of local music activity, Ryan (pers. comm.), goes on to explain:

> So I believe Mojo’s maintaining its original music... commitment [by] upholding my end of the bargain in being an owner and booker of that, what always, for some forty years of live original music being in that space.

Despite the fact that many people in Perth’s music industry have a strong desire to support local music activity, being able to do this is influenced by external factors such as ownership and management changes at the venues. For example, in the early 2000s, the Rosemount Hotel underwent a change in ownership, which also coincided with a change in management. Recalling the concerns he had about the venue continuing to support live music, Rinaldi (pers. comm.) says:

> It felt like almost the owners have brought in someone specifically that was not to do with bands, that wouldn’t be attached to the scene, wouldn’t have any kind of like hard feelings of just canning it all together and that’s certainly what I felt at first [...] and none of my ideas were getting listened to. They wanted to have free entry all the time and just have a residency and it was just like, oh it was painful, you know, and then it all sort of just worked out. They were like ‘oh yeah, it was going worse doing that so yeah, you were right, your ideas are fine’ and all of sudden it was just better and has just gone from strength to strength since then and they’ve just, they’re making money from functions, they’re making money from food, you know all those things that takes the pressure off the room inside, once the pressure gets taken off I don’t have to look like a beggar you know ‘oh please play at this room’. And then it takes the pressure off me whilst the room still gets more people in it. So it’s really good at the moment and feels like it’s there to stay and that manager has been really instrumental in that happening which has been bizarre because I don’t think he ever, probably hadn’t seen a band before you know.
Arguably, one of the most loved venues discussed by interviewees is the Grosvenor Hotel. The venue hosted original local live music for more than two decades before shifting focus to being a food and beverage establishment (which it still is today). Having experienced ongoing issues with noise complaints, the venue ceased hosting live music permanently following a change in management. Recalling the degree to which the venue had supported local music, Dave Cutbush (pers. comm.), who booked the venue for a period of time, says:

We were having seven nights of entertainment for quite a bit of that and the Grosvenor did pretty well in those days. We had problems with noise which is pretty well documented but, in terms of people in the pub, [we] did pretty well.

While the desire of venue managers to support local music is essential to local musicians having places to play and develop their audience, the venue also requires support from musicians and a positive reputation if it is to develop as a hub within the local industry. Savvy booking agents who know what works at particular venues help venues build audiences. As former venue booker, Steph Edwards (pers. comm.) says: “If you’re smart about the types of line-ups and really generating a community spirit then you really are pushing toward the greater good.”

While the venue bookers mentioned above all started working in venues that were already established, the Amplifier Bar provides an interesting example of the redevelopment of an existing space into a live music venue. The bar, which became Amplifier in the mid-1990s, had a previous history as a club before being rebranded as a centre for local music. Recalling this time, venue promoter Jeff Halley (pers. comm.) says:

A mate of mine, Dwayne Smith who plays with me in The Chevelles, one of my best buddies, we always had this dream about opening our own venue […] We started going out checking out venues and finding somewhere that we could maybe, you know, maybe latch onto, a little room somewhere. And looking at various places but the back of what was then The Globe Nightclub, was doing awful drum and bass type things. The worst ever. We went out one Saturday night to check it out. It was about 12 midnight, there was about two people in this room, this thumping, grating drum and bass, and straight away knew this was the room […] I had a relationship with the owner, had known him over the years and put the idea to him that wanted to start this kind of indie kind of you know, mecca. […] We struck up a deal with him, a terrible deal […] I think we were getting about $300 a week, to
run this club and, we completely started it, conceptualised it, Dwayne and I came up with the name ... which was Amplifier, we developed all the artwork through a graphic artist, we, everything, the way it runs, it still even runs to this day. You know, original bands early, DJ’s late, what sort of bands, just everything that we did and we managed it and everything. Opened the doors and thought ‘wow there’s gonna be lines going down the street’ and we had a full page in X-Press and ... didn't quite get the numbers immediately which we thought we were going to. But, yeah we hung in there and yeah.

In the same way that it takes time for musicians to develop a following and make connections within the local scene, venues also require time to develop a following and acquire a reputation as being a worthwhile place to perform in, and attend shows. Reflecting the cyclical nature of music production, venues have come and gone over the years, with key sites also experiencing shifts in attendance. Regarding Amplifier’s current reputation, Halley concedes that:

I don’t think Amplifier is at its high point, I think its glory days are gone... But...you know, it’s ... it depends on [what] your measurement [of] success is. If you’re talking about when it was packed, which you probably are, you know [...] after a couple of years things started to pick up you know. All the right things, kids were going there and it was kind of that period, I think about 18 months, since inception you know, probably six years from there were the best years of the club’s life.

Promoters of large scale concerts and music festivals similarly recognised their role in supporting local music at their respective events. While the majority of festivals programme national and international artists as ‘headliners’, promoters also include local artists in their line ups. Such support is motivated by wanting to give artists a ‘leg up’ in their careers through exposing artists to larger audiences larger than they are likely to have performed in front of in the past. Sloan (pers. comm.) explains that when he sees an act has been working hard, and developing a solid local following, he starts programming them in his festivals:

When they’ve worked hard and they’re starting to get some traction, I tend to try to then help build bridges between them and interstate and international bands and build their profile through the events because I think they’ve earned it. And I think the timing’s right.
As Knight (pers. comm.) explains, the Big Day Out festival has a dedicated local music stage at each of the cities where the festival is held. Even so, some acts may be programmed in another slot, on a genre-specific stage, due to being more high profile or better suiting other audiences:

Basically it comes down to, first of all whether we think [they] deserve a slot [...] We'll look at the styles of music and the styles of music on each stage before we make [a decision...] A lot of it comes down to warrant and a lot of it also comes down to style [...] We try and never have a band play twice [in a row] unless they've actually progressed in that year past just playing a local stage point where we might have a slot on a stage three or a stage four or a Boiler Room slot and slot them into that on merit [...] In general, it gets down to that and then it gets down to sort of like style of music and you know, what they've done.

In comparison, Chitty has varying degrees of input into what local artists will be performing at his festivals. As he explains (pers. comm.):

It's hard to put local acts on Southbound and West Coast cause there's so many international and national acts coming it doesn't really leave many spots for locals. But, we always reserve local spots and we just generally choose acts that we think are right to be on that year – that are ready and gaining some profile or you know, their song's on the radio at the time [...] With Laneway - as far as the local acts go - we suggest local acts to the national programmer of that event and work with them on what local acts we offer in WA.

Ensuring that local bands are programmed at these franchise and partner events, means that artists are supported through opportunities to develop links with the national and international live music touring industries, and also reach a broader audience at home. As Chitty (pers. comm.) explains:

They get to meet a lot of international and national musicians, and what we find out of that is quite a lot of them end up with tours [...] If a national or international act likes a local band they'll generally offer them to support them on a tour. And it [also] exposes the local act to a lot more people to what they normally would [be].

Working hand in hand with promoters and headline music events, the local media also supports the operation of the local music industry, and the promotion of local music. The West Australian, for example, offers local music coverage within a traditional news publication where the primary focus is to report on broader news and current affairs. As such, the music coverage needs to appeal to a broader audience. Arguably, many of the paper’s readers will not have developed a taste or
appreciation for local music, instead preferring to read about national or international artists. Additionally, local music audiences are more likely to expect the street presses to cover local music activity. As The West’s music editor Simon Collins (pers. comm.) explains, local music coverage is offered “as part of the mix” and is for the most part in competition with national and international music coverage:

There’s all different levels [of coverage]. There’s coverage from just a few lines in a column or a blurb or whatever to the full blown feature ...I think it’s a band by band decision generally speaking... We’ve always had columns that their primary focus is on local music...I don’t want to, you know we’re not a community notice board. ... A lot of people treat us like [that], ring up and want to get things in... They get kind of this confusion that we should be supporting them but it’s like, ‘well no, we’re here to sell newspapers’. But, I think that writing about vibrant and exciting local music sells newspapers. It deserves to be written about and brought to [our] readers’ attention. We’re not here to talk about every gig and every - some band’s four week residency - we don’t need to remind people every week that they’re still playing at this venue.

Within the context of considering The West’s broad readership, Collins (pers. comm.) explains that:

It’s not as sort of planned out as you might think. We do a lot of interviews because they’re worth it. You know, do a lot of interviews and [then] work out where it’s going to go later and sometimes things change. [Sometimes] our cover story gets knocked down to a smaller story or our smaller story gets knocked up to a bigger story because of something that happens or the interview was really great and the person that did the interview pushes for more space to tell the story or the pictures are great. And that happens a lot...Really great pictures can [also] elevate a story from being a, you know, a 500 word around to a cover story.

Further compounding the influence of these editorial decisions is the fact that The West is WA’s only state-wide daily newspaper. Collins (pers. comm.) explains:

I’m pretty much the first interview for the state which means I get some really great interviews... because if someone wants to sell tickets to a tour in WA they know the best way to get to music lovers and to have an impact is to get a story in The West.
One result in terms of local music journalism is that it is more difficult to get coverage in this publication than it is in the street presses. Due to their heavy focus upon supporting WA’s music scene, both Drum and X-Press dedicate a solid amount of editorial space to local bands. As Wilson (pers. comm.) explains, numerous factors are taken into consideration when deciding upon editorial coverage of local music activity, and local musicians are actively encouraged to contact Drum:

It just depends what’s happening, what bands have done, in terms of who we’re going to kind of cover. You know, with local bands I think a problem in Perth is that a lot of them just don’t try [to get coverage] and don’t care... [But it’s] not just in Perth [it happens] everywhere but you know, they’re really quite passive about it so, one of the things we try and do to encourage them [in order] to get editorial is that they need to help themselves. So they need to send us - we’ve got a section called Backline- where they need to send us information about shows that they’re doing and stuff.

Gordon (pers. comm.) similarly explains that numerous factors influence the editorial coverage of local music in X-Press. These range from the amount of noteworthy activity taking place to the calibre of local music being created and performed:

The concentrated editorial coverage [is] always [given] to original music and in terms of, well sometimes some bands are just more interesting than others. So there is always that, there is always that ‘it’ factor that some [bands] will just rise above [the others] and be ones that get written about. But also just in terms of, the more bands play the more their activity, the more they do things, the more there is to note what is going on with them... In many ways you know, the cream kind of rises to the top.

Singling out the magazine’s Rock Xtras section, which is focused on what is happening locally, including national and international tours, Gordon (pers. comm.) explains:

That’s kind of spread over two to three pages of ‘tid bits’ and mini-interviews and things like that. So it’s kind of like, if you get it in in time and there’s enough space [it’s in]. It’s not [an] advertising driven part [of the magazine].

When examining the attitude toward supporting local music at RTRfm, doing so is considered integral to the functioning of the station. As touched upon earlier in this chapter, RTRfm received
triennial funding in 2005 from the Department of Culture and the Arts to subsidise the cost associated with employing a local music producer at the station (Cutbush, pers. comm.). While the station had a long-standing association with the local music and arts communities, the development of this role allowed the station to place a greater focus on supporting local music. Explaining the increase in coverage resulting from the creation of this role, Cutbush (pers. comm.) says:

My role here [is] to facilitate more local music being played on RTR, more varieties of local music being played on RTR and more interviews happening on the station. So I increased the amount of interviews from quite a small amount to quite a large amount which happens now, and the local music quota - I’d set in place quota’s for different programs - and the local music percentage went from like 5-10% to like now it’s close to 20-25% so we play a lot more local music than we did five years ago.

Importantly, these quotas of local music coverage are not related to the stations licensing (although as expected a commitment such as this would be required to justify a funding allocation) but, reflect a commitment to supporting local music product. Broadly speaking there is a strong commitment from all musicians and industry workers to support local music product. While the ways in which support is provided it is ultimately about connecting music with audiences and supporting the development of nationally engaged careers from within Perth.

As explored in greater detail in Chapter five, engaging with the national music industry can be of benefit, and yet in some ways a hindrance, to the artists involved. It has helped some bands achieve a level of success and recognition which allowed them to build careers, albeit with differing levels of success. On the other hand, engagement with the national scene has sometimes resulted in bands breaking up under the pressure of trying to maintain an Australia-wide profile with little to no ongoing support, especially after they have been let go from a recording contract. Further, while some bands will engage with the national music industry and achieve a degree of recognition, their success may not be sufficient for music to become their full time career. Others may relocate away from Perth or even Australia in order to connect more easily with national and international audiences.
Artists who gain recognition and success within the national market have sometimes spoken of feeling limited by being an Australian musician. This is because their band has achieved success to such a high degree that they need a new challenge, or because they feel that the music they create does not have a big enough audience in Australia to be able to sustain their continued development. Variations in the ways in which WA artists engage with the national and international music industry, and the consequences for local music of them doing so, will be further explored in Chapter five.

