

[What A Life! Rock photography by Tony Mott. A free exhibition until 7 February 2016]

[Sarah Taylor. Metcalfe Theatre, State Library of NSW. 29th October 2015]

[Applause]

[Sydney Live Music]

[Dead or Alive: A particular perspective offered by Sarah Taylor, PhD candidate, School of Maths and Geospatial Science, RMIT University]

[Sarah Taylor, a bespectacled brunette in a black polka-dotted dress, stands at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Great. Thanks, everyone. So, I'll be talking about my wider research project, which looks at Melbourne and Sydney between the 1980s until roughly the mid-2000s and what's changed with live music, but I'll be focusing today on a period of change in Sydney - the late '80s through to the '90s. And it's not that... I'm taking a terrible risk, because I wasn't there, and I think at that time I was so uncool that, like, that title Dead or Alive makes me think of Bon Jovi. I think I was still into Bon Jovi at that time. But it's a great example of a time when live music was changing, and I think, in Sydney, it was getting a little bit mean for a variety of reasons. And I say I've got a particular perspective on it because what I've used through my PhD and what I'll show you today is a mixture of maps of live music locations, or gigs, more specifically, and interviews with musicians. So, it's very much viewing it as a historical, geographical story about things changing over time, and I would say that the reports of Sydney live music dying, you know, like, have been a bit exaggerated, like, Mark Twain kind of thing, but I think it's totally fair to say that live music has restructured and popular music more generally has restructured over several decades, and, in true restructuring fashion, it's been spatially uneven and more negative changes occurred in Sydney in the '90s than in Melbourne. But I'll get into the particular reasons why I think that was so, and both cities have changed, but I'll identify a few key factors I think played out. And also we'll have a few photos from Tony's exhibition and we'll play Guess The Musician - 'Who's that?' - and then try to fit them into, you know, the sort of perspective I've had on live music. So, part of what I do is interview musicians, and we'll start with this lovely quote.

[A slide with the quote printed on it from an interview in 2014 with a musician active in Sydney till the late 1990s, who later moved to Melbourne]

'Things changed a lot between when I first moved to Sydney and when I realised I wanted to get out. Every venue shut down, essentially' - which is not true, but we get the sentiment of what he was saying - 'or discarded music. To actually play was a horrible experience.' And I did hear that a lot. 'It was like you were getting yelled at by the venue for putting your gear in the wrong place. So when we first got to Melbourne, the first thing I noticed was you got a rider.'

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Does everyone know what a rider is? One free drink. You'd be like, 'Yeah!' It was huge. I was like, 'I can't believe this.' So, I'd like to sort of hone in about when he's talking about too. He was trying to make it as a musician in the late '90s in Sydney, and then he left, came down to Melbourne, in the early 2000s. And another one, early 2000s. A musician who was actually originally from Perth.

[Another slide with the quote printed on it]

SARAH TAYLOR: 'We went up to Sydney.' So, they drove up for one gig. 'Drove all the way for the one show, and the Hopetoun were running their clock on the wall ten minutes fast.' You know, so, you don't, like, take up too much air and stuff. 'That was always the feeling in Sydney. It was just a bit wrong.' Always just a bit wrong. 'There was often that disconnect with people you were dealing with.'

[In the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And I think that feeling did amplify in a certain timeframe, and that there's real reasons why people are saying this. But if we get back to the idea that Sydney live music has 'died' - if it's 'died', then it's been a very, very, very long period of death - actually dying. So, it starts early '80s, maybe even earlier.

[A slide explaining a timeline between 1983 to 2009 when the live music scene began to die]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

That's where my research starts. But pretty much the whole time it's been there, people have been saying it's dying. So, maybe we've seen another word, probably 'restructuring'. 'Closing at a rate of knots'. Then we have more 'casualties' in the late '80s. Then we have a few really great medical symptoms later. 'Very bad shape', 'pretty wobbly', 'ailing'. So, it's very medicalised by this point. 'Sagging under the weight of competition.' 1993 was an official report - the vanishing... Oh, no, sorry, that's... Official report - Staying Alive in New South Wales. Ominously titled, and appropriately, talking about the suburban pub rock scene had disappeared by then - by 1993.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Then it's still dying, still dying, etc., etc., and you get the picture, through to 2009, when the Hopetoun Hotel finally closes, and as I will get into, even though that was viewed as a kind of, you know, big moment in the end of live music in Sydney, there was such a negative feeling around that everybody was like, 'Oh, we didn't like it anyway,' and that seems to be part of how things have panned out here. How I conducted research is making maps, because I think that live music is very geographical, because it's all about showing up.

[A diagram showing boxes enclosing gig listings as well as maps and spatial stats interconnected to database storage and processing]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Like, 90% of success is just showing up. So, like, you gotta be at the right place at the right time. That's what a gig is.

[In the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Once you get there, you could, like, whistle into a bottle. That's a gig, but you have to be at this place at this time. That's what makes it live music, and it leaves very good geographical evidence in the gig listings. So, it'll say where people were playing. And when you look at these pages - kind of like the TV guide - but once you look closer, they've always got locations in them - locations and dates, locations and dates. And once you start looking at them in different years, those locations change, and you start to see traces of what was going on at the time. And it's the sort of thing that musicians have to figure out anyway, because if they are trying to work, or quote-unquote, work as a musician, they need to know where to go, they need to know where they can play and they can't play. So, they sort of build up these mental maps anyway, and it's just very lucky that live music is a very public kind of work that leaves very specific records. So, you can look at this... If you're interested in music, you can look at it as a music story, but if you're just interested in human work generally, it's an unusual case where you have very public records of where people were doing work, and you can see that change over time. You can't just scan the gig listings. They're from newspapers and street press and magazines. You can't just pull them off, put them in a computer, and get a map. Kind of not that easy. But you can structure it in such a way that you get the locations out, and then you separate the band names and the locations, and you can start getting some really interesting stats. And again, I can't use all the gig listings, 'cause I think there'd be probably about 2 million over 30 years, but you can definitely see locations changing and also differences in how often bands were playing, 'cause I can separate them out. So, gig guides here - there's a lot here at the State Library of New South Wales.

[Copies of gig lists in newspapers and magazines]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, I owe a bit to this library. Also the State Library of Victoria. Drum Media - that was going all the way through the '90s and the 2000s. Before that, there was On The Street. I don't know if anyone remembers that. No? And Juke and the Sydney Morning Herald. They all had gig guides.

