

# An Ethnography of the Music Scene in Portland, Oregon

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**Dedicated to the memory of my Mother  
for her wisdom and spirit**

**&**

**For Lougie Anderson & Jay Cushman  
for their incredible generosity in supporting my  
fieldwork.**

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## **Abstract**

The northwest city of Portland, Oregon is a beacon for independent music making in the United States. Portland is not musically defined by a single genre but embraces a range of musical communities and ventures. This has allowed Portland musicians to project a set of common values inspired by the social and physical environment of the city. The musicians who flock to the city to record, and the city's own homegrown talent, share this simple identity, 'Portlanders'.

The music made in Portland is supported by wide-ranging network of facilitators: bookers for venues, music journalists, recording engineers, label owners, record store owners, policymakers and non-for-profit organisations, who lobby and campaign for the changes required to make Portland musically inclusive. This thesis is an ethnographic study of these music-makers and music-facilitators. It shows how the Portland musical community has worked to build and sustain the success of its scene. Drawing on fieldwork conducted between 2013 and 2014, this thesis offers a snapshot of the many relationships integral to the Portland scene, examines the socio-political challenges faced by scene members, and explores how policy-makers have responded to the challenges met by the music sector in the city. In this way, Portland exemplifies the potential of a city to maintain an independent ethos, to nurture its local musical talent, and to meet the challenges of economic and social change.

## **Acknowledgements**

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*Figure 1 Participants' photos of their own feet on the carpet of PDX International Airport.*

## **Introduction**

Any exploration of Portland music should begin with a carpet: an airport carpet. The carpet of Portland International Airport (PDX) is a perfect analogy for the city's music scene. Its pattern shows the airport layout from above which, like the music scene, has divergent runways leading to a multitude of destinations with no definitive end location but many possible routes to choose from. It has almost become a ritual for Portlanders and visitors alike to mark their passage through the airport, whether coming home, saying goodbye, or arriving as a researcher standing on pastures new, by taking a photograph of their feet on this hallowed carpet. While these journeys are being made music is being carried by passengers to all corners of the globe from Portland to new ears.

Before this project began I had never been to Portland; I had only heard its music from afar. My first experiences of Portland music came by chance

through finding an advert for Laura Veirs' *Year of Meteors* whilst looking through old copies of the *NME*. When purchasing Laura's music on iTunes I found she had recorded a duet with The Decemberists, on a record produced by Tucker Martine, all Portland artists. Then in the summer of 2008 when I was on a school trip on a cruise around the Aegean Islands, I found in the ship's gift shop a copy of Pink Martini's *Hang on Little Tomato*, a record inspired by the sounds of jazz, easy listening and musics from a variety of countries, and learned they too were from this city, Portland. When I first set foot on the airport carpet, I did not realise that I was interacting with only a small corner of a wildly diverse and creative scene.

My first fieldwork experience in Portland introduced me to the sense of community highly imbued in the local music scene. Through a mutual friend I was introduced via email to Blues Fusion performer Milo Walker-Hayden, known as Mr Moo, whom I met on my first day in southeast Portland. We decided to have our interview further up the street at a herbal tea café and within a few minutes of beginning our conversation we were joined at the table by a musician friend of Milo's, Monica Metzler, a vintage folk and experimental electronic musician better known as Monikerr, and then by another musician friend. Although active in different genres they all had socially interacted through events such as house shows, a concept whereby anyone's living room can be turned into an all-ages performing space. This encounter set the precedent for the fieldwork that was to follow and was my introduction straight into the field of study.

I soon discovered how Portland's musical life was shaped and supported. In Portland there are music venues too numerous to count. Each of the city's

venues has a distinct music flavour and acts as a natural hub for specific genres, from the indie rock of the Doug Fir Lounge, to the punk scene at the now sadly closed venue The Know. Portland also has a variety of music press outlets, with music sections in the *Willamette Week* and *The Portland Mercury*, not to mention blogging outlets such as *We Out Here Magazine* catering for all things Portland hip-hop.

Music is a part of the fabric of the city, and is played in sports games, shops, museums and even at city hall. Despite not having any internationally recognised landmarks, by engaging with the local nightlife *Travel Portland*, the official tourism board, have managed to build a vision of experience-led tourism with music at its heart, and many local bands have been invited to contribute to *Travel Portland* campaigns. Music and its infrastructure play an important role in the local Portland economy as well as the local culture, playing a key role in establishing and connecting people on a social level. The combination of these roles creates a unique ecosystem in which music is made. Throughout history Portland has defied musical expectations to create intriguing connections and collaborations between and across genres.