Conclusion
In conclusion, Perth’s local music industry is highly concentrated and highly entrepreneurial. The level of concentration with which this industry operates is facilitated and supported by a high concentration of workers and spaces in which music is created, recorded and performed. The entrepreneurialism of musicians and industry workers is facilitated by its concentration of members and spaces, which is viewed to result from the geographical isolation.

The geographical isolation of Perth results in the city’s music industry and scene being on the periphery of national activity. This isolation informs the way in which the local industry operates, particularly in relation to the importance placed on social networks as well as in the ways in which music leaves and enters the state. Further this distance results in limitations and benefits for musicians and industry workers when it comes to creating music and engaging with the national industries.

Interviewees place a high level of importance on supporting others in their musical and business pursuits both within the state and in reaching new audiences elsewhere. As a result, strong networks exist between members and within the spaces where activity occurs. These networks prove critical in supporting the ability for musicians to reach new audiences (albeit with varying levels of success), and for resources to be developed locally. Such resources include: local recording studios, local live music festivals and venues, local media outlets and local record labels.
Through their use of these resources, the ability for such resources to continue to be available and the careers of those who develop and provide such resources is supported. For example, by working in local recording studios, these spaces become a viable place in which others can record and the careers of those who run them are supported. Importantly, however, supporting local music in a broader sense is often done so with understanding of the financial risks associated with doing so.

Perth’s small music market results in small financial returns from local music. As such, there is an understanding that by supporting this sector of music activity within Perth it is done so with non-financial taking precedence and outweighing the financial losses. This small market size also results in musicians and on occasion industry workers having to look to audiences beyond the state in order to continue developing.
Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry.

Introduction

This chapter explores, in greater detail, the engagement of Perth’s indie/pop rock music industry with those which exist in national and international contexts. In particular, it works to offer some explanations regarding the need, and ability of the music from Perth to engage with a wider audience, as well as the ongoing integration of Perth’s music industry within those that operate at national and international levels. Further, this chapter comments upon the changes which have occurred in the local music industry as a result of this engagement and integration.

First, this chapter discusses international music culture and its influence on the music created by the musicians interviewed for this research. Next, it examines aspects of career development within Perth’s local music industry before exploring a shifting attitude toward the isolation of Perth and the ability of the members of this industry to develop music industry careers while staying in Perth. It then examines the implications of engaging with the national and international industries, from the perspective of the musicians, before leading into a discussion regarding loss of passion toward, and a waning desire to be, a musician. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a discussion regarding what the increase in interest concerning Perth music and integration of this local industry within the national market means moving forward.

International music culture and its influence on creativity

It is important to understand that the geographical isolation of Perth does not directly translate in the city being culturally isolated. This is because, as discussed in Chapter three: The structure of the music industry and the role of the music press, international and national contexts, the music and music-related media industries are internationally connected and closely integrated while also being influenced by historical trends and broader music industry conventions. Further, the musicians interviewed for this research have been influenced by music genres and styles which are
created beyond Perth. These influential musical references are largely aligned with international music popularity and consumption trends. Therefore, by drawing on international music culture - either consciously or not - in the creation of their music, the ability for such music to attract a following beyond Perth is increased. This is because the music contains stylistic reference points familiar to those who act as the gatekeepers of these industries, as well as for the audiences who consume the music and associated products, on both a national and international level.

The musicians’ influences can be largely associated with other genre- and scene-based peaks in musical interest. Some of these peaks have had a lasting impact on popular music and associated culture, with their associated genres and scenes being viewed as worthwhile sites of musical creation by both the music industry and associated music press. These industries not only influence what music will be financed and marketed to audiences but, in the case of the music press, influence the way in which musicians are exposed to new music, particularly in the pre-Internet era.

For example, the musicians included in this research were all active at some time between the years 1998 – 2009 and were predominately born in the late 1970s – early 1980s. Consequently, many were in their teens or early 20s during the first half of the 1990s. It was during this period that two key changes occurred in the Australian music and related-media industries. One, youth radio station triple j was expanded to become a national broadcaster, having been Sydney-based (and, some say, Sydney-centric) since the 1970s; and the Big Day Out grew from being a Sydney-only music festival into a national festival touring operation (Mathieson, 2000, p. 109). These two changes enriched the mix of music to which Perth-based musicians were easily exposed to, and for many, revolutionised the paths through which their music could connect with national audiences.

These changes also coincided with one of the most significant developments in genre and scene-based music in the late 20th century, being the genre of grunge and the associated scene of Seattle, Washington. Further, Australian alternative music was making significant inroads within the national mainstream market. Musicians often spoke of how these shifts in music popularity influenced their tastes and subsequently the music they made.
Arguably, if this peak in interest had not occurred, the ease with which Perth’s musicians would have been exposed to this style music would have been greatly diminished. It is possible that the artists would have been exposed to other music, and the influence of that might not have necessarily connected as well with the broader national audience. As Jeff Halley (pers. comm.) says:

triple j changed everything. All of a sudden ... east coast bands were getting national radio play and so people were hearing The Clouds on the radio, they were hearing The Underground Lovers... It was just everywhere... and you know...it just made it accessible. People were listening to triple j, they were hearing all these bands so, a market had developed and ... you know, with greater airplay and you know, greater awareness of triple j, became greater potential market audience so from there it’s just you know, grown and grown and grown.

As discussed in *Chapter three*, triple j has been instrumental in exposing Perth musicians to a broader range of music, and in supporting Perth music in reaching new audiences. Airplay on the station has not only been a goal of many of the musicians interviewed, but also supports the ability for their music to reach new audiences and in some cases, this has contributed to the industry interest around an act. These factors have, in turn, also supported the ability for musicians and industry workers to develop careers within and from Perth.

**Developing a career within and from Perth’s local music industry**

Broadly speaking, the capacity to develop a career within and from Perth’s local music industry depends upon a myriad of internal (local) and external (national and international) influences. As discussed in *Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets*, audiences are critical to the functioning of the music industry, and the need to continue connecting with new audiences is, beyond any external interest, a key driver behind musicians’ engagement with the national and international music industries. For industry workers, developing a local audience is also important. This is especially true of those who work within the live music sector as they require a local audience for their products. Importantly, musicians and industry workers are mindful of finding a balance between developing a new
audiences and connecting with existing audiences, while not overwhelming the market with new products. Broadly speaking, a shift in attitude has occurred amongst the interviewees regarding the ability to develop a music, or music industry career in Perth.

For the purpose of this discussion, the focus is first on the challenges and hurdles Perth musicians face when engaging with the national and international music markets, along with how these hurdles impact upon their ability to continue engaging with these industries. Following on from this is an examination of the capacity of industry workers to develop careers, before a broader discussion regarding the shift in attitude towards being able to develop a career in the music industry while still remaining in Perth.

As discussed in *Chapter four*, the geographical isolation of the city results in benefits and limitations for musicians who wish to develop and sustain their careers in the music industry. In particular, they need to overcome the geographical distance between the west and east. This involves a high investment of time and money which, in turn, places an additional pressure upon musicians when they attempt to engage with national audiences and the national industry.

For example, when discussing the differences between the ease with which musicians in Sydney and Melbourne can tour the east coast, compared with Perth musicians, Turnston (pers. comm.) explains:

> There are bands in Sydney and Melbourne who can pop in a car and do, over four days, they can do three states and it’s just done in a car. They take their own cars, and away they go. Whereas if you’re [wanting to] go and play a few shows, I mean it’s the... I’ve done the run so many times where you fly to Adelaide and you play and the next day you get up and you drive to Melbourne and you play, and the next day you get up and you drive to Sydney and you play and then you do Brisbane, and then you fly home. Just ruined because you’ve spent you know $6000 on air|fares| and hiring gear.

The financial costs and distances associated with reaching the east coast have been cited by many musicians as impacting how they engage with these larger audiences and wider industries. As a result, while it is now more accepted that a nationally and internationally engaged music career can
develop from Perth, there will always inevitably be some acts that prefer to leave the west. In discussing why his band The Hampdens relocated to Melbourne, keyboardist Julian Hamilton (pers. comm.) says:

The geographical isolation [of Perth] made it hard playing in a band and touring - and I suppose that was the main reason that we, that the band moved to Melbourne [...] It was easy [to move] because we’d been offered a place – someone owned a house and had fully furnished it, and [were] disappearing overseas for an 18 month working holiday and said ‘do you guys want to take it?’. And it just meant being - at that stage [...] we’d started doing a few national tours and kind of wanted to be more in the centre of things and be able to say ‘yes’ to gigs rather than having to turn them down because it was too far to go just to play. And we weren’t - the band wasn’t a significant enough size that we could afford to fly for every gig - so, short of constantly driving across the Nullarbor - which we did a few times - it seemed like that was our next logical step.

It is not so much that the distance between Perth and the east coast prohibits engagement, it is that it results in musicians spending extended periods of time away in order to maximise their investment of time and money. Relocating to the east coast, while it can potentially make things easier on artists, is not always desirable however. As Thornton (pers. comm.) says:

[Relocating] seemed to be the ‘kiss of death’ at that time. I think now, now bands do it but, at that stage, pretty much every band that we knew that had moved to Melbourne, did nothing.

In contrast, if a band can continue to grow its influence but remain in Perth, that allows musicians to continue accessing a solid network of friends and family who can support them in their musicianship. As Bodlovich (pers. comm.) says:

For anybody being at home is always advantageous. Just in terms of the support networks around you [...] If you’re [in] a band or [are] an artist or a business person [...] if this is your home, you’ve probably got some parents that you can go to and get some money off or get some food off or [they will help by] doing your washing and all that kind of thing. You’re probably in a situation where if your amp breaks down you can borrow an amp from someone [...] If your car breaks down you can get a lift somewhere; you’ve actually got those support networks and you’re also in the situation where you can just, I suppose from a personal perspective just disappear and chill with people [who] aren’t part of the business that you’re involved in. I think, if, for people that move you know obviously all those
support networks aren’t there, and you can develop those over time but that’s an effort in itself [and] you’re also gonna find that the people that you meet and befriend and who start to be your social group are gonna be people who are all wrapped up in the same business that you’re wrapped up in. So you probably won’t have those people who you go and have a beer with or go and watch telly with or something who [are] simply interested and aren’t gonna talk the talk. So, switching off and getting out of it would be a little bit harder which is probably a bit of a mental strain I think.

While the geographical isolation of Perth is a hindrance to bands, until such time as they are established in the national market, spending extended periods of time away can support the development of a strong work ethic. As discussed in greater detail in *Chapter four* being based in Perth has conditioned a strong work ethic and attitude toward seeking opportunities out while also developing resources for the local music industry. Despite this strong work ethic, musicians are not immune from the rigours of life on the road.

While travelling longer distances can help develop a work ethic in musicians – in much the same way that touring with higher profile acts can, as discussed below – the rigours of the road can result in ‘burn out’ for some acts, which can elongate time between releases. Delaying releases can impact upon musicians’ creative drive, as well as result in a loss of audience interest which occur in line with the cyclical nature of music consumption trends. Further, musicians are also at the mercy of ongoing changes occurring within the music industry, particularly with regard to the infrastructure that supports its functioning.

For example, following the release of their debut 2005 album, *End of Fashion* toured relentlessly. With the band’s two founding members, Rodney Aravena and Justin Burford, having spent the several previous years performing in *The Sleepy Jackson*, by the time the band came off the road in early 2007, Aravena & Burford had been on the road touring almost constantly for four years. Recalling this time, and the desire to keep touring when perhaps they should have stopped, they explain (pers. comm.):

Burford: You know 20/20 hindsight, like you know we should’ve kind of stopped mid-2006, by that time our album, our first album had been out for a year, we’d been, from recording to you know, leading up, promotion, touring, we’d be working that record for
already 18 months, coming up to the end of 2006 meant that we’d been doing it for two years.

Aravena: And because we’d been making a living of it, everybody just said ‘yes’ to everything because it was kind of like, we are making money.

Burford: Yeah.

Aravena: We are paying ourselves decent wages.

Burford: Yep.

Aravena: Could buy things.

Burford: Yep.

Aravena: Could go on holidays with our girlfriends and it was like.

Burford: So who would want that to stop?

Aravena: Yeah. Except for the part that you have to write more songs.

Burford: Yeah.