[Sarah speaks and gestures at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And I just sort of carefully sampled them in different years. So, they looked very similar in different years, like, just to the naked eye, but once you start pulling them out and turning them into maps, then you do start to see the changes, but it's not the kind of decline that I was expecting when I started my PhD. I was expecting to look at a decline in a number of venues, because that was the reported story, because Sydney was dying, and Melbourne was dying as well. I was expecting to see the numbers go down and then look for the causes, but it sort of became more of a, 'What is meant by decline?' Because things have declined, but not really the number of venues and not the number of gigs. It's other parts. It's very much a restructuring story.

[Another box added to the first diagram of gig listings and maps involves musician interviews]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And the other really important part of how I've done my PhD is using interviews with musicians who were here at different points of time, or in Melbourne, and asking how they got into live music, where they played, what that experience was like, how they organised it - all that kind of stuff - and then finally asking them to look at the maps to just...

[In the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

That's an important part, just there - 'Oh, I actually don't like these maps. I don't think they're showing exactly what's going on.'

[Sarah sips from a plastic bottle]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, to look at some of the things that have come out over looking at really long-term change in Sydney and Melbourne, we can get a picture of what... ..a change from a place, which, to me, seems like a foreign country, so, the early '80s. I was alive then, but, like, I wasn't going to gigs and stuff. This is I would call 'then'. This is live music then. Of course, it's always changing, but what was

normal, working in live music or being a musician in the early '80s, to me is like a foreign country, and I think that the big shift between then and now was really casualised, competitive, very loose, but you know, inclusive kind of live music scene now, that obviously the '90s is a restructuring period. That's true of a lot of industries.

[A slide showing newspaper cut-outs from the early 1980s. One headline reads, 'Goodbye disco - now live music calls the tune' and a caption over a photo of a five-member band reads, 'From pub musicians to superstar']

[SARAH TAYLOR]

But here in the early '80s, live music wasn't something you felt sorry for. It wasn't something you needed to support or whatever. It'd be kind of like you need to support Maccas or something. It was like, 'They'll be fine, they'll be fine.' The other features that jumped out at me when people were describing the early '80s - it was doing well, people would play often.

[Sarah speaks in the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

If you were a musician and doing OK, you'd be playing three or four times a week. It was thriving, but it was really hierarchical. The barriers to entry were much higher. The costs of sound equipment, the costs of recording were a lot higher. So, that kind of built up a little bit of a relationship where you'd normally be working through a booking agency, and if you wanted to record, you'd probably have a 'recording deal', not just for distribution, but just even to cover the costs of recording. At that time, there was the inner city scene that we would sort of be familiar now with of people doing their own thing and kind of approaching the venue directly. Kind of giving it a go, a little bit casual - go down the pub at the end of the street. That was there, the sort of independent scene, but there was also a suburban circuit, and that was helped a lot by Countdown at the time, which was a national television show, which was huge. It was also helped by drink driving, 'cause you could just have a great time, no-one's gonna stop you, and just a bit more of a push, I guess, from all the people who were involved in live music, and it was much more organised - but it was still kind of mean, just a different kind of mean, and that was going to change significantly into something that was much more casual. Thriving in a different way. So, you fast-forward to the... I don't know what you call them now. 2010s? Yeah, 2010s.

[Two photos of protests from 2010. Banners read, 'Don't kill live music' and 'Are we in Sydney?']

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Now live music - it's not like Maccas. It's, like, something we... ..many cities would see as, you know, as a bit of a motherhood statement. We would like to have a live music scene. It's a pretty good thing. You won't get elected saying, 'I don't like live music.' You might say something a little bit more diplomatic like, 'We'll manage the interests of musicians and residents,' but you're not gonna say,

'Let's get rid of it,' and that was probably an OK thing to say in the early '80s and late '70s, 'cause it did have a strong association with rowdy behaviour.

[Sarah in the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

There's a very clear start when governments started taking interest and saying, 'We want live music scenes' - that's about 2002. Before that, there's only a little bit, really. '90s is just kind of this quiet period where I think everyone was hoping that music would just sort itself out, but it starts being a thing that people want, but they don't necessarily have anymore in their cities. Live music generally, there's more people involved. It's more inclusive. There's not as many barriers to entry, certainly cost-wise. It's a lot cheaper to record. You don't have to have your own PA system to do a show. You don't have to be with a booking agency. There's a lot more do-it-yourself, but it's also really, really casual, and there's not organisations pushing you through the suburbs. So, it's changed, for better or for worse, and part of that change is... On the right there, we have Sydney as a punchline. This is at the Save Live Music rally in Melbourne, where they managed to get a very good crowd - I think about 10,000-odd - to come out against some liquor licensing changes which would have meant that they needed more security guards for live music events, and at the time, we all knew what this meant. 'Are we in Sydney?' Ha, ha! Boom-boom-ching! Like, that's... because Sydney sort of sucked, and what was interesting about it is it didn't always suck, and that's what's great about it as a geographical story, and it reminds us that live music hasn't died, or declined, per se, but it's restructured, and it's been really uneven, and it's for a whole variety of reasons that just, you know, very unfortunately, and you know, not deliberately - just piled onto each other - Sydney did get the short end of that stick. And here's someone talking about being in Sydney in the late '80s, and he was part of the, I guess you'd call, more independent scene, doing their own thing. I think they were living in Surry Hills on the dole. (Laughs)

[A quote from an interview conducted in 2014 with a musician active in Sydney in the late 1980s]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

'I've always felt in retrospect that we were at the tail end of what we'd call the golden era of rock in Australia. The venues were just starting to change and something was different. People were changing their behaviour, poker machines were coming in, breathalyser. I don't ever remember people saying, "Wow this is a healthy scene, this is fantastic." They still complained. But if you compare it to what happened after, it was incredibly healthy.'

[The auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, when I put all these samples of gig listings in different years, looking at them, making them into maps, and being able to separate bands and venues and count them all out, I was looking for this decline. It wasn't quite there. It never really went down.

[A list of venues in Sydney from 1983, 1994 and 2006 showing the gigs listed in a week for each of those years is mentioned along with the performance count]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, in Sydney you can see these are the most listed venues in different years. I've got a bigger one than this. But you can see the venues changing, but the numbers don't really change. So, 1983, there's 471 gigs. 1994, there's 469. 2006, there's even more - there's 788. So, the number of gigs doesn't go down, and in fact, when I pulled out the number of bands, that didn't go down either.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

It did look a little bit different in Melbourne, though. We got some even more exaggerated trends. So, I was, like... something is happening, but it's not that the sort of amount of live music is going down. It's something a little bit more qualitative.