Music is made in all corners of the city. Music made throughout Portland can sound like the geography, be inspired by it, and these sonic pictures of the city can be used to promote it. Music tourism in the city is a relatively new development and has tended to focus on a 'culture of the now', selling music as part of the Portland lifestyle. But this is not to suggest that Portland's musical

present does not engage with its past. In the case of the Kingsmen's 'Louie Louie', I discovered echoes of many of the issues I explore in this thesis.



*Figure 2 Plaque commemorating the recording of Louie Louie.*

Walking along SW 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue from its intersection with Burnside towards SW Washington you might not realise you were passing a site of musical significance. This is perhaps where it all started; a moment of popular music infamy. As you walk south, on your right sit four inconspicuous commercial units: a clothes store, a watch and bike store, and a cosmetics store. But outside unit 413 – a shoe shop when I last was there in 2014 – in the alcove entrance you would see the plaque pictured above in Figure 2 it reads: 'This marks the location where Portland band The Kingsmen recorded Louie Louie by Richard Berry'.

'Louie Louie' is one of the first major musical moments in Portland's music history. The song tells us a great deal about youth culture, racial politics

and the musical roots of the city. It is also perhaps the one cultural moment that epitomises the issues facing the Portland music scene.

Originally written by Richard Berry in 1955, The Kingmen's recording of 'Louie Louie' became popular at high school dances across the US, and the band developed a large young audience as a result. But the song was not universally loved. Parents and staff at Sarasota High School in Florida somehow managed to get the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to investigate the song for its negative influence on students. Thanks to a freedom of information request the now-declassified report on that investigation can be accessed, and it makes for an entertaining read. So why would the FBI investigate a simple rock n roll song?

Captioned record [Louie, Louie] is very popular with the high school students, and he has been furnished lyrics for the song, which are very obscene. [...] Radio Station WKXY, furnished what Limax Music Company claims to be the actual lyrics of the song, which is Enclosure #1. However [name redacted] said the lyrics of the song do not seem to be the same (FBI, 1964, p.2).

This is where the investigation gets interesting. The FBI establish that the anonymous complainant has found the official lyrics don't match with their reading; yet they are inclined to investigate the song for subversion, and genuinely entertain the notion that the officially published lyrics are false.

So, what where these obscene lyrics? In the report there are letters from parents who claim:

the lyrics are so filthy that I cannot enclose them in this letter...these morons have gone too far...this land of ours is headed for an extreme state of moral degradation what with this record, the biggest hit movies and sex and violence exploited on TV. How can we stamp out this menace???? (FBI, 1964, p.12).

The suspense grabs the reader, who is finally treated to a transcription of the lyrics in all their misinterpreted glory:

## Louie Louie

Oh No, Grab her way down Low  
There is a fine little girl waiting for me  
She is just a girl across the way  
Then I take her all alone  
She's never the girl I lay at home

Tonight at ten I'll lay her again  
We'll fuck your girl and by the way  
And...on that chair I'll lay her there  
I felt my bone...sh...in her hair

She had a rag on. I moved above.  
It won't be long she'll slip it off  
I held her in my arms and then  
And I told her I'd rather lay her again

(FBI, 1964, p.13).

A comparison with the original lyrics reveals certain slight differences:

## Louie Louie – Richard Berry (Google)

Louie Louie, oh no  
Me gotta go  
Aye-yi-yi-yi, I said  
Louie Louie, oh baby  
Me gotta go  
Fine little girl waits for me  
Catch a ship across the sea  
Sail that ship about, all alone  
Never know if I make it home

Louie Louie, oh oh no  
Me gotta go, oh no  
Louie Louie, oh baby  
I said we gotta go  
Three nights and days I sail the sea  
Think of girl, constantly  
On that ship, I dream she's there  
I smell the rose in her hair.

Louie Louie, oh no  
Me gotta go  
Aye-yi-yi-yi, I said  
Louie Louie, oh baby  
Me gotta go  
Okay, let's give it to 'em, right now!  
See Jamaica, the moon above  
It won't be long, me see me love  
Take her in my arms again  
I tell her I'll never leave again

Louie Louie, oh no  
Me gotta go  
Aye-yi-yi-yi, I said  
Louie Louie, oh baby  
Me gotta go  
I said we gotta go now  
Let's take it on outta here now  
Let's go!!.

It is clear that the first set of lyrics was tainted by the listener's personal bias towards the text. Rather than concede that lead singer Jack Ely's delivery was merely indecipherable, the listener here infers references to sexual acts. The FBI later reported that 'All three governmental agencies dropped their investigations because they were unable to determine what the lyrics of the song were, even after listening to the records at speeds ranging