Sharing a similar story of burning out following an extended time spent touring, Mal Clark (pers. comm.), drummer for The Sleepy Jackson says:

When I came off the road after that 2004 tour, I like, looked ten years older than I am now [...] We were just, you know, we were drinking a lot of alcohol [...] not eating right and just playing every day and just getting into the cycle of craziness you know? And yeah, [it] did definitely take its toll [You’ve got to] be a certain type of person to be able to do that kind of thing, you know, in the first place.

Generally speaking, making a living from music is rare, even in the group of musicians interviewed for this research. Many spoke of having to juggle working ‘day jobs’ while pursuing music. For some, even when they were able to pursue their music full time, they had to live off a combination of social security payments and shared band money. As Clark (pers. comm.) recalls:

I remember when we first went to England, the exchange [rate] was like 30 pence to the dollar, and I think we were getting 300 bucks a week while we were on tour, from the band account, in which case we got a hundred pound a week [...] and you walk down stairs and breakfast costs 25 pound, you know what I mean? [...] it was really hard. But at the end of the day, we still, like I said, we had alcohol and food most times, and a hotel room.

All the musicians interviewed shared the desire to pursue music full time at one point or another. Where a demarcation occurs is between those who have been able to do this full time, and those who still wish to do so, and those who have either withdrawn from music completely, or create and
perform music now as a hobby. The shifts in the desire felt by many musicians with regards to continuing pursuing music is discussed later in this chapter.

Linking back to the discussion presented in *Chapter four*, however, musicians and industry workers alike recognise the importance of supporting the attempts of others when it comes to engaging with the broader national and international industries as well as developing audiences beyond the city. One of the key ways in which musicians are supported in doing so is when higher profile acts take up and coming artists on the road with them.

When successful Perth acts take other local artists on national tours this can be beneficial in raising wider audience awareness of the local scene, and giving recognition to lower profile artists. It is not, however, a guarantee of widespread success and recognition. All artists are constantly at the mercy of external influences, including broader cultural and music consumption trends. As such, even though a local music scene may be viewed as a place of musical innovation, and start to attract music and media industry attention, as has happened with Perth, not all acts will achieve the same level of success or attention from record labels, the media or audiences. What acts do benefit from when supporting higher profile artists on tour, is being able to develop improved performance skills, a solid work ethic and, in some cases, industry connections with the east coast.

Touring in support of higher profile acts was crucial to the ability of his band to overcome the hurdle of Perth’s geographical isolation, according to Cruickshank (pers. comm.):

> We were pretty lucky because we got to tag along with lots of bands, like Eskimo Joe, Little Birdy, Jebediah, stuff like that. I think we were really lucky, like I say, if we hadn’t been able to do that [... it’s] really hard to tour and get out there [...] We were really fortunate to just hop on all the supports, and I think I certainly took it for granted that it felt quite a simple thing to do but, yeah, as we’ve gotten older and done more tours on our own [...] we’ve done well in Perth but, we still haven’t really made much of a dent over [east] I don’t think. So it’s, yeah, it’s kind of hard to do that from over in Perth [...] getting to go away with all those other bands and that just made it feel easier [...] and] in terms of isolation, it did make you feel less isolated.
While Cruickshank (pers. comm.) admits, “I don’t think we’re as popular as some people perceive us to be when it comes to putting our own shows on,” getting to perform with higher profile acts has allowed his band to have professional experiences they otherwise would not have had. These experiences support the ability of musicians to develop their performance skills and work ethic, such as learning to perform on larger stages and to an audience that is not necessarily familiar with your music. For example, when recalling his experiences of performing in the opening slots at festivals and around Australia as a support act, McLaughlin (pers. comm.) says:

Yeah it was massive learning [curve]. Like, you really get an idea of where you sit in the scheme of things when you support a band that’s packing out 2000 [capacity] plus venues. And also playing festivals - when you’re the first band on the stage it’s very different at the start of the day to what it is at the end of the day. It just gave us an idea of where we’re at and kind of, where we want to be. The cool thing about that is you can look at those bigger bands who have more money and have the profile to be able to do what they want and you can say ‘well I wouldn’t do that. I wouldn’t do it the way they’re doing it’. Or you know, ‘what they did was really good’ [and] maybe get ideas from that. In terms of the actual playing, you’re playing in front of an audience that’s not there to see you so it’s, it’s quite an effort each night to try to get a response out of those people. There’s, a big challenge in that. And also playing bigger stages, you’ve got to fill the space. So you just kind of, I think it was a massive help for us to do the touring that we’ve done. I know that seven week tour I spoke of before, the tightness of the band was massive compared to before we left to when we got back. It was, just changes you as a band, you become more comfortable on stage.

While improved performance skills and a refined work ethic are one of the reasons to support higher profile acts, another benefit lies in the opportunity offered to a lesser known act to lift its profile. Reflecting on the challenges of capitalising on exposure resulting from touring with better known acts, Turnston (pers. comm.) recalls:

We’d already toured with the Eskies at that point and we’d been over to the east coast three or four times and we’d already had two songs on high rotation previously on triple j [...] the name was recognised to a degree. It’s always really hard to know because you’re not, I mean you know what the name is but does anyone else?

Turnston’s band, The Avenues were closely associated with the likes of Eskimo Joe, End of Fashion and Sleepy Jackson, through various creative and personal links. The Avenues signed a
deal with Rubber Records, an independent label based in Sydney, who, with the consent of the band and their management, decided to give away one of their songs, Slow moving, for free on the triple j website. While the track was the most downloaded track from the website at that point, and it raised the profile of the band, it also caused difficulties in creating an expectation that there was a product to sell to audiences.

When the band signed with the label, they had recorded an EP on which Slow moving was featured. This meant, with the song being given away for free, audiences were not inclined to purchase the EP. As Turnston (pers. comm.) says:

[The label] released the EP and they did push it [...] you just can’t get any traction with something that you know, if you’re getting it for free why would people go and buy it? And EPs for all the people [that] like putting them out and they treat them like mini albums and we agonise over the artwork and ‘oh the track listing has to be thus’ and you know, treat it as a single, radio’s only gonna play one song from it. You can’t release a second single from an EP. So essentially it’s a glorified single [...] and] if that single is given away you don’t get another bite out of it unfortunately.

The experiences of Cruickshank, McLaughlin and Turnston illustrate the varying ways in which performing alongside other higher profile acts can support musicians in their attempts to connect with broader audiences, as well as the varying outcomes of doing so. In some instances, however, local musicians have also performed as session players and touring members of the higher profile bands.

Performing with a higher profile act in such a manner has benefited the musicians concerned while also influencing their future musical endeavours. These opportunities have sometimes inspired the touring members (as opposed to the permanent members) to continue pursuing their own original music and, at times, have reconnected former band mates.

For example, Lee Jones and Shaun Sibbes are former members of the band Spencer Tracey and spent time performing as touring members for Eskimo Joe. They lost touch with each other following the breakup of Spencer Tracey, a band active in the local scene through the 1990s and
early 2000s. When they found themselves on tour with Eskimo Joe it inspired them to start creating music together again. As Jones (pers. comm.) recalls:

> When we were on tour with Eskies, we were always in the same hotel room and we pretty much [went] straight back into hanging out full time again kind of thing. And then it just sort of, it came from there, we just sort of said [...] Why don’t you come and try and play with us?’ and, and it you know that’s kind of where it went from.

Dan Bull (pers. comm.) similarly spent time as a touring member of the Sleepy Jackson and Eskimo Joe, and explains how doing so inspired him to create his own music:

> I got a taste of what can be achieved and I it’s like ‘well yeah, I can probably achieve that to some degree with my own music’. Song writing - learning how to write songs - is a funny thing because you can write songs for yourself and you can write songs for your friends or you can write songs for a wider audience. And hanging out with Sleepies and Eskies really helped me hone my song writing skills.

These experiences of Bull along with Jones and Sibbes illustrate the fluid and ephemeral way in which musicians navigate their musical activities. They are also illustrative of the influence engaging with higher profile acts can have on the desires and aspirations of others.

The experiences discussed above illustrate the varying ways in which musicians from Perth are able to develop their careers, and the challenges they face in doing so, while also demonstrating the interconnected and fluid nature of popular music production. Further, while they provide specific examples of the experiences shared by musicians from Perth, these stories acknowledge, in a broader sense, the importance of the decisions made with regard to engaging with new audiences and building a career in relation to with whom they will work.

Linking back to the discussion presented in *Chapter four* regarding the attitudes towards supporting local music activity within Perth, as well as accessing local resources such as recording studios, live music venues and local media, it is important to acknowledge the decisions musicians make when navigating the development of their careers. To this end, decisions such as deciding to get, or change band management; and whether to obtain or leave a recording contract are vital.
Most musicians interviewed here first gained management through the informal networks which exist in Perth’s local music industry. At the same time, however, reputation and access to managers also play a critical role, as does the decision (or not) to work with a local producer. In order to continue progressing their careers, musicians often change management. While in some cases, this was sometimes because managers decided to step away from band management, in most cases the change in management resulted from a difference of opinion, or the realisation that the band needed a different skill set in their management in order to continue progressing their careers. It can be difficult to progress a career without management since it requires musicians to take on management duties themselves, and in some cases, impacts upon their ability to take advantage of opportunities and negotiate with record labels.

At the time that many of the musicians interviewed were beginning to make connections with the east coast music industry, in the mid – late 1990s, major labels were still highly valued and seen as the preferred pathway to reaching new audiences. Linking back to the discussions presented in chapters four and five, several of the musicians interviewed initially had their music distributed with the help of local labels, or had distribution deals with east coast based distributors. Musicians often spoke of their desire to sign with a major label. To this end, there was a high degree of (admitted) naivety on their part. At the same time, however, musicians recognise that as their needs change so too does their desires to sign with, or remain signed to particular record labels. Signing with labels is also about access and opportunity, as well as the needs and hopes of the acts in question. As these needs and hopes change, along with the thresholds of success and recognition reached (or in some cases, not reached), musicians, their managers and labels re-evaluate their relationships with one another, in the hopes of being able to remain in the most productive and profitable scenario.

While most successful Perth bands have engaged with the national industry, and the context for this research is the increase in success and recognition of Perth music within the national market, some acts turned their focus to those which exist internationally. Motivations for this level engagement vary but include: feeling limited within the Australian market; having interest from
overseas record labels; and, recognising that not all music will resonate within the Australian music scene.

For example, End of Fashion was signed by EMI in the hopes of having an impact on the international music scene. Eskimo Joe found themselves making connections with the US market after becoming established in Australia. In other cases, when acts such as Nathan Gaunt, The Panda Band and The Panics looked to overseas markets, this was about taking advantage of opportunities coupled with an understanding in some cases international audiences may more readily connect with their music than those in Australia.

At the time the End of Fashion signed their record deal there was interest not only in the music of Perth within the national market, but also an interest in Australian rock music at a global level. This followed on from recent global success of acts such as Jet and The Vines. As Burford explains:

> When we got signed to EMI, we got signed on the premise that we were gonna be the next big Australian musical export. Off the back of Jet, off the back of The Vines. Next up was going to be End of Fashion.

While the group signed their deal with EMI Australia, Jet and The Vines both signed contracts with EMI US. Signing the band out of Australia was a deliberate move on part of the record label, as Burford (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) explains, “They wanted to prove – the people behind the scenes [in Australia] wanted to prove – that they could sign an Australian act [within Australia] and have it work overseas.”

However, as they were signed by EMI Australia they still needed to impress the executives at EMI in the US in order to be marketed to audiences there. To allow EMI to, as Aravena explains “hedge their bets” (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) in the case of the band achieving international success, they were signed to a global contact. This contract did not require the band be marketed to audiences in other territories, however, but acted as a way for EMI Australia to protect their interests and maximise the potential to make a return on their investment.
With their sights firmly set on breaking into the US market, the band recorded their 2005 debut self-titled release in Oxford, Mississippi, with producer Dennis Herring. This was done at the suggestion of Ron Laffite, the then head of A and R at EMI US. In meeting with Laffite in Sydney prior to heading to the States, Aravena (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.):

So basically, we’re in Sydney [and] EMI are like ‘you’ve got to come and meet Ron Laffite, you know, get in his face’ [...] In comes this American dude, we sit down we start having dinner [...] I started chatting to him and I was like, and the way he was talking he was saying stuff like ‘oh I can’t put you guys in a scene in America’ which is like basically saying ‘I don’t know how to sell you’ [...] I basically went to him ‘but [if] you’re not really here for us, what are you here for?’ and he goes ‘oh I’m here to see a band called Wolfmother’ and that’s when we first heard of Wolfmother [...] We went and saw them play and went ‘right I get it’ [...] There’s all these A and R guys and they were all like, drooling.