[Two maps published in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1983 and 1994 and one from Drum Media in 2006 mark the venues]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, looking at the maps, just across some really broad-brush eras for Sydney here. In the early '80s, you'd have a ring of suburban venues, the drink driving venues.

[Sarah speaks at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Not sure that that was what they called themselves, but it worked well for them. They were big - they were really big venues, and that would include Dee Why and Caringbah, and you know, kind of further out places. It was a viable circuit. You could work through that circuit. You could work multiple nights a week. You did have to be in with an agency to do that, but it was there. And then in the inner city, Surry Hills. Not so much Newtown at that point, obviously, but yeah, the Surry Hills, kind of Darlinghurst thing. There's that scene, but then there's the outer circuit. So, there's two things happening at once. By the mid-2000s, we've got the same pattern that we'll see in Melbourne, which

is just... You know, just all coming into the inner city, basically, and the inner west. And the '90s, there's other maps that look like this too. This is kind of the middling years. It's like, 'We don't know what we're doing. We've lost our suburban circuit, but we kind of haven't compensated or really started clustering,' and that's the survival mechanism that Melbourne started showing earlier, for better or for worse. Melbourne, in an even more exaggerated fashion, just started to be more performers performing less often and in a much smaller area.

[Maps of Melbourne showing venue clusters in 1983, 1994 and 2006]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, Melbourne loses its suburban circuit too, although admittedly it wasn't as thriving as the Sydney... You know, like, the Cold Chisel kind of scene.

[Inside the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

By the '90s, everything's starting to cluster in on Fitzroy. St Kilda still to a certain extent. And then by the 2000s, it was even more exaggerated. Fitzroy and Brunswick are just taking - and the inner city - just the lion's share of the gigs. There's more gigs in there, and in Melbourne there's actually more and more performers every year, more gigs every year. What's changing and what is declining is not just the raw numbers. It's, um...

[A graph showing the undulating and dropping wave marking the average distance between gigs in Melbourne between 1983 and 2006]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Here, one of the stand-out patterns in Melbourne is the distance between the gigs just, year upon year, just goes down, down, down. So, that means that the venues and the gigs are closer together. It also means that there's more venues that are just doing the lion's share of gigs.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, you have these kind of flagship venues, like the Esplanade, or the Tote, or the Punters Club, that they'll have, like, 50 gigs a week. So, that means that things are just close together, and at that time in Melbourne, you also had venues across the road from each other. It was a visible scene. I don't think anyone was making any money, but you could see it. You could find it. If you were a migrant to the

city, you'd be like... You know, 'I wanna be involved in live music,' you just go out and find it. You don't need to know people, you just go out and look for it.

[A similar graph for Sydney shows the average distance between gigs reaches a peak and then falls]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Sydney just sort of more middling again, basically, during the '90s, going up. I think that's more a factor of just not really getting a centre, or not keeping a centre, in that same timeframe.

[A graph showing the ratio of gig to musicians in Melbourne]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And in Melbourne, the general trend of the number of gigs... So, when I pull out these samples, I can see how many times each band's playing. The general downward trend is that the bands will do fewer gigs. So, there's plenty of bands, but they're not performing as often. They're probably spending a lot of time on promo, and in Sydney it's even more exaggerated, so, yeah.

[A similar graph for Sydney where the line falls dramatically]

SARAH TAYLOR: So, you can still be a musician, and it might be that they're playing at places that aren't on the radar - the underground thing, which is another thing I'll talk about.

[Inside the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, these are probably more likely... When people say things are dying, things are declining, it's not really the number of venues, it's not really the amount of gigs, it's these other kind of... very real, but kind of... not just raw numbers changes. It's more geographical. It's, like, for every band, they're playing less and less. In Melbourne, they're playing near each other and they're probably having an OK time, even if they're not making much money, and in Sydney they're playing less and less when they don't have that suburban circuit anymore. And in terms of what I would say made Sydney seem just a little bit meaner than Melbourne in this timeframe, and take longer to just sort of get its centre, its survival mechanism... And to emphasise again - both cities, and in fact, everywhere in Australia, have restructured. It has changed radically. So, if we think about what it was to be a musician in the early '80s, unless you're actually literally Jimmy Barnes, and a lot of those people still are doing that, that sort of career doesn't exist anymore. We have this big restructuring time in the '90s. It has changed - it is still alive, but it has changed, and it's turned out differently in these cities, and some of the factors I would point to - migration.

[A cutting of an article entitled Year of the Triffid]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I think it's worth remembering that a very large proportion of musicians in Sydney were not from Sydney, and it's the same for Melbourne.

[At the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

You just dig a little bit, and you'll go, 'The iconic Melbourne musician who was born in Perth,' or Adelaide, and things like that. If musicians are trying to make a go of things, they will do pretty much what I just did then and figure out where things are happening and not happening, and they'll go, 'I think we should go... We should move here, or not move here.' And there's a history of that in Sydney, especially in the '80s - Hoodoo Gurus, Triffids. People coming over from Perth. And then you have the Oz rock bands like Chisel and Angels coming over from Adelaide. It was a viable choice to come here, and they would come here for a reason, and then add to that as well. Like, they would actively participate in the scene and help the whole thing grow, but by later in the '90s, it wasn't such a viable option to move here, and you start noticing that there's not as many of those Sydney musicians from somewhere else. There were also some better reasons for people to stay, like, in Queensland or Perth, which there definitely weren't in the '80s.

[Two images on a slide - one is a still from a video clip of AC/DC performing on the street in Melbourne for Countdown in 1976 and the other is an article from 1986 entitled 'Triple J - Go Forth and Multiply']

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Again, sort of viewing live music as part of a wider ecosystem. Down the bottom you need sort of small venues where people can get started, and you also need... What I've seen with a lot of interviews and bios is to reach that sort of next level in the tree canopy, you pretty much have to have some kind of media reach.