While the band had some apprehensions, as to whether or not EMI’s goal would work, Aravena says, “Thing is, you’re gonna hedge your bets ‘cause he may’ve been right.” Further, EMI Australia continued to remain optimistic about their plans, despite Laffite’s lack of confidence in their marketability within the US. As Aravena (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) explains, “It’s not that EMI [Australia] wasn’t in good faith. They worked their asses off [...] They tried too, [only] to finally realise that like Australian [bands], in the world scene, are midgets.” As Burford (Aravena & Burford, pers. comm.) also recalls:

Once we went there and placated the Americans – as far as we thought we had to EMI Australia’s best interest – when it came down to it [...] Basically from what I understood, it was basically down to us and this band Yellowcard... [And to compare] You’re talking about a band from Perth? Where? To a band that’s in their hometown you know? It’s easy for them, they can go down and put a showcase [...] It was just easier for them. That and the thing that [the Florida punk band] Yellowcard I think was Laffite’s baby. Like he discovered them and that’s, like I didn’t realise how important that was in the music industry.

As the experiences of End of Fashion illustrate, the desire to engage with the global market can also be influenced by the trends of Australian music resonating globally. In other instances, such international engagement can be the result of feeling limited within this national market.
After they have achieved a high level of success, acts can start to feel limited by the size of the Australian market and start to look elsewhere. For example, Eskimo Joe experienced considerable national success and recognition in 2006. As such they started to feel limited within Australia, particularly when it came to performing live. As Temperley (MacLeod et al, pers. comm.) explains:

Those very first massive tours that we did, like, were like really kind of scary and amazing and we slowly built up to this point where we, you know, were too big in Australia to you know, to be a support band. And even that was amazing in itself but, like now that we’ve kind of done that for like two albums even, like even that’s kind of like you know, run out of steam now. We need to find some new way to get our kicks I think.

Eskimo Joe’s experiences at trying to connect with international audiences further illustrate the differences between music markets. Despite having achieved significant commercial success in Australia, the band’s attempts to connect with the US have been marred by difficulties between managers and labels as well as a run of bad luck, whereas in Europe they have found the experience much more rewarding. As MacLeod et al (pers. comm.) discuss:

Temperley: Well originally we had some interest over [in the US]. We had like a small label who released us and so we did a bit of touring but, we just toured with a band who didn’t really give us much traction and we had a lot of bad luck [...] Well the first time we went on [the back of the] *A song is a city* [release we], had this like massive kafuffle [...] a massive communication breakdown [...] Our manager at the time had like given us really bad advice and basically completely pissed off the Australian record label.

MacLeod: Killed the deal for us.

Temperley: Basically killed the deal and we went home with our tails between our legs [...] it was just ridiculous. And then the next time we went [following the release of *Black fingernails red wine*...] we finally signed to this US label and it was all happening.

Despite the band’s excitement and the support of a US record label, Temperley (Macleod et al, pers. comm.) says, “crazy shit was going down every time we went to the States.” A run of bad luck, and the inability to gain enough traction resulted in the band shifting their focus to Europe, where they would tour following the release of *Inshalla* in 2009.
While End of Fashion and Eskimo Joe’s desires to connect with international audiences has been driven by the goal of record labels as well as out of feeling limited in the national market, in other cases acts will start connecting with international markets due to recognising how limited they can be in Australia, even if they do not achieve similar levels of success and recognition domestically.

For example, Nathan Gaunt came to spend time in the US after attracting the attention of a US-based manager. Reflecting on his experiences of performing in the States, Gaunt (pers. comm.) says:

It’s been great. I’ve played venues I can only dream of with artists I can, I never thought I would’ve been able to play with. People like, well obviously Carole King’s pretty good but, over in the States venues like BB Kings in New York, I played with Marcia Ball at the Highline Ballroom in New York, Wolf’s Trap one of the best in DC, best venues, Shawn Colvin, played some shows with her, Robin Ford, just people that mean so much to an artist and maybe the general public don’t care but, the heroes of yours that just blow your mind. And going to these places you’ve only seen in pictures and saying ‘oh my God, that thing that I said I’d do, I’ve done it’.

Where Gaunt keeps a base in Perth and visits the USA every six months or so, he has spent extended periods of time in the US in an attempt to become established in the market. Similarly, The Panda Band relocated to Brooklyn, New York, in order to take advantage of label and industry interest over there. As Namour (pers. comm.) recalls:

I had been contacted by a lady from New York who worked for EMI over there. We became friends and she eventually managed us when we went to the USA. Also when we played at SXSW in 2005, a label called ‘Filter Magazine’ watched us, and liked us, so they offered to put our first album out in North America.

The band spent six months based in Brooklyn, and while they were unable to make a sizeable dent in the market, Namour (pers. comm.) says “it was awesome. Probably the best experience of my life so far. Lots of ups and downs, but all worthwhile in the end.”

Similarly, The Panics have also spent time overseas, particularly in the UK. As their manager, Carroll (pers. comm.) explains:
They spent about six, seven months in the UK last year and we set them up with a release [and] they did a couple of tours. They got great radio airplay, we got amazing press and it was a really successful period so. But, we’ve also spent some time in the States. The new album is about to be recorded over there [and] we’ll [also] follow up what was done in the UK last year around the release of this forthcoming album.

Where the relocations of Gaunt, The Panda Band and The Panics have been temporary, the band Snowman permanently relocated to London in 2008 so as to continue developing creatively and professionally. As McKee (pers. comm.) says:

You hit a ceiling living in Perth and Australia. We needed to branch out. Play to new people. We’d sold out all the venues we wanted to sell out... Achieved what we wanted to achieve. The next thing we wanted to achieve was success internationally. So we had to come here to London and start again.

The experiences of the bands explored above also illustrate the role of the broader international culture of music consumption and especially the way in which musicians navigate their careers. More broadly, however, WAM has been very instrumental in developing connections between Perth’s music industry and that which exists nationally, and particularly internationally.

For example, the staging of the annual WA Music Business Conference provides musicians and industry workers the opportunity to learn from music industry peers from within and beyond Perth while also supporting networking opportunities (Bodlovich, pers. comm.). Since the mid-2000s, Perth artists have also performed at international events such the annual CMJ Music Marathon in New York and the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference in Austin Texas.

Established in 1980 the CMJ Music Marathon is held late October each year in New York. It is the longest running event of its kind and now hosts 1300 acts over five days and nights. It also incorporates a film festival and business conference featuring approximately 70 panels. Since 2007, Perth artists have performed at CMJ as part of its regular program of events as well as a showcase hosted by the WA Music Industry Association (WAM). In discussing how performing such events can help artists’ careers, Matt McDonald, the vice president of artists and events at CMJ, explains:
Performing at the marathon] can either open up additional doors and set the framework for advancing their career in the States, or it can highlight the importance of having enough momentum in their home territory before they make the jump internationally (Ballico, 2009).

Comparatively, the South by Southwest Music and Media Conference takes place over five days each March in Austin, Texas. The event was established in 1987, with its attendance growing from 700 delegates in its first year, to 12,000 in 2010. It features a wide range of international acts across 80 stages in downtown Austin by night, with a ‘trade’ show taking place during the day. This event sits within the ‘SXSW Week’ which also features the SXSW Film Festival and the SXSW Interactive Festival. Perth artists have performed at the event since 2005 (SXSW, 2010). Varying outcomes occur as a result of engaging with these events, and while they are not a guarantee of success engaging with such events can help artists develop connections with industry in different markets, while also providing WAM the opportunity to develop connections with industry workers who come to Perth to speak as part of the WAMI Music Business Conference.

The work undertaken by WAM, as discussed above, illustrates the broader industry attitudes toward needing to reach beyond Perth, and even Australia, to be able to continue developing musicians’ careers. Further, it illustrates the importance of support networks when doing so, as well as the need to engage with such opportunities within local industry. To this end, education, advocacy and support are critical in instances where musicians can become very limited very quickly by their local surrounds. In some cases, a similar pattern can immerge in the career development of industry members.

While musicians’ careers often have been focused around developing a broader audience for their product, and spending time away in order to do so, the development of industry workers’ careers has been more focused on developing within the local industry, and developing connections with the national and international industries in order to support the ability to engage effectively with other music industry professionals.
Almost all the industry workers interviewed for this research have held more than one role in the local music industry. For those who have, they often do so at the same time. This is due, as discussed in Chapter four, to the small and highly concentrated nature of Perth’s music industry, and the understanding that in order to earn the equivalent of a full time job and wage industry workers need to work more than one job. More broadly, however, when examining the ability Perth based industry workers to have a career, there is still the critical need to engage with the broader national and international industries.

For example, those who work in artist management, engage with these industries outside Perth in order to help their artists build careers, which in turn allows them to attract new talent and to continue working in band management. For live music promoters, particularly those who tour national and international artists to WA, connections with their peers operating in larger markets are particularly critical. As discussed in Chapter four, the festival and live touring sector in Perth sits within national activity. If the event promoters of these events want to bring these events to Perth, they need to work with their peers on the east coast in order to have access to the events and/ or to be able to make the tours viable.

In the same way that musicians can start to feel limited in terms of being able to develop in the national market, so too can the careers of industry workers. This sense of restriction is driven in part by the relatively small industry in Perth, and the smaller scale on which it operates. For example, while Perth acts were making solid inroads in national and international markets, they often achieve this with the support of eastern states managers. As such, when Perth based managers started making similar inroads with their acts, they sometimes felt unsupported by their peers. For example, as Bradby (pers. comm.) recalls, in discussing his decision to relocate to Sydney, which was due in part to personal reasons:

For me as a manager it was pretty hard cause you’re removed from the business side of things so, you know, you tried to learn as much as you could but, there wasn’t you know back then [...] there were no real kind of courses that you can do in management [...] you kind of had to learn by your own mistakes – which I you know, I still think is the best way to learn how to do this job and it’s how most decent managers have done it - but, there was no real support network. There was no-one else sort of doing things on a kind of national
basis [in Perth...] that would be peers that [are] gonna have the same sort of problems that you’re facing so you can throw ideas around. One of the great things of kind of being [in Sydney...] and being in this kind of environment is that if there’s an issue there’s probably someone that has faced that issue in this building so you can go have a chat about it and find out what to do.

Similarly, Edwardes (pers. comm.), who relocated to Melbourne in 2009, explains that in order for her to continue progressing her career within the music industry, she had to leave. She says, “I’d pretty much done everything I felt I could do in Perth.”

The desire to remain in or leave Perth is influenced by the goals and personal perspective of the interviewees. For industry workers, this is further influenced by the focus of their roles. Therefore, while Bradby and Edwardes relocated away from Perth, in part, due to the ability for them to continue developing their careers, in other instances people may feel this is not necessary. For example Rinaldi (pers. comm.), cites a combination of personal and professional reasons for remaining in Perth:

It’s kind of weird because probably like a lot of other people I’ve probably sort of got into doing what I do - not accidently as such - but, unintentionally and then all of a sudden it’s kind of like ‘oh yeah I’m enjoying this, oh I’ll do this’ and then it’s like ‘oh, I’ll do this as well, I’ll do this as well’ [...] that time seems to have gone really quick and I suppose because you’re always sort of trying to do the next thing, whether it’s the next tour, the next album or - this is just from a band manager point of view - obviously from a venue booker as well, you might be talking about booking dates for things next year you know and you’re always looking so far ahead that time does tend to go very quick and because you’re so focused on what that next goal is for whatever project, whatever band and then once that’s done it’s like ‘okay great, now we’ve gotta do this, now we’ve gotta do this’, I think time does go really quick and as such, you know, turn around however many years later and someone asks you why you’re still in Perth and it’s ‘oh shit, I never thought of leaving.’

The experience of Rinaldi illustrates a somewhat inward looking aspect of local music activity as well as the informal way in which industry careers can develop. That is, the way in which industry roles function within the local industry influence the ways in which industry members navigate their careers. Therefore, while Edwardes and Bradby felt the need to leave Perth in order to continue developing their careers, Rinaldi feels supported in his abilities to work and sustain himself within
the local market. Further, the desires and aspirations of these three industry members also
influences their desires to stay in or leave the west.

More broadly, however, the changing relationship to the city’s isolation is another support for
music industry people being able to develop careers in Perth. The shift away from the isolation
being prohibitive to being a barrier which can be overcome, while also allowing a creative freedom,
has further enhances the attitudes toward being able to develop a career from Perth.

**Changing relationship to the isolation and the ability to develop music industry careers**
Several factors have influenced changing perceptions of Perth’s isolation, along with what it means
to be a musician working in and from Perth. These factors include: technological advances
associated with the widespread uptake of the Internet in the music industry and broader culture;
the deregulation of the airline industry; and a changing music and media landscape in which Perth
is now held on par with eastern states counterparts. More broadly, as more acts remained in Perth
and successfully engaged with the national market, the more attitudes shifted toward this being
viable.

Musicians often spoke of witnessing these shifts and reflected on how they are changing the
landscape of the local music industry. Interestingly, while many reflected on how musicians have it
‘easier’ nowadays (and would often include themselves in this category) the desire to remain in
Perth was described as being more about lifestyle factors than a self-righteous sense of being a
Perth musician. For example, the musicians who were part of a wave of interest in Perth music
initially remained in the west because they felt supported in doing so. They also believed that
remaining in Perth gave them a distinct advantage by being associated with a scene which was
attracting national attention.

Decisions made by others within the local scene influenced some artists’ desire to remain in Perth.
This included both those who had accomplished national recognition and success while remaining
in Perth, and also acts who relocated east with the hope of achieving success in the national market
but, disintegrated and broke up in the process.
While most felt the advantages of remaining in Perth far outweighed any desire to relocate away from the west, doing so requires a solid commitment and a passion to overcome the hurdle of Perth’s isolation. Therefore, while technological advances have made it easier for musicians to create, record and disseminate their music, they are still required to travel long distances in order to connect with new audiences in live settings.

The deregulation of airlines in the late 1990s has been cited as a beneficial factor in reducing travel costs. At the same time, however, Perth musicians are still viewed as being at a disadvantage due to the longer distances travelled in comparison to their eastern states counterparts. Therefore, while technological advances and changes to the media landscape make it easier for Perth music to be consumed by people beyond the city, musicians are still faced with the very real geographical isolation of the city. For those who are established within the national market, however, the isolation of Perth is no longer an issue as their national tours will take in all major centres (Balmont, pers. comm.; MacLeod et al, pers. comm.). The community of musicians and industry workers who work together supporting one another in their pursuits is central to keeping people in Perth and helping successful acts enjoy the same recognition as if they had moved.

A shift in attitude toward being able to build a career in music in and from Perth is been one of the most significant developments occurring in the local music industry between 1998 -2009. The continued success of Perth music within the national market, and particularly outside of any peak interest periods, has further buoyed the attitude towards being able to develop a career within Perth’s local industry and work within the national market with a home-base in Perth. Reflecting on this, Adam (pers. comm.) says:

There’s a few more people that actually say they want to be managers of bands now and do become a proper manger, not just a glorified booking agent. There certainly seems to be a lot more emphasis on the business side of things now and even, even younger bands starting up are starting to think about that.

Similarly, Bodlovich (pers. comm.) explains:
[There are young people now] interested in developing careers in that, or in band management, or as promoters and really sort of coming through and filling that kind of void [...] I think there’s a lot of young artists, a lot of established artists, and a lot of, a lot of young businesses coming through that are really, really exciting that I think need support but, have the potential to take the industry as it is locally to another level.

With the support of organisations such as WAM, the funding allocated by the DCA, and a continued presence within the national scene, the local music industry has developed to a degree whereby it is now ingrained within the nationally-focused Australian music market.

This integration has occurred through musicians recognising the need, while also having a desire, to connect with new audiences in bigger markets. For industry workers, connecting with their peers in the east coast supported the potential of their businesses to grow locally. More broadly, this integration has also required a shift in attitude from the east coast toward Perth as being a pool of talent and a viable market to engage with. Without this integration, industry workers and musicians would have been more likely to leave Perth. Further supporting this dynamic is a shift in attitude toward Perth as a viable market into which international acts can tour and, critically, a shift in attitude toward Perth as being a place of musical innovation.

The implications of engaging with the national and international music industries and scenes

As examined in Chapter three, the musicians and industry members interviewed for this research have had varying and differing levels of engagement with the national, and at times global, music industries. For musicians, this engagement includes: having band management and recording contracts with companies in the east and/ or overseas; engaging in national and international live music touring; and receiving national radio airplay and media exposure. For the industry members, this engagement includes: negotiating, on behalf of their artists, with the music and media industries in the east and overseas; and developing relationships with peers in the east and overseas in order to stage large-scale live music festivals and tours in the west, as well as operating at a national scale. Several consequences arise from this engagement with the national and the global, and these consequences differ between musicians and industry members, as well as with regards to
the continued and ongoing development of the local industry and scene between the years 1998 - 2009.

For musicians, their engagement with the national and global music industries influences the ways in which their careers develop. Additionally for some, this engagement influences the music they create. This creative influence results from: the involvement of record labels and record producers; changes to the membership of their bands; and personal pressure to create at a certain standard as result of having achieved a particular degree of success and/ or recognition. Further, a musician’s capacity to continue creating music can be influenced by the degree to which they have been involved in certain activities, for example heavy and constant touring schedules. Conversely, engaging with the national and global music industries influences industry members with respect to the ways in which they are able to do business. Some say that the experience has taught them new skills and ways to negotiate.

A musician’s record label is a key decider of whether or not musicians engage with the local and/ or global industry. As discussed in Chapter three, record labels provide artists with different services and levels of support, depending on their size, structure and underlying characteristics. These labels provide a crucial range of funding and support to the production and dissemination of WA music and its associated products, such as CDs and live music tours. While the role of triple j has been beneficial in raising awareness of WA artists, and in supporting the development of musical tastes, the labels often have the added role of marketing the bands to audiences. For the musicians interviewed in this research, the varying degrees to which they engage with the record labels, coupled with the size, structure and underlying characteristics of the label in question, influences the way in which their careers do or do not develop. Expanding upon the discussion presented in Chapter three with regards to the process and degrees to which artists engage with labels, this section discusses the consequences of this engagement, starting with the experiences of the musicians. The section addresses the implications of engaging with the labels upon Perth’s local music scene between the years 1998 – 2009 before examining how global music culture and activity impacts upon the Perth-based and locally-focused music industry.
Musicians and record labels engage in three main ways: deals with major labels; deals with independent labels; and deals with distribution labels. Further influencing these different engagements is the variety of ways in which artists can be signed to labels, such as by way of: distribution; licensing; and full-service deals. These variances in the ways in which artists are signed to labels determines the degree to which the label is financially invested in, and subsequently ‘backs’, the artists. The relationships between label and artist, and the investment made in the artist by the label, influences the way in which artists will be developed and marketed to audiences, as well the prioritisation given to that act within the label’s roster of artists.

The relationship between record labels is also a relevant factor. As discussed in Chapter three, major labels often set up smaller, niche or independent record labels. On the other hand, smaller labels may have unexpected connections and may have access to services associated with bigger labels, such as distribution, or access to finance from these larger firms. This study has established that these inter-label relationships can have significant influence upon interactions between labels and musicians. This is because larger firms generally exercise power over smaller firms, particularly in approving the financing of recordings, in attempts to sign artists, and when smaller firms have been taken over or absorbed into a larger firm.

In cases where artists sign to labels which are funded by larger firms, it has sometimes been difficult to get financing approval to pay for the production of releases. In other instances, the larger firms circumvent the smaller labels by liaising directly with artists in an attempt to sign the acts directly, or in order to have the artists start work on releases unbeknownst to the label to which the act is contractually signed. Further, when smaller labels have been established as subsidiaries of larger labels, and then absorbed back into or been taken over by the larger labels, the artists often experience difficulties. These difficulties can result from changes in key label employees and from dealing with a label that differs in size, structure and underlying characteristics from the label to which they originally signed.

For example, the Fergusons were signed to Dew Process which, while established as an independent label, receives funding and distribution services from Universal, which is a major
The band were signed after making significant national inroads with airplay and live broadcasts as part of triple j’s *Live at the wireless* program, and with a slot at the annual *Splendour in the grass* festival. Despite the interest in the group, they experienced difficulties in getting financial approval to make their debut album. Having decided to work with acclaimed US producer Jonathan Burnside, Beadon et al (pers. comm.) explain how his recording approach, which impressed the band, resulted in a budgetary blow-out which Universal were unwilling to fund.

Joyce: Look I think it was his recording process because [the] first EP we did [was] completely analogue, the second one we did completely digital, the third one we did completely analogue, and we wanted to do something a bit of a combination of the two. Like we wanted analogue drums and bass and then digital guitars and vocals and that was always Jonathan Burnside. He came to us and said ‘This is how I record’ and we’re like ‘that’s perfect’.

Beadon: We got along with him so well.

Nistelberger: We got along with him really well but, the problem was his price. [The] record company were just like ‘no chance that we’d spend that much money on a band that hasn’t released an album before.’

Beadon: And at that stage we’d lost all of our momentum as well. At one stage, after *Splendour*, our momentum just went [down], and then after that because we had to cancel the rest of the tour because one of the guys got sick, that was, that was it, and it just went from there and then it came to a full halt.

With Universal unwilling to provide Dew Process with the funding for The Fergusons’ album, and the group having lost momentum, they decided to disband. These experiences illustrate the influence of the broader structure of the recorded music industry, and the challenges musicians face when navigating their careers.

Linking back to the discussion presented in *Chapter three* regarding the structure of the recorded music industry, it is characterised by the relationships and the inter-label rivalry which exists between labels. In some cases, when an act proves their financial viability, they can find themselves in the midst of this inter-label competition. Such competition is not exclusive to the highly competitive major label sector, as is illustrated by the experiences of the band, Turnstyle.
Turnstyle first signed with Spunk Records, an independent label which had not long been established in the late 1990s, with Festival (another independent label) providing distribution services. After the band’s debut record achieved significant success, Festival wanted to sign the band directly. Turnstyle did not have a manager. Kerimofski (pers. comm.) recalls the experience of meeting with Festival executives:

The interview was just clichéd and the guy, I don’t remember his name, he sort of swanned in, he threw his keys on the table, he said ‘oh got big plans for you guys, we want you guys to be like the next Gerling’ and that’s the only thing I remember [...] because we didn’t have a management, you know, we were just the band members, again that’s the fail, because we didn’t have management we didn’t have [a mediator].

Linking back to the earlier discussion regarding career development in the music industry, experiences such as that of Kerimofski illustrate the critical role solid management plays in the development of careers in music. Further, it demonstrates the importance of the popularity of the music and its consumption. However, success has its downside. Not only were Turnstyle the victim of inter-label competition, the parent label, Festival, wanted to capitalise on the success they were experiencing with another popular Australian act, Gerling, at that time.

Eskimo Joe provide another example of where artists find themselves in the middle of inter-label tensions. In the band’s early days they were signed to Modular Records, which was an independent label operating (at that time) with support from EMI. When the executives of both labels stopped seeing eye to eye, Modular’s manager decided to start shopping the label around to other firms. While this was happening, EMI encouraged the band to get into the studio to start working on new music. Recalling this experience, MacLeod et al (pers. comm.) had this exchange:

Quartermain: We were on Modular and EMI who was headed up by John O’Donnell at the time, and Simon Moor was head of A and R, they were basically on the phone to us saying ‘okay’ – cause they didn’t like Pav at all at this point, there was some fracture there and they were like ‘oh we’ll take you guys on’. So they put us in the studio like, not telling Pav but paying, so it was like all, like not spoken about with our actual record company. Put us in the studio, we made three songs, which turned out only okay and I guess off the back of that, which cost them a lot of money, off the back of that, they decided not to sign us because the songs, like the songs were alright but the recording didn’t turn out very well,
they decided not to sign us and stop kind of talking to us. Because I was talking to John O’Donnell.
Temperley: Yeah.
Quartermain: Every couple of weeks going ‘come on’ like, there was this Mexican stand-off between us and Modular when we asked to get off the label and they said ‘well too bad, we’ve got you contracted’ and we’re like ‘well clearly it’s not working can we get off?’ They’re like ‘no’. So we, we just went home and kept working on tunes but, all the while our stocks were plummeting, I guess because we were losing all the momentum we gained with ‘Girl’ and then EMI decided after that, those recordings, not to, to take us on and then Pav eventually gave in and realised we weren’t gonna make a record with him and took it to Michael Parisi at Festival and we’d become good friends with Cath Hardiy and he went to Cath and said ‘guess what?’ You know, Pav was actually trying to sell Modular
Temperley: Yeah.
Quartermain: To FMR or shopping Modular
MacLeod: Yep.
Quartermain: To another label and to and get off EMI because he’d fallen out with these people.
Temperley: Yeah and Parisi basically said ‘oh I don’t know about the label but, we’d like Eskimo Joe’ and he went ‘oh alright, you can have them’.