[Inside the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

That's pretty consistent. If anyone knows anyone who hasn't sort of had that helping hand, then let me know, but it's a big factor. It's a geographical factor, even though it's a little bit ephemeral, I guess. It's not the musician doing the live music, but if they are mentioned in these national media or community radio forums, they absolutely will have a wider reach of places they can play gigs. So, in the olden days, so, '70s through to '80s, Countdown was huge. It was a national television show, which, at

times, I believe, would have a viewership of about a million people on Sunday night, which is full-on. If you see someone on that show, and then, 'And by the way, they're playing at your local pub this weekend,' that's going to have a big reach, and it did. It tied into a sort of oligarchy, I guess, in the Countdown era from the mid-'70s through to when it finished in 1987, where the booking agents and the record companies would very much be crossing their fingers that their acts would get on Countdown, because once they can do that, then they can push them through those suburban circuits with even greater effect. It was a beautiful relationship when it worked, but it didn't work for everyone, and many of the musicians who worked in Sydney at that time were kind of, like, a bit down on Countdown. (Laughs) Like, one of the quotes was Don Walker from Cold Chisel saying, of Melbourne, meaning Molly Meldrum and Michael Gudinski of Mushroom Records, both based in Melbourne at the time... He was like, 'If those two or three people didn't like you, you might as well get a day job.' So, at that time, Sydney was kind of a haven, I guess, of people who were like, 'Oh, we're gonna work a little bit outside of this sort of massive nexus of power that is Countdown and record companies.' And you'd have a few bands that were just like, 'No, I'm not doing Countdown.' And they would have to make a go of it some other way, and Cold Chisel did that very successfully by doing lots and lots of live shows, but I don't know if they'd be able to be that fussy several decades later, when you wouldn't have that suburban circuit that you could compensate or really tap into. So, Countdown is 1987. Then there's kind of this middling period, 1987 through to 1990, where there's no national broadcaster for music - well, not really. No mega broadcaster. But we do have something stepping into the fold. I just gotta get the right stats on that.

[Sarah flips through sheets of paper]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Triple J. Double J. Yeah, so, we have some quotes on Triple J. 'Triple J brought back some painful memories. I know the rest of Australia won, but we lost big-time. I was in a band at the time. I felt like the tap was turned off.' That's someone talking about 1990 in Sydney, and then someone else. 'We're very lucky in Melbourne to have Triple R and PBS and 3CR. I think Sydney probably had that with Double J, and they lost it. When it went national, they lost it, having to share it with everyone else, and it wasn't replaced. They have FBi now, which I think is really good, but that came later. It really stalled the scene.' So, this was a big deal. It was a great thing for music at a national level. It was a fantastic thing for a few musicians. But in terms of the ecosystem for Sydney, it was pretty bad. So, just to catch up on community radio, Double J, Triple J, technically wasn't ever community radio, but it was brought in in the mid-'70s, like all other community radio stations, through the same set of Whitlam Government legislation. All those community radios you'll see in different cities, they can trace their roots back to that timeframe, mid-'70s. In Melbourne, they've kept the same radio station. They're still there - RRR, PBS. They're still there, and they were a little bit lower down in the ecosystem than, like, Countdown. It is quite accessible, but people really do listen to it. Double J, and Triple J when it became FM, that was always slated to go national, but from mid-'70s through to late '80s, for all intents and purposes it was community radio in Sydney. It was accessible. You probably could take your demo tape down there, and it wasn't a big deal, but it was accessible when it was a bit lower down on the ecosystem. From the late '80s, that planned expansion is on the horizon, and this is a little article, '86, saying, you know, 'This is gonna be great,' and you know, 'We're gonna play lots of Melbourne music and it'll be awesome.' Well, that never actually happened, but... In 1990, that's when it got more serious. Many of the staff who were at Triple J were replaced, and so that's the time. If you look in the street press at that time, there's a few letters calling the new program manager - which, I hope is not here...? OK. A 'festering sore'. So, it wasn't lost on people in Sydney that this was kind of a problem. Triple J went huge. It kept nationalising through to 1996, and it was a really big deal. It was broadcasting all throughout Australia. So, if you were on Triple J, great - it was like Countdown - but

your odds of actually being on Triple J are getting lower and lower. So, by later in the '90s, if you're wanting to tap into that kind of infrastructure of, you know, a little bit of community radio support, and you know, some live gigs, and then work it up from there, which, incidentally, a lot of the independent bands like Midnight Oil absolutely made use of, and Hoodoo Gurus. They used the accessibility of community radio and the support that came with that to get up to the next tier, and that just wasn't there by later in the '90s in Sydney. Pokies. (Laughs)

[A note that explains the advent of pokies in New South Wales and Victoria]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I have to say... Sorry, um... Again, there's some differences between Sydney and Melbourne, and they didn't... Like, it is a simplification to say that they killed live music, because it did exist well after they were introduced, but there's a great book that you can get here by Shane Homan called *The Mayor's A Square*.

[Sarah speaks at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

He looks at a lot of changes in Sydney live music, even further back than I did, and he was very emphatic, saying that the pokies didn't kill live music, but they had very bad timing. It just came along when all these other things were adding up, and it was just the last part of the equation that made live music not as viable. So, I'm sure you all know the first part of this, but in New South Wales, pokies have been around for ages. They were in clubs from the '50s, and... after a lot of lobbying from the Australian Hotels Association, they were kind of jealous that the clubs got to have the pokies. They're like, 'That's not fair. We should have the pokies too.' 1997, they started bringing pokies into hotels in New South Wales. And in Victoria there were just no poker machines at all until 1992, and I remember when they used to have these buses full of old people and drive them over the border to New South Wales just to play the pokies. And they've panned out differently. In Victoria we have the thing of the 'pokies pub', where certain pubs will just go, 'We're going full pokies,' and that's all they do. And in all the interviews, even... ..the best that any musician could say about pokies was just being kind of diplomatic and going, 'Oh, you know, people can do what they want,' that kind of thing, but it was pretty much assumed that it was a mutually exclusive use of space, it was either pokies or music. And the way it panned out in Melbourne was that there'd be kind of some pubs that would just pretty much disappear from the music scene, 'cause they went pokies, and it was kind of this, like... I don't think it's great. I don't think it's great for equitable access to different forms of entertainment, because they're very spatially biased. It tends to be the outer suburban pubs that have pokies when they used to have music, but they didn't come into live music venues, and that's a very distinctive feature that comes through in musicians' accounts of the late '90s and 2000s in Sydney. It was this weird phenomenon of sharing space with pokies in the same venue. Really weird, and the venues would find some ways to sort of make it work. They'd set up, you know, put a wall over there and put the pokies in that room. 'Can you keep the music down?' (Laughs) You know, like... So, it became a real experience even within, you know, a music pub, like the Annandale, the Hopetoun, that there would be the pokies section. And no, it didn't end music, but I think that it really came along at a bad time to undermine some of the social capital which could have been used to keep the venues. Just

really bad timing, and the experience of competing for space in the same venue comes through as being not a great experience for people.

[A slide explaining liquor licensing in New South Wales and Victoria with black-and-white images of screaming men. The captions on the images read, 'I'm mad' and 'I'm angry']

[SARAH TAYLOR]

The other factor - liquor licensing. I guess I would broadly put drink driving under that. So, drink driving wasn't really enforced in Victoria until 1989. They were a bit earlier here in New South Wales - 1982.

[In the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

They started saying, 'Hey, you know, maybe you should cut it down from six drinks,' and stuff. The problem was there were a lot of pubs that were built in between cars coming in and drink driving actually being enforced. It was completely dependent on cars. There was no other way to get there. So, once drink driving is enforced, what are they gonna do for money? I mean, the pokies comes along and you know, 'Hey, we're here.' Not great timing there. Coincidentally - no sort of design in this, just no-one had on their agenda, 'We will increase live music.' It wasn't a government agenda then.

[Mobile phone rings]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

It was just trying out different things in terms of, you know, the usual evils of liquor and rowdy people and all that sort of stuff. In... That's OK! In... It's like the pokies.

[Soft laughter]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Almost coincidentally, in Victoria, there was a report that came out, and I won't attempt to pronounce the name, in 1986, which radically influenced how liquor licensing was done in Victoria, which basically said, 'No, we don't think that having large liquor licensing fees and having fewer pubs makes people drink less. Why don't we try having really low liquor licensing fees and more and more little venues, give it a go, see how it goes?' They were not doing it to increase live music, and that's what comes through in Shane Homan's work as well, is that most of the stuff that's really affected live

music had no intention to be about live music. It's just this, you know, coincidental effect on the ecosystem of what made it easier. No-one was saying, 'Let's have live music.' They were just saying, you know, 'These beer barns are a bit unpleasant. Let's try something really different.' So, in the late '80s in Victoria, they really changed liquor licensing. They were liberalising it and making it much lower entry to have a small bar. At the same time, again, coincidental, New South Wales was amping up regulation of public entertainment. That dated back to the... For really good reasons as well. A lot of the early gigs were incredibly dangerous, and broken glass everywhere and all this kind of stuff. But they sort of took a while to get around to it. So, there were a lot of dangerous things happening in the late '70s, and then the Luna Park fire kind of gave some impetus to bring in some regulations about public entertainment. But they just sort of, you know, got around to it in the late '80s, and then said, 'You need a Place of Public Entertainment licence if you're gonna have live music.' You don't need it if you're gonna watch TV, but if you're doing live music, you need to fill in all these forms, and the musicians at the time could see that this wasn't a great idea. What was odd about it, and what makes the '80s seem like a foreign country to me, is at that time, they're going, 'We will lose our jobs.' Like, you're making a living out of this? Oh, my goodness! So, they could see it was not a great thing, but there were really good reasons to have those regulations. It's just that they were unevenly applied. So, you could have 100 people in a room being really scary as long as they're watching the football or playing the pokies, but if they got live music, then you have to have these regulations. So, at the same time that a lot of other changes were happening in music, Sydney and Melbourne were kind of taking different paths for the lower end of that ecosystem. Another big part of it - affordability. I almost don't go into this 'cause it's so obvious, but house prices. And when we look at bigger changes to music, musicians are doing more of their own organising. Recording costs are lower, entry costs are lower generally, and they don't have these debt relationships with record companies and agencies. There's no-one pushing them through. They're doing it themselves, for better or for worse. They're doing all their own organising, and that really incurs a spatial leash. When you're doing stuff yourself, you do it in your neighbourhood and you do it with people you know, and you need to be part of a network of people and have some proximity to where you want to work and where other people you know are working.

[A cut-out of a letter printed in Drum Media on 13 August 1996 entitled 'No Fluffy Dogs' regarding the 'yuppification' of Newtown debate]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And, yes - yuppification. It's a very old-school word, 'yuppies'. I think we would say 'hipsters' now. I don't know. That's Newtown in the mid-'90s. I'm sure everyone here would remember that, in the '90s, that Sydney house prices trebled. So, that's pretty impressive. And it WAS getting expensive. And it was that combined with all these other changes with liquor licensing, and also, in a broader sense, with music recording and the barriers to entry.

[Inside the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

There were a lot of bands, but, you know, they're all doing it themselves. No-one's pushing them through. They need to be near each other, they need to be working in a kind of accessible infrastructure, and that is absolutely not happening in Sydney. It's getting very, very expensive.

[A slide entitled 'Record stores' showing classified advertisements in the pages of a magazine]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Another thing that's jumped out at me with Sydney, and again, remembering that the recording of popular music has really, really changed over the last few decades as well.

[Sarah speaks at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, in the last five years, live music's actually become a bigger source of revenue for musicians than recorded music - sort of come full circle - and in the meantime, in that sort of '90s period, the old system of record stores and record companies was really changing. It was very vulnerable. There wasn't as much profit to be had in running, you know, a record company, and in Sydney, I've noticed that the flagships... More so than in other places, the flagships of sort of independent music were record stores/ record companies, rather than the venues. So, we have Waterfront, Phantom, Black Eye, Half A Cow. These are all record stores, and they were an important part of musicians' biographies and how they kind of got a foothold and got support, especially if they were at kind of more the independent end of the ecosystem, and a lot of these... a lot of these stores... I think the only exception is Red Eye, and that wasn't actually... That didn't have a bands branch. They all closed by the end of the '90s, because record stores generally are having a lot of problems. So, in Sydney there was just a little bit more dependency on a part of the music industry that was even more vulnerable than live music in the big picture. And you'll see, in all the gig listings from the '90s and the '80s, you'll see these little ads on the side - Waterfront Records, Half A Cow, Phantom - and you'll see some very familiar band names in there.

[A slide entitled 'Social capital' has a black-and-white photograph of a protest march outside a pub. Banners read, 'Hands off our history', and 'Kosky, get off the train and take a look at our arts']

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And a big-picture thing is social capital, which is, I think, gonna be a key determinant of how things pan out in the near future, because really music, for the most part, is a not-for-profit kind of activity now. So, you're relying on people doing it because they want to do it, whereas, you know, back in the '80s, there were a few people in it because they actually would make a fair bit of money.