The Fergusons, Turnstyle and Eskimo Joe all found themselves in the midst of inter-label competition. Musicians can also experience tensions when the label they initially sign with is taken over or reabsorbed back into a larger firm. In such cases, musicians can discover that they are no longer supported by the label and/or are subject to different approval and promotional avenues not used by their previous labels. This is what happened to Red Jezebel.

Having originally signed to Festival-Mushroom Records, Red Jezebel found themselves on Warner Music’s roster following a take-over of the company. This resulted in the band going from being signed to an independent label to being involved with a major instead. The tension was exacerbated by the departure of key label employees in whom Red Jezebel had confidence. For the band, this meant that industry members who particularly supported them were no longer with the label, resulting in the group no longer being a priority. They found the release date for their album *How I learned to stop worrying* was being repeatedly pushed back. Recalling this Rinaldi (pers. comm.), the group’s manager, says:
They kept going ‘we’re still aiming for June release but, oh Magic Dirt have got an album then so we’ll go with July’ and then, ‘oh no, actually no, Shihad are on then so we’d better not, oh Thirsty Merc [have a release due out too]’.

The group’s bassist, Mark Cruickshank (pers. comm.) explains what this felt like for the band:

The writing was on the wall that they weren’t gonna put any effort into us [...] From what I gather it became quite clear that there wasn’t much point staying with them [...] I mean it was all quite amicable but, yeah it was just quite clear there was no point being with the label ... And they wanted to push us really hard too. Like when they were hot they were really hot and when they were cold they were really cold (laughs). Like they were wanting to go hard, like they were just really expecting lots and lots of touring and we all had jobs and that so it was a little bit freaky.

Due to this lack of interest and support from the label, the group negotiated out of their contract and released their second record in 2007 independently, with distribution through MGM.

Whereas Red Jezebel found themselves unsupported by Warner Music, Jebediah ended up signed with Sony Music following the reabsorption into the major of the subsidiary label Murmur Records. This shift from independent subsidiary to major label meant the group were marketed in a way they were not used to, or particularly comfortable with. As the band’s bassist, Vanessa Thornton (pers. comm.) recalls:

I’ve never seen us as a major label band and I’ve never seen us as a commercially successful band. I just think we’re an indie band who’ve had some great luck along the way. So, to all of a sudden be sort of treated and expected to sort of approach music the same way as a band like Human Nature or whatever, not that I’m dising Human Nature [...] they’re just, [a] totally different type of band and we were sort of being lumped in with all those sorts of bands and it just like, we didn’t fit and we knew it and I think they knew it as well, and I guess that’s why the relationship came to an end.

Remembering one particular experience in which the label decided to host a studio listening party for the media, Thornton (pers. comm.) says:

By the time we were doing the third record Murmur no longer existed, so were actually dealing with Sony and there was, you know, I remember having a listening party in the
studio where they invited media and whatever to come and listen to rough mixes or whatever of the songs in the studio which [...] totally freaked us out because, hang on, this is like, our space and all of a sudden there’s these [...] journos or whatever [...] in there, which we had [...] sort of, been really sheltered from, being signed to Murmur, they you know [...] they were all really cool about that kind of stuff and not sort of forcing us to do any of that.

As discussed in Chapter three, musicians (and at times their managers) choose to sign with particular labels based on their needs, the level of interest from the label and existing personal or professional relationships between musicians and/ or management with label employees. Several of the artists interviewed for this research gained the attention of record labels following airplay on triple j, and by performing alongside other local artists who may have been better known. As the interest in Perth music grew, hand-in-hand with the continued development of local events such as the annual WAMI Music Festival and Music Business Conference, there was an influx of record company executives heading to Perth in the hope of finding ‘the next big thing’.

This increased interest in Perth being a creative scene producing viable and marketable music had an impact on the artists who would be signed to labels, and also on the continued and ongoing development of the local music industry itself. This industry and scene remain in a constant state of flux due to the ephemeral nature of local music scenes. Artists’ experiences of shifts in their desire and passion toward being a musician are a further influence upon the development of this situation and are the focus of the next section.

Dealing with pressure and a loss of passion and desire towards music
While much of the discussion presented here has been centred around the desires of a career in music or the music industry, it is important to acknowledge instances where success – be it commercial, independent or otherwise – has been achieved and the ways in which musicians deal with this.

Generally speaking, when discussing whether or not they have felt any kind of creative pressure as they gained more recognition, musicians spoke of how it was more about the pressure they put on themselves to continue creating to a particular standard. External expectations – be that from a record label or from an existing audience – often played little to no part in whether or not
musicians felt creative pressure. At the same time, however, in cases where artists were having to work to strict deadlines, which they felt impacted their creative processes, or in cases where the act felt unsupported by their record label or by no or poor artist management, some difficulties were experienced. Linking back to the earlier discussion regarding the experiences of the bands The Fergusons and Turnstyle, deadlines and a lack of management respectively impacted their ability to continue functioning as bands (Beadon et al, pers. comm.; Kerimofski, pers. comm.).

More broadly, the unexpected (albeit warranted) interest in Perth music during the early stages of this study’s time frame – particularly in the late-1990s – mid-2000s – resulted in a degree of naivety on part of the musicians. Local musicians and industry alike did not believe that interest from the national music and media industries would occur within the context of the Perth market. The interest from labels and other external industry workers was welcomed, with many musicians eager to engage with these players in order to develop their careers. As time progressed, and more acts started engaging nationally, the more artists felt supported in continuing to do so.

While experiencing external creative pressure may be rare amongst this group of musicians, pressure can be felt in terms of maintaining a career. Due to the investments of time and money made, particularly in the initial stages of developing a career, particularly on part of the musicians who place a heavy focus on their musical pursuits, and as such often forgo developing skills in non-music related jobs. This can see them feel a pressure continuing to pursue music as it is the only vocation for which they feel qualified. For example, when discussing how they have sustained themselves financially while pursuing music, Aravena & Burford (pers. comm.) had the following exchange:

Burford: [It’s a misconception that] you suddenly sign a record deal and you, you’ve got heaps of money [...] It’s a big loan and you have to pay it back [...] When the band first started touring [it was] a lot of fun. You think about the fun a lot more than you think about the business and then, as you kind of get older and you realise like ‘shit, you know, I’m 30-something now, I haven’t had a job for eight years’
Aravena: Yeah.
Burford: ‘I am virtually unemployable’
Aravena: That’s the thing.
Burford: ‘Got to make this work somehow.’ And that like, this kind of new pressure comes on [...]  
R: Just, just to get a bit of extra [cash] you know, I’ve been working [It’s the] first job I’ve had yeah, in probably about eight or nine years.

In comparison, in some cases musicians decide to stop pursuing music as a result of the difficulties experienced in trying to continue engaging with the national industries. As discussed in greater detail later in this chapter within a discussion regarding career development, factors such as strong management and the continued interest from the east coast gatekeepers is key. In other cases, however, musicians can experience a shift in their passion and desire toward music, resulting in them retracting from being a performer as well as from the local scene. Linking back to the discussion presented in *Chapter four* regarding the critical role that the local live music scene plays in the formation and sustaining of Perth’s music industry, engagement with live music defines whether or not one is involved in the local scene. In cases where musicians have retracted from the local music industry, ceasing attendance at live shows is one of the signs that this has occurred.

The primary reason for withdrawal from local music is cited as a loss of the passion for music. This was particularly evident in cases of musicians stopping, or heavily reducing their performance schedules; experiencing band break ups; or simply times of hiatus. For example, and linking back to the important role of interpersonal relationships in the music industry, the group Ammonia broke up in 1999 following a breakdown of relationships within the band. Several years after this, drummer Alan Balmont relocated to the east coast to work as a tour manager for other Australian bands. At the end of what had been a 20 year period in his life – from his late teens to late 30s – Balmont left the industry, and also stopped going to see bands perform because:

That innocence goes [...] nothing’s surprising anymore [...] you’ve seen it all, you’ve done it all [...] you’ve just seen so much and so much more than you really wanted to in a lot of ways and dealt with people and personalities that you know, there’s just no surprises [...] you know all the bullshit behind it [...] you know that look that someone gives someone in the band, [...] you know exactly what that means [...] meanwhile] someone next to you will be going ‘oh my God, how amazing is this?’
In comparison, Vanessa Thornton, bassist for Jebediah, says that when the band experienced a hiatus in the early 2000s, she moved to Pemberton in the south west of the state, leaving her stereo and music collection behind. At that time she would still come to Perth and perform with other bands, and found that being able to continue jamming was an important outlet for her. Even so,

I think I was overloaded [...] We’d been playing for ten years just constantly on the road and you know, when we were at home we would jam every week and [have] rehearsals or whatever [...] if I wasn’t playing a gig I would go out and see bands and then constantly [be] on the road you know, having a disc-man or you know, radio going in the car – just, I think it was just, it was just too much and I become a bit disillusioned with music and moved down to the country. Only listened to ABC Radio National, Country Hour at midday and talk back radio and whatnot.

Thornton goes on to explain that after roughly 18 months of living ‘down south’ she started to miss life as a performer and this influenced her decision to move back to Perth. A further example of this lessening of passion is evident in the experiences of the group The Fergusons. Discussing how having been a performer influences the desire to continue attending shows, Beadon et al (pers. comm.) had this exchange:

Beadon: I don’t know about you guys but actually playing so many shows takes [a] bit of the magic away from being a punter as well.  
Joyce: Yeah.  
Beadon: I don’t know if you guys do.  
Joyce: Yeah I think because you over analyse what’s happening on stage.  
Nistelberger: A little bit  
Nistelberger: But if you see something that’s really special, then you, then you really appreciate it ‘oh my God! They are amazing.’ [...]  
Beadon: But don’t you think your tolerance for that kind of thing goes down and it’s harder to appreciate a good show?  
Nistelberger: You become more critical. Yeah you have more expectations. Whether that’s right or wrong I don’t know.  
Beadon: I’m not saying it’s a good thing, it’s a bad thing because it’s, I don’t go to see as many shows anymore.  
Joyce: Yeah. I have only been to a couple of gigs since we’ve broken up so.  
Nistelberger: I went to the Emperors [show] two weeks ago.

The experiences discussed above illustrate the way in which musicians’ engagement with music changes over time and subsequently contributes to the cyclical nature of music production and
consumption. While musicians have spoken of wanting to pursue music full-time the ability to actually do so successfully is limited, heavily mediated and requires musicians to relinquish control in order to engage with these industries. Further, through attempting to develop careers, a shift occurs in musicians’ level of fandom and passion for music. Such shifts, as well as more broadly the experiences of musicians and the continued integration of Perth’s music industry with the national and international industries have continued implications for the local music industry.

**Moving forward**

While the success of Perth music within a national market, coupled with continued the integration of the local industry within the national and international ones has influenced the activities which have occurred between 1998 – 2009 it also has ongoing implications for the continued functioning of the local music industry into the future.

With a strong shift toward being able to develop careers in Perth and successfully engage with the national and international industries and related audiences, some interviewees have spoken of witnessing an attitude amongst newer musicians in regarding the expectation that success and recognition beyond Perth is a given. Further, that newer acts put a lot more pressure on themselves due to an awareness of, as Parkin (pers. comm.) says, in discussing his experience of working with newer artists, “the pressure that people put on themselves, like within the bands - especially the new bands coming up - is fucking ridiculous.” Further, he (pers. comm.) says, “the pressure of competing with the past like, everything from the Jebs through to your Eskimos […] there was kind of a standard set.” Where acts from Perth gaining national attention was once an anomaly and heavily reliant on the interest from the east coast, musicians admittedly have the ability to circumvent the need to engage with record labels for example and undertake more of these roles themselves. Where a new challenge arises, however, is in being able to navigate careers in this manner. As discussed earlier, management is an important component to being able to navigate careers, and a lack of label support can result in further difficulties in being able to sustain a presence within the national market. Additionally, a shift away from Perth as being a hot spot for talent and forming a part of the national industry means artists need to find new ways of gaining the attention of the national industry and associated audiences due to the lack of hype around the
scene which was experienced by many of the musicians interviewed here. This is not to say that newer acts lack innovation and uniqueness in their sound, but instead come up against a reduction in a heavy focus on Perth music from the east coast levels the playing field within the national industry.