[In the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Any kind of organising events like this, it takes effort, and in fact, organising pokies or anything like that, is effort. It's got push to it. A push-and-pull factor. In the '80s, there was an infrastructure there that encouraged organisations to pick a few bands and then push them through the suburbs and get behind them, because they wanted their money back. They wanted their bands to play a lot of shows, get on Countdown or whatever, and recoup their money. Now, you know, it's much smaller groups of people who are doing that pushing. Pushing, pushing. And you need a bit of goodwill to make that happen, to actually give a shit, and, like, keep doing it. And I've noticed that in Sydney, that there was a sort of long-term effect of those things I was talking about in the '90s, about it getting just a meaner place, is that it undermined a lot of that, so that when venues actually did close, a lot of the time the reaction was just like, 'Whatever! I'm going to a cool party that you don't know about.' And to actually do the opposite of that and get behind a venue and say, 'No, we want to support this even if it's not really profitable. We just actually want to have this venue,' requires a lot of social capital, a lot of organising and that. They were doing that exactly at the Esplanade Hotel in Melbourne in 1997, but that takes a lot of effort. It doesn't happen by accident. And I've also noticed in Sydney, there's a bit of channelling of that social capital - you know, connections and goodwill and you know, all those sort of transactions that occur between humans - does tend to go underground a bit more. So, I've been told many times, 'You don't know. It's underground. No, I have to show you. There's these other venues you don't know about.' That's for better or for worse. I think, in many ways, it makes it an interesting scene, that it sort of became so bad, so inaccessible, sort of a hostile environment to start out in as a musician, that a lot of it has gone underground into, you know, warehouses and private parties and stuff like that.

[A colour photograph of two musicians playing to a small audience in a room. The photograph is accompanied by social media posts and a quote from an interview]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

That can be really great, because if you just have, you know, a massive oligarchy like in Melbourne with Countdown and Mushroom Records, it can be a bit boring. It's fun to go to underground parties and stuff like that, but there's pros and cons.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, looking at the underground scene, which has been going on for some time, and I'm only occasionally invited to them. (Laughs) Putting these two things side by side, this comment up there is when the Hopetoun Hotel closed in 2009. 'The bar staff did suck. We are only sad the Hoey is closing because there's nowhere else to replace it, not because it was that great.' And at the same time, when the Tote Hotel was closing in Melbourne, they organised a rally and got behind that. Here, it's just like, 'Eh, whatever. I'm going to a great party and you're not invited.' That can be fun, really fun, and you can get some really interesting musicians coming out of it, but on balance, that's my... Nearly finished. And here's the negative side of that. What's left on the surface can still be quite nasty. I found... I encountered stories about this fellow, who, again, I hope is not in the room. He is his own agency. So, this is not underground. This is, like, in the venues that are still more public in Sydney.

[A 2014 interview excerpt from a musician active in Sydney in the early 2000s]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

'He is his own agency. If you get a gig on your own terms, he will appear, go to the barman and say, "I'm a booking agent, you owe me 50 bucks for this act," regardless of whether you know him or not. He's a major part of the music scene in Sydney. Everyone will have a run-in with him. Nobody likes him, but people who work with him are people who don't know the scene. They want to get in.'

[In the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, that kind of nasty, predatory behaviour is more likely when there's more investment in underground venues, but the underground venues are producing some pretty cool musicians. And just to finish with, here's some photos from Tony's exhibition, which is upstairs, and we can play Guess Who's This Musician, and I'll also point out common factors, and then roughly in, you know, chronological order, and maybe think about their biographies and how they relate to what I was just saying. Like, the changes in terms of suburban circuits and how much musicians do for themselves or how much is related to record companies, changes to national broadcasters, housing costs. Who's this?

[A black-and-white photograph of a man under stage lights holding a glass bottle in one of his outstretched arms]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Yeah, Barnsey. So, Cold Chisel - classic Sydney band who come from somewhere else. They came over from Adelaide. They could have chosen to go to Melbourne, but they very emphatically said no.

[Sarah stands behind the microphone]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

You know, 'It's a bit too much of a closed shop. We'll do our own thing here.' They totally worked the suburban circuit. In fact, their last tour is viewed as the end of the Oz rock era. So, the end of 1983. And obviously he's still around and succeeding.

[Sarah sips from a bottle of water]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Another interesting part of Cold Chisel's biography is they were able to do really well out of the live circuit, and they wanted to do that next thing, which was really exciting in the '80s, when a few Australian bands were, you know, making it big overseas. They had a crack at going to America, and, you know, trying to do Men At Work, and it just never worked, never worked. So, if you can remember that song You Got Nothing I Want, that's about America, by Cold Chisel. Yeah. Who's that?

[A colour photograph of a four-man band sitting against a colourfully painted wall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Hoodoo Gurus, yeah! From? Perth. Most of them, anyway. So, they came over. They were in punk bands in Perth. They moved over here and formed a band in 1980, and I will leave it up to Dave Faulkner to actually describe what happened next.

[Inside the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Oh, by the way, they signed to Phantom Records, the record store, and then they got a lot of support from Triple J. And then they went up to the next level, and they got quite big. Dave talked for a City of Sydney event a while ago about what he noticed was happening in the '80s when they were working as musicians. 'Live music has been good to me. I've been a self-employed musician since I was 18 years old.' Early '80s. Remember that. 'The Hoodoo Gurus formed in Sydney one memorable New Year's Eve, and what had started out as just a bit of fun had turned into, "This is what I want to do with my life." A little pub in Surry Hills, the Southern Cross Hotel, became our home base, and from there we launched ourselves onto the world. It wasn't long before we started attracting a following, and that led to opportunities to open for other bands at bigger venues because they'd know we'd bring our crowd with us. Without the stepping stones of those earlier, smaller gigs, we would never have made it to first base. The music we were playing was not popular. We didn't sound like anything else that was on the radio. We were an independent label' - Phantom - 'who gave us an album deal that caused great amusement to many in the music industry, but after two solid years of gigging, we had built a market for our own music all by ourselves. Our career trajectory kept going, but even back then,' mid-'80's, 'we could see that things were changing for those people behind us, the ones just starting out. Gigs were getting scarcer and times were getting tougher, and now, nearly 30 years later, we see that downward trend has continued unabated.' And other people connected with the Hoodoo Gurus who have also migrated, I'd say, would be the Scientists and the Triffids.

[A black-and-white photograph of a man playing a guitar while standing behind a microphone stand]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Paul Kelly - he spent a few memorable years in Sydney and wrote most of his best songs in that period, I think.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

At that time it was sort of a career break. 'Let's go up to Sydney,' late '80s kind of thing. He was already kind of successful, but he'd had a, I guess, a writer's block period, and there's a lot of really lovely songs and film clips that are all about his experience in Sydney at that time. But even though it was really working for him, he got out in 1990. Time to go.

[A sepia-toned colour portrait of a young man]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Tex Perkins from, um...

[WOMAN]

Cruel Sea, Beasts of Bourbon.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Yeah, yeah. And he's another of the classic 'left Queensland' bands.

[Inside the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So, when Queensland started being less bad, Sydney suffered a bit too. So, those... like Regurgitator and Custard in the early '90s. They stayed. Tex Perkins left Queensland in the '80s. Of course you're gonna leave. So, he came down here.

[A black-and-white image of two men and two women sitting on the floor]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Hummingbirds. Was that Phantom or Waterfront? They're connected to that independent record scene as well.

[Sarah speaks in the lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

They did really well in the early '90s out of a period of signing those bands that had been working on the independent circuit. They got on Triple J, they were big, and then they kind of got caught up, I guess, with the bigger record company infrastructure, and that didn't work out as well, but they really had a period of vindication, like some other Sydney bands, and were tied into record stores and migration.

[A black-and-white snapshot of three men outside an old weatherboard building]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Ratcat - originally with Phantom, I think. One of those small ones. They were signed by rooArt, which was a kind of pet project of the manager from INXS, and they had a breakout single in 1990, and that was huge, and I reckon they're still pretty cool, but...

[MAN]

That Ain't Bad.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

That Ain't Bad! Yeah, thank you! (Laughs)

[A colour photo of two DJs standing behind their equipment on stage]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Itch-E and Scratch-E - that's this other part I haven't talked about that much - doof music. Very big. Also part of the independent scene. They got big Triple J play for one of their songs in 1994, but they had been working on the underground doof scene for several years before that, and they commented that after they got big, it was actually really hard to play anywhere, because they were so much a part of the underground scene that there was nowhere else to play.

[Sarah at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

They also famously thanked their ecstasy dealers when they got an ARIA Award.

[A black-and-white photo of a four-man band standing under a wall lamp]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

And I'll finish with this one. Who's this?

[WOMAN]

Whitlams.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Mmm. I think they're... Oh, yeah, I've got Silverchair after that. Anyway, Whitlams are a great... literary band to comment on what was happening in the '90s.

[In the auditorium]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

So many of their lyrics are just saying what I've just been saying then. They have a song about the pokies, which I am going to try and play on the ukulele at the end of this. They started in 1992 in Newtown, and they were huge on Triple J. They really benefited, A, from being an amazing band, but also, B, once they were big, Triple J was fully nationalised, and they were Hottest 100 in the year that the Hottest 100 was the biggest year ever. So, they did do very well out of that, but they had their roots in that inner city scene, and they tended to comment and lament on what had happened to it.

[A black-and-white photograph of three long-haired young men standing in diagonal line against a fence with their arms crossed]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Silverchair - later in the '90s. Again, awesome band, but what I would say is part of a change later in the '90s, which is towards competitions, and you'll start seeing that once that lower level infrastructure is gone in the ecosystem.

[Sarah speaks at the lectern]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

They literally won a competition called Pick Me - and they should have been picked, 'cause they were great, but it started to be an era where winning a competition was your best way to get the next level up, and after that you have Triple J's Unearthed competition as well, which was also a really big deal. And there was a quote at the time saying that, 'Bands are trying to make the increasingly difficult leap from their garage to success.' There wasn't much in between. You might get picked, but you sort of couldn't work your way to it.

[A colour photo of a young brunette dressed in a black-and-white dress standing on stage and leaning towards the audience]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I'll just end it with a more positive one, Sarah Blasko. Working post all that. So, she was in a band in the late '90s. She won a, or their band, won a campus band competition, as you had to do at that time.

[The lecture hall]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

They played at the Hopetoun, and never had to be part of the record company infrastructure or anything. Was able to just, you know... By the 2000s, that's just what you do. You organise it yourself, you do things yourself. You record, do all that by yourself, and you can be quite successful, but it does help if you tie into Triple J and the festival circuit, which is radically different if you think about her compared to Barnsey. They're very... They're both running on their own energies, but they're very difficult ends of the spectrum. And just a recap to finish with. Thinking about those longer term changes, everything has restructured, unevenly, for better or for worse. It's easier to be involved in live music. It's harder to work often. You're only gonna be playing every so often and doing a lot of promo. You got lower overheads, and you're going to be working in a much smaller area, and it took Sydney a little while to catch up with it. Would everyone like to hear a Whitlams song?

[WOMAN]

Sure!

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Why did I do this to myself? OK.

[Sarah drinks from a bottle and bends to pick up a ukulele]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I figured it's weird to have a talk about music without music in it, and I thought, I could do that thing where you play music, and every time I've ever seen anyone do that, like, with the multimedia, it never works, so... I thought, 'Maybe I should bring my guitar.' No, that's trying too hard. I'll have to pay excess baggage. So, I'll use the ukulele.

[Plays ukulele]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

You'll know the song, and to put it in context, this song was written in 1999 - two years after pokies got into hotels in Sydney, a few years after Triple J was fully nationalised, and in the decade when house prices had trebled in Sydney, so, it's pretty much at the... There were lots of other great things happening in Sydney, but live music was probably not one of them at the time. Sorry if I stuff this up. # There was a stage # Two red lights and a dodgy PA # You trod the planks, babe, way back when # And it's strange that you're here again # Here again # And I wish, I wish I knew the right words # To make you feel better, walk out of this place # And defeat them in your secret battle # Show them you can be your own man again # Don't Don't explain # Lots of little victories take on the pain # You took so long to learn # You can double up or you can burn # You can burn # And I wish, I wish I knew the right words # To make you feel better, walk out of this place # And defeat them in your secret battle # Show them you can be your own man again # And I wish, I wish I knew the right words # To blow up the pokies and drag them away # 'Cause they're taking the food off the table # So they can say that the trains run on time # So they can say that the trains run on time. # Thanks.

[Cheering and applause]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Sorry, I've gone a bit over time, but we do have time for two or three questions, I believe. Or you can get up and sing a ukulele song. Yes?

[MAN]

Sarah, how much influence do you think the State governments have on the music scene? I've sort of noticed that Brisbane in the '80s, with the Saints and all that, went really well under Bjelke-Petersen.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Yeah.

[Man speaks indistinctly]

[MAN]

Even in England, under Thatcher, comedy, music and comedy also, flourished. Do you think there's a link or...?