Further, in discussing how they have seen the local industry change over time, interviewees also spoke of a shift toward a more professional industry sector. While this is a benefit in that it has resulted in the development of resources and supported the development of careers, the loss of innocence associated with the development of an industry which is now heavily integrated within the industry further shifts attitudes towards an expectation of being able to ‘make it’. In turn, this creates a new set of challenges for musicians and industry workers in the future, to continue building on the past without letting the weight of expectation interfere.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has examined the ways in which Perth musicians and industry workers engage with the national and international music industries in order to develop their careers. Within this, it has examined the influence of international music culture on the music created as well as on the ability for this music to connect with broad audiences. Further it has examined the shifting attitude toward the city’s isolation.

Broadly, musicians and industry workers alike view Perth as now being a place in which music careers can develop, with the hurdles of the city’s isolation now viewed as being manageable and overcome to a degree. This has occurred due to the continued integration of this local industry within the national market from the perspective of musicians who have continued to have a national presence as well as industry workers who seek out connections with peers on the east.

More specifically, this chapter has examined the varying ways in which musicians have engaged with the national and international music industries as well as the consequences of this engagement. Further, they illustrate the influence of broader music industry activity and consumption trends on how this occurs. Additionally, the shift toward industry workers being able
to develop and sustain careers within Perth in a diverse range of roles has further been examined as well as the points at which these members can still feel the need to leave the west in order to continue developing.

Following on from this, this chapter has examined the implications of the success, recognition and development which occurred between 1998 – 2009 on the ongoing functioning of this industry into the future. Of particular interest here is the development of a more professional local industry and a new set of challenges for musicians in being able to make an impact in new markets.
Conclusion

How does the local music industry and scene constitute itself?

Largely focused on the metropolitan area of Perth, the local music industry and scene is highly concentrated. While this in itself is not a finding of this research this aspect of Perth’s music industry and scene influences the focus of the study and the subsequent choice of interviewees. Importantly, as found in this study, it impacts upon attitudes within the music industry towards supporting local music, and it underpins attempts by musicians to connect with audiences beyond the state. The dynamic constitution of the local music scene as highly concentrated and interdependent not only results from the way in which the local industry is structured but, in turn, influences the way in which it operates.

Musicians and industry members alike place a high value on supporting the activities of others within the local industry, and assist each other’s attempts to connect with the broader national and global music industries. Importantly, within this suite of support activities there is a hierarchy of key sites of production and dissemination (comprising specific studios, venues and events) and key musicians and industry members with whom musicians wish to work and be associated. As reflected upon later, musicians and industry members alike regularly acknowledge this hierarchy as one element in the longitudinal decision-making processes involved in developing and sustaining a career.

Linking back to the concentration of Perth’s local music industry and associated scene, this music industry is highly self-sufficient with a strong entrepreneurial attitude. This attitude spurs the development of new business ventures and proactive moves towards integrating well within the national industry. Relevant connections range from the business partnerships which facilitate national and international acts touring to the state, common in the live music sector, to musicians entering into contracts with record labels based in the eastern states. Also important are the other industry gatekeepers, such as managers who are able to provide support, expertise and access to resources which can be used to support the development of careers in music within and from Perth.
What attitudes support local music activity in Perth and its attempts to connect with the broader national and international markets?

As mentioned above, there is a strong commitment to supporting local music activity within Perth and the building of connections with the broader national and international industries. This commitment results from an attitude which supports the development of careers within the music industry, particularly through events held by WAM; and for musicians, providing them with opportunities to connect with industry members beyond Perth, similarly through the work of WAM. Higher profile acts also take up-and-coming musicians on the road with them, and media outlets also support the promotion of Perth music within the national market.

Broadly, these supportive attitudes facilitate the functioning of local music activity while also supporting the endeavours of its members when connecting with new audiences and industry members beyond the city. They are critical to allowing musicians and industry members to develop activities and resources, while also supporting the development of their careers.

What relationship does Perth’s local music industry have to national and international markets?

While being largely self-sustaining, Perth’s local music industry and the people who work within it have strong connections to the east coast. As mentioned above, these connections support activity locally and assist musicians in connecting with the larger national and international industries.

A range of infrastructure components, resources and expertise are accessed for the wider music industry beyond Perth. Of particular note here are connections which link Perth’s live music sector, in which local music promoters work, with their counterparts on the east coast. These associations make it possible to tour acts into Perth, and this supports the development of the local live music sector. Connections between the Perth-based music industry entrepreneurs with their peers interstate and overseas occur due to the realisation that including Perth in a tour helps make events financially viable. It grows the active music audiences in Western Australia, while also affording touring artists the opportunity to perform in the west.
Perth-based musicians often have connections with the broader national and global industries through their personal recording and management contracts, as well as through the opportunities they have, and they take, to travel east or overseas to tour or record. Such connections are developed through necessity but also as a result of making the most of the breaks that are offered. While musicians all recognise the importance of supporting local music activity in some cases, such as recording with producers they admire and in studios of a higher calibre, they choose to work outside the state because they have the opportunity to do so. On occasions, this has occurred because the labels to which they are signed it to, but often Perth-based musicians will take such opportunities because they greatly value this experience and that broader experience can still enrich the scene back home.

What are the implications for musicians and related local music industry members as a result of engaging with national and global music industries and scenes?

While some musicians have been able to develop music careers, others have not. The degree to which careers have and have not developed depends in some part upon their experience of engaging with the national and international music industries. Within this broader context, musicians can be constructed as being at the mercy of globalised music production, consumption and popularity trends. Certainly, as discussed across chapters four and five, while also being a key rationale for this research, the need to connect with broader audiences, at national and international levels has driven much of the activity discussed here. The resulting desire to continue developing or sustaining a career, or to abandon it altogether, is heavily influenced by global music trends and the resulting experiences of Perth artists in the wider sphere. The reason these trends are influential is because they provide key indicators as to the styles of music which will be marketed to audiences, which influences the acts which will be signed and supported by record labels and media outlets alike. Further, they can also be influential to the types of music musicians are exposed to, particularly in the pre-Internet era of which many of the musicians here were a part of.

Industry members, like musicians, tend to require strong connections with the national and international music industries if they wish to develop their careers. This is because industry
members, as well as the sectors in which they work, require support and access to resources in order to sustain local activity. For example, the development of the local festival circuit, as discussed in Chapter four: The structure of the local music industry and its relationship to the national and international markets is reliant on engagement with peers on the east coast in order to develop partner events at a local level.

More broadly, however, the capacity to build a sustainable and legitimate music industry career within and from Perth is supported by the connections made by the musicians with whom the Perth music industry members work. These musicians’ links facilitate industry members in forming connections on behalf of their artists, which in turn develop their businesses and careers. This beneficial effect works both ways, with musicians also benefitting from access to experienced industry-member connections.

Further, the continued engagement of Perth musicians and the ongoing development of the local music industry supports other scene members in their aspirations to have viable careers working as part of the local music industry in Perth. As discussed in Chapter four, continued engagement with the national and global industry supports these musicians’ aspirations and fuels attempts to connect with broader audiences. Capacity is built through supporting local music activity within Perth and the state; and through providing services and resources for musicians and industry members to use and develop as part of their creative and business pursuits. In the 1990s, as the music from Perth began to have an impact in the national market, this improved opportunities for subsequent acts to connect nationally and supported a shift in attitude towards Perth’s music industry as being professional and worthy of national and international attention.

What considerations do musicians and industry members have when navigating the development of their careers?
Musicians have numerous considerations when navigating their careers. Of particular note are decisions to take on, change or forgo management, as well as to sign with or leave recording contracts. More broadly, choosing to work with particular music producers, and to leave, or start
performing with, different bands are also decisions which can have huge impact on a musician’s career.

Interestingly, as discussed i when asked about attitudes towards signing with labels, musicians often seemed naively willing to sign with the majors. While the majority of musicians interviewed have been signed with independents, there are a number of occasions when acts have found themselves signed to majors through takeovers, or through the reabsorption of independent subsidiaries into a major label, as discussed in Chapter five: The implications of national and international engagement on career development and the development of the local music industry. These experiences have rarely ended happily. While the music of Perth may periodically be subject to intense periods of national interest, musicians working within the local scene remain ultimately at the mercy of broader music industry trends and structural changes, as discussed in greater detail earlier.

Choosing to remain with or leave a label is a decision based on a continuing desire to pursue a music career. Conversely, a decision made by a label to keep working with an act ultimately influences the capacity of an artist to have a viable career as a full-time musician. Even where an artist is signed to a label and retains the desire to keep music as their career, the prioritisation which occurs within a label’s roster influences the degree to which artists will be backed and subsequently pushed by the label.

When examining musicians’ decisions to work with particular producers, these are as much about access and opportunity as they are about the creative aspects of music production (i.e. wanting particular goals in music creation and production). When artists are starting out, working with local producers generally occurs as a result of their accessibility and on the recommendation of friends. Once acts engage with the national industry, and have the financial backing and support to access studios on the east coast or overseas, they often do so.

Additionally, and perhaps most critical to the development of musicians’ careers, is the decision to leave, or start performing with, different bands. The reason for this criticality is because creating,
performing and recording music with particular groups of musicians is at the heart of being a successful performer. Additionally, such decisions often have strong flow-on effects. This is because when a group loses a member, it can result in the group losing momentum. This loss of momentum can lead to an inability to continue connecting with the national industry and audiences, with repeated line-up changes being particularly devastating to groups, and occasionally resulting in band break ups. At the same time, however, when musicians start performing in new bands, particularly in cases where they perform as sessional or touring members, it can inspire and support the formation of new groups and enable a new set of musicians to pursue their musical endeavours together. Further, performing with higher profile acts affords up-and-coming musicians the opportunity to develop performance skills, a work ethic, and have performance experiences that might otherwise have never happened. Partly because the industry works reciprocally, musicians understand the importance of supporting one another and appreciate the chance to be able perform with and alongside higher profile acts. Despite this attitude, and the subsequent decision making process which goes along with it, there is no clear correlation between being invited to perform alongside particularly successful artists and becoming successful in the music market. This apparent vaguerity in the market place, where a big break is not necessarily a big break, is due in part to the broader influence of popular trends in music and its consumption, changes to the business structure and revenue streams of the music industry, and the prioritisation of acts within label rosters.

For industry members, sustaining their businesses is paramount when developing new ventures and taking on additional roles. Arguably, industry members have greater control over being able to develop their careers than do musicians. This is because industry members are able to take on multiple roles and diversify their businesses in ways which allow them to develop skills in a range of roles leading to an increase in expertise and knowledge. For industry members, a broad range of experience is greatly valued and this reduces the perceived risks of taking on multiple roles. In turn, holding a portfolio of concurrent positions in the music scene affords industry members the opportunity to work constantly and earn the equivalent of a full time wage.
This is much less true of musicians. Leaving aside the aforementioned influences of broader music trends, musicians require a great deal of time, energy and focus to build the critical mass of performances and income required to have a solid chance of succeeding in music. A lack of capacity, or an unwillingness to commit such time, energy and focus influences the way in which a musician’s career does and does not develop at the most basic level.

Interestingly, when examining the role of the audience in the decision-making process of career development and sustenance, there tends to be a different focus for industry members and musicians. For industry members who work in the live sector (as venue bookers, and tour and festival promoters) and as contributors to local media outlets, local audiences are required for their ventures to be viable. The dynamic differs for musicians. Local audiences are important when they are starting out, but national and international audiences become critical to their capacity to continuing developing a career.

**How have careers developed or become stagnant through an engagement with music industries beyond Perth?**

Linking back to the discussions presented in chapters three, four and five, it is clear that whether or not careers prosper depends upon the structure of the music industry, music consumption and popularity trends, as well as the relationship between Perth’s local music industry and those which operate at national and international levels, alongside the ways in which musicians and industry members engage with these larger industries. To this end, even while musicians and industry members navigate their individual careers by way of ongoing decision-making processes, their ability to develop careers as musicians is ultimately underwritten by their capacity for engagement with the national and international music industries, along with the willingness of these broader industries to engage reciprocally with them. Further, it requires an ongoing willingness on the part of industry gatekeepers, such as record label executives, to continue supporting and marketing particular acts to audiences. This willingness is influenced by the anticipated goals which motivate the label in signing the act, and the resulting investment made by the label when they put time and money into an act.
As discussed in *Chapter five*, the way in which musicians’ careers have and have not developed is dualistically influenced by, but also somewhat independent of, the wider interest in Perth music as a whole. That is, while such interest supports the capacity of musicians to attract the attention of the national industry, and influences a shift in attitude toward being a nationally successful musician located in Perth, the broader influences discussed above also play a large role in the way in which a musician is positioned by their label. In turn, a musician’s experience of engaging with these broader industries influences their continued capacity and willingness to do so.