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I think there is a link there, because what it helps to do is to mobilise the social capital in the other end of it. So, under Bjelke-Petersen, you couldn't do a gig without police showing up and, you know, all that kind of stuff. So, once you're a part of it, you're in with these people and you're forming social connections with them, and it kind of forged sociability and action that might not be there otherwise, and it's certainly the case in the Thatcher era. With Jeff Kennett, I think that the other unintended effect is that sometimes really rabid governments sort of accidentally make great things for live music by kind of liberalising other things. They don't mean to. (Laughs) Typically, trying really hard to help live music directly doesn't work that well. You have to sort of... let other parts of the infrastructure flourish, and in the Liberal era in Victoria, they did that with the liquor licensing changes, and they weren't doing that... They also, under the Kirner Government, brought in the pokies. None of them were intended to help live music or hinder it. I don't think they cared either way, but they can accidentally help things a lot, and that's definitely the case in Queensland. And you know, it was an easier place to stay, in Queensland in the '90s, and there was a period of flourishing, but then there's lots of musicians in Melbourne now who've come from Brisbane, and it doesn't conspicuously suck, they're just kind of going, 'Nah, it's not that great.' Yeah, so, I think you're right there. Yep?

[MAN]

Sarah, it seems a scene never dies, it just changes.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Mm-hmm.

[MAN]

In everyone that you have interviewed, is there kind of a sense that musicians just kind of like to complain sometimes?

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Yep, that certainly comes through - that no matter what was going on, like, in the '80s, when things were flourishing in other ways, like, there were plenty of gigs to be had, there were other things that were kind of difficult, you know? Like dealing with record companies. There was a sort of period

where the record companies were bad, and they were pretty bad in some respects, but I guess 'cause when people are working as musicians, it's a very extreme form of the labour market, where all you're really selling is yourself and your humanity. So, you're really gonna come across all those barriers and personalise them big-time. So, yeah, constant stream of complaining the whole time. It's just the nature of that has changed and the things that it's attached to have changed as well. Like, the menace... Like, so, in the '80s it would be more like, you know, 'Countdown and the mainstream music industry, they're making it hard for us,' whereas I don't think there's that sort of schism between mainstream and you know, every... It seems like a really ridiculous concept now. It's this kind of all-in sort of lottery thing, so, the bad guy does change a lot, yep. But I would say that the one valid point, and it's probably a very ominous point for everyone if they view it as an extreme form of the labour market is that the only constant in there is that the payment for bands has gone down - down, down, down. So, in the early '80s, you'd be getting, you know, a few hundred bucks a gig, and going, 'Oh, I don't know about this. It's not that well paid.' And that's before inflation, so you can count on one thing, yep. Yep?

[WOMAN]

I just wanted your comment on the resurgence of the interest in vinyl again and how that may affect things.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Well, there is a resurgence, but in terms of what vinyl was, it's still small, but it does tie into that kind of hobbyist part of the music industry that is putting a lot of effort in and really loves it. So, vinyl is a good way to trace genuine interest in music, and commitment to music. And part of the '90s also was the CD era, which I think was quite bad. So, it was, you know, easy to produce, but maybe not loved as much as vinyl. So, I like seeing the vinyl stuff come out too, but it's not as huge as it was. Thanks. Yep?

[MAN]

What do you think of the new Empress Hotel?

[Sarah laughs]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I haven't had anything to eat there. It's gone full gastro, which I always find a weird name for a type of pub. It's, like, you know, full typhoid or something, but it's like, yeah. This is the Empress Hotel in Melbourne. Very much like, I guess, the Annandale, but no pokies. A small, accessible pub, but after a very long period of operating, 25 years, it closed and has reopened as a sort of food pub. So, it's still there, but it's not a music pub anymore. Yeah, I think I preferred it before, but they did have a bit of an issue where they kept having door deals. Like, it was a bit of a pay-to-play thing, and I don't think that really helped them. They're also a little bit isolated from other venues. They're in North Fitzroy, a few suburbs away from other venues, and I always think that's not a good situation for a venue, to be on its own. If you're in a bit of a group, they tend to survive longer. Yep?

[MAN]

Just in regards to bands getting paid comparatively more in the '80s, did you look at, at all, the demographics of how many people went to these gigs...

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Mm-hmm.

[MAN]

..as compared to now, even though there might be the same amount of gigs?

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Yeah, so, it's really hard to trace the audience numbers, but you definitely get that coming through in the accounts. So, there's more gigs. There's almost certainly fewer people at each gig. So, you'd have fewer musicians working a lot and working big rooms, and there would have been huge overheads to working those big rooms. You had to bring your own PA. You know, you had to have roadies and lighting guys and stuff like that, but they were big events, there would be lots of people there, It would be a very different experience and much more profitable. Yep? Yep?

[WOMAN]

The live festivals - they seem to be very healthy.

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Oh, I should have mentioned festivals! Thank you! Sorry. Yes, yes!

[WOMAN]

And, like, is it so great for, like, the bands or are they international artists?

[SARAH TAYLOR]

Mostly international. It's a little bit of a... What would you call it? Uh, well... In a positive way you'd say it's very organised, and in a negative way, you'd say it's a little bit like a cartel. So, there is a lot of money in those festival circuits, but because they're only done every year, the people who are running it are a little bit anxious, and anxiety and live music - not a great combination. They wanna make sure that their event's gonna succeed. They're gonna pay big money to make sure they've got big names. So, that's great if you're already a big name, but in terms of starting out, not so great. But yeah, they

are quite healthy and they pretty much correspond to the end of the suburban circuit. That's when festivals kicked in. So, 1992 is the first Big Day Out. I think the Livid festival was before that, but they very much worked in tandem with, where there used to be regular big events, like you were saying, lots of people at them, suburban events. Once they were going, you started having more infrequent, I guess you would call them, sort of pop-up towns of festivals. You get a lot of people for a short period of time, and you have to have a big push behind that, and it can work, but yeah, with that sort of risk comes a tendency to want to have the big names come in too. Yep, but I like going to festivals too. They're fun. Yep?

[Woman speaks indistinctly]

[SARAH TAYLOR]

I haven't done that, but there is research on that. So, from the Australia Council - what was the Australia Council - they have a report called Do You Really Expect To Get Paid? And they look at the numbers of that, and I think it's a couple of thousand in the whole country who could make a living out of... Maybe even less, but yeah, that's a great report. The vast majority will not make a living out of it, yep. It's not... You can break even, and in a way, in real terms, you might be doing better than some of the bands in the '80s because you're not incurring debt while you're doing it, but yeah, really, even on a global scale, no, you're very, very unlikely to be making a living out of it. And one of the other trends that's coming through on a global scale with popular music is because you can kind of do OK out of those, you know, like, sort of social media things and stuff like that, but the actual amount that you're gonna recoup off recordings is extremely low. One of the unfortunate side effects is it means that there's more people from well-off backgrounds who do music, because they're not going to make money in any other way. So, that's one negative of that. Thank you.

[A black-and-white logo of the State Library, New South Wales]