While engaging with the national and international music industries is generally considered to be the ultimate goal of musicians, and integral to their continued career development and sustenance, this is not always possible. When musicians invest a large amount of time and financial investment in their careers, but are unable to reach the critical mass of recognition and income which affords them the opportunity to pursue music full-time, they often lose the desire to continue working in the industry. Further, lifestyle considerations such as wanting to put down roots, start a family and buy a house, also play a significant part in determining if and when musicians will give up on their dream of being in a successful act. Even when musicians are able to commit full time to music, they can be put off staying within the industry by unsuccessful but strenuous and unrelenting attempts to connect with the industry nationally, and with national audiences. Seeing the experiences of others in a tight-knit community of practice also impacts upon the willingness of some musicians to continue developing and sustaining careers. Also relevant is whether or not musicians get the support they need, for example in terms of management, to enable them to navigate their careers positively. In cases where musicians have found themselves without management and other support, their continued ability to engage with the national industry is impeded.

Broadly speaking, while musicians may be inspired by the achievements of others in connecting with larger industries, and while they may feel supported in their attempts to develop national and internationally recognised careers, engaging with these larger industries entails risk. As is explored in greater detail in *Chapter five*, there is no guarantee of success at any level. The wide range of varying experiences influences musicians’ continued desire and capacity to pursue a music career.
In turn, the experience of feeling supported influences a musician’s broader engagement with local music.

Both music industry members and musicians need to engage with the national and international music industries. Musicians do so in order to develop an audience base which makes it possible to sustain a career. Industry members engage with these broader industries on behalf of the artists they work with, as well as to grow their businesses. To this end, whereas musicians recognise the need to engage more broadly in order to develop audiences, industry members, and particularly those who work in the live music sector, understand the importance of strong connections to the east and overseas-based music industries to have capacity to develop events locally. National audiences are important to national and internationally focused events, such as live music festivals. Such audiences support these events taking place within the national market. In turn, these events support the capacity for such events to be performed locally. Indeed all national events include a range of ‘local’ ones. At the same time, the financial viability of these events occurring in the west is ultimately underwritten by the local audiences who consume the events.

Through the development of stronger connections with the national and international music industries, components of local music infrastructure are supported and industry careers developed. It is the strength of these music industry connections between the local and the national and international, coupled with the ongoing development of local music infrastructure within Perth, which supports the development of music industry careers within Perth. The continued ability for industry members to keep working within the music industry is also made more possible by the opportunities they have to undertake numerous roles, and/or to shift focus within their Perth-based businesses.

For others, however, their desire to connect with broader national and international industries in an integrated manner and with ease prompts them to leave Perth. In the interviews, the cases where relocating from Perth to the east was as a result of professional considerations, the move was spurred by the desire to progress the musician’s or industry worker’s career in the national or international markets.
While continuing career development depends upon engaging with the larger music industries of the east coast of Australia and overseas, this broader engagement does not necessarily result in a flow-on effect which ensures continuing success for other acts. Even though an increase in interest supports capacity development so that more musicians can make connections with these broader industries, it does not translate directly into similar levels of success, or even growing levels of success for all musicians. As reflected upon in terms of career development, musicians are inspired by the accomplishments of others. Nonetheless, musicians remain at the mercy of broader trends which influence the functioning of these larger industries and opportunity plus desire does not necessarily result in success.

Critical examination of the ongoing development of the local music industry, indicates that continued engagement with larger industries supports a momentum of growth. As a result, there is a strong flow-on effect upon the local music industry when it engages in a business development manner with the national and international music industries. This national/global dynamic in the industry context has more impact on the functioning of the local industry than connections made with musicians. For example, the national and international connections that are made through events such as the WAMI Music Business Conference, and contacts which are developed and used by live music promoters who tour national and international artists to the west, enable the continuing integration of Perth music within the national market, while supporting the development of industry careers.

**What is the result of this engagement for the local music industry and scene?**

The engagement of Perth musicians and industry members with national and international music industries has flow-on impacts on the local music industry and scene. These are more extensive, and more significant, than solely the development of careers.

Most importantly, the integration of Perth’s music industry and scene supports a shift towards legitimising the choice to be a musician working within these national markets but based in Perth. Through these strong connections with industries beyond Perth, and the related local growth,
industry members are afforded opportunities to develop their careers within and from Perth. As noted in *Chapter five*, industry members are increasingly finding that more music industry workers consider Perth a viable market in which they can develop a future, including a future as a musician working beyond the live sector.

In discussing how they have seen the local industry change, however, numerous interviewees speak of a shift toward an expectation that one can easily develop a career in music – particularly as a musician – from Perth. This attitude is viewed as resulting from the recent ongoing success and career development experienced by musicians. Such perspectives largely ignore the challenges and hurdles overcome by nationally and globally successful acts in order to achieve their status in the markets beyond Perth.

**How, if at all, has this engagement with the national and international music industry influenced changes and ongoing developments within the local music industry and scene?**

Importantly, as previously addressed and also discussed with regards to career development, the engagement of Perth’s musicians and industry members with the national and international industry influences changes and ongoing developments at the local level.

Even though the national market’s increased interest in Perth-based music does not result in similar levels of success and recognition across an array of musical acts, it does have a flow-on impact in that the success of some local artists inspires and supports the validity of other artists committing to the hope and possibility that they might achieve the same results if they work hard and find the breaks. With the continued focus on Perth as a viable music market in its own right, and a clear understanding of the challenges associated with connecting local artists to new markets, the Western Australian government inaugurated funding programs such as the Contemporary Music Grants Program. Similarly, the WAMI Music Business Conference has developed, and continues to support, ongoing connections with the national and global music industries, as well as educating aspirational industry workers and musicians on working within the music industry both locally and beyond Perth.
What implications does the increased integration of Perth’s music industry within national and international music markets have for the ongoing functioning of the local music industry?

The development of Perth’s music industry between 1998 – 2009, and related levels of success and recognition achieved by Perth musicians in national and international markets, inevitably resulted in flow-on effects for other musicians and industry workers based in Perth. Within the context of this study’s time frame, the success of some Perth-based artists inspired and supported the continuing development of the industry and helped musicians make better connections beyond the west.

Looking forward, however, interviewees often spoke positively about the capacity of the industry to continue functioning and growing in ways that would ensure its future capacity to sustain itself. While it is not anticipated that the local industry will ever reduce its ties to and integration within the national and international industries, it is now expected that, for example, band managers will be able to work within the national market from Perth. Were this to become an everyday reality it is likely to mark a shift away from Perth musicians feeling the need to seek eastern states-based management; and it would also act as a reason for managers to feel they no longer have to relocate away from Perth in order to continue developing their careers.

The live music sector is considered able to continue functioning, having reached a critical, self-sustaining mass during the research period of 1998-2009. While it is still subject to the influence of broader music consumption and popularity trends, these are the very trends that have influenced its growth. This is particularly the case for the increases in festival circuit activity which is now heavily integrated within the national industry, notwithstanding the costs of touring bands in the west. Audience growth has been in line with that of Perth’s music industry and there is now a compelling case to bring international acts to the west when they are also booked for other capitals in Australia. In comparison to the confidence around the growth in the festival circuit, there are varying opinions regarding the ongoing functioning of live music venues, such as pubs and clubs, accepting that this is an area which will always be in flux. This state of flux is evident through the changes in key venues which have occurred even within the time in which the musicians and industry members interviewed first started attending live shows. These changes reflect a dynamic
policy and regulatory environment, as well as differences brought about by the appointment of new managers in established venues, along with changes in ownership.

More broadly, however, interviewees are certain that a positive change has occurred around the attitudes towards being able to work in and from Perth. Even so, the success has been so great that many established players within the Perth music industry and scene are concerned about the development of an attitude of entitlement, with success and recognition as a given, and which suggests that the old challenges no longer exist. One of the biggest challenges moving forward is to reaffirm for a new generation that the members of Perth’s local industry and scene should continue to support one another, and continue to acknowledge that challenges still exist due to the city’s geographical location and the cyclical nature of success in the wider music industries.
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*Wide open road* 2008, radio program, Triple J, 15 November.


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Guazzelli, P. (2010). Personal communication (interview, October 20).


MacLeod, S., Quartermain, J., Temperley, K., (2010). Personal communication (interview, October 7).


Parkin, D. (2010). Personal communication (interview May 26)

Rinaldi, L. (2010). Personal communication (interview, April 7)

Ryan, A. (2012). Personal communication (interview, April 18)

Sloan, P. (2011). Personal communication (interview, September 1)


Wilson, A. (2010). Personal communication (interview, April 10).
Appendix one: Demographics

Demographic information for the 45 musicians and key industry workers is shown below:

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Regional WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metropolitan/ Regional Victoria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan/ Regional Northern Territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<table>
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<th>Where raised (most time spent until age 18)</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Metropolitan South Australia</td>
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<th>Self-defined class of upbringing</th>
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<td>Middle</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle/ Upper</td>
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</table>
Appendix two: Musicians, their key bands and primary creative/ performance roles

Adem Kerimofski, multi-instrumentalist/ vocalist, Turnstyle
Al Balmont, drummer, Ammonia
Al Nistelberger, guitarist/ vocalist, The Fergusons
Andrew Ryan, guitarist/ vocalist, Adam Said Galore
Cain Turnston, guitarist/ vocalist, The Avenues
Dan Bull, solo musician
David Namour, bassist, The Panda Band
Grant Joyce, bassist, The Fergusons
Jae Laffer, multi-instrumentalist/ vocalist, The Panics
Joe McKee, multi-instrumentalist/ vocalist, Snowman
Joel Quartermain, drummer/ guitarist, Eskimo Joe
Julian Hewitt, keyboardist, The Hampdens
Justin Burford, guitarist/ vocalist, End of Fashion
Kav Temperley, bassist/ vocalist, Eskimo Joe
Kevin Mitchell, guitarist/ vocalist, Bob Evans/ Jebediah
Lee Jones, guitarist/ vocalist, Spencer Tracy
Mal Clark, drummer, The Sleepy Jackson
Mark Cruikshank, bassist, Red Jezebel
Nathan Gaunt, solo musician
Pat McLaughlin, vocalist, Sugar Army
Rodney Aravena, guitarist, End of Fashion
Shaun Sibbes, drummer, Spencer Tracy
Stu MacLeod, guitarist, Eskimo Joe
Wayne Beadon, guitarist, The Fergusons
Vanessa Thornton, bassist, Jebediah
## Appendix three: Industry interviewees and question sets

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<th>Surname</th>
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<th>Community radio</th>
<th>Festival booking</th>
<th>Independent label (management)</th>
<th>Music producing</th>
<th>Music journalism</th>
<th>Live music booking</th>
<th>Major label (employee)</th>
<th>Major label (interaction)</th>
<th>WAM</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
NB:

* Interviewee is/was also a musician and was not asked questions relating to this.

** Interview is/ was a musician and was asked questions relating to this.

Community radio: Includes management and music programming.

Music journalism: Includes print and/or online formats.

Live music booking: Includes working as a venue booker and tour promoter

LIMV is Love Is My Velocity (Giles et al, 2010). This interview also touched upon music related (but non-musical) outputs such as books.

WAM is the West Australian Music Industry Association

It is important to remember that this chart only illustrates the set questions asked in the interview that these interviewees all had additional involvement in local music, including outside the timeframe of this research. Therefore, in some instances in the body of the thesis, interviewees may be quoted on topics not illustrated here.
Appendix four: Driving distances and duration

The charts below illustrate the driving distances and durations from select major cities in Australia, Europe and the USA:

From Perth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To</th>
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<th>Duration (hours)</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
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*Hobart is excluded as it is on a separate island.

From Paris

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<td>Rome</td>
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From New York

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<td>Seattle</td>
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*These distances have been converted from miles to kilometres.

NB: Distances shown have been rounded to the nearest kilometre, with durations rounded to the nearest half hour. (source: Google maps, n.d.)
### Appendix five: Festivals/Conferences: 1998 - 2009

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<td>In the Pines</td>
<td>In the Pines</td>
<td>In the Pines</td>
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**NB:**
Rock-It was held March and October 1999-2006. The 2009 event was in March only/ The Big Day Out was not staged at all in 1998.
The Kiss My WAMI/ WAMI Weekender/ WAMI Festival are essentially the same event, showing a transformation in the annual festival run by WAM.
## Appendix six: Key releases of musicians’ bands (or solo projects where applicable)

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<td>The Sleepy Jackson (+ EP)</td>
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*Jebediah and Spencer Tracy EP’s were ‘split’ releases with Jimmy Eat World and Cartman respectively.

+EP refers to when the artist has released both an EP and an album in the same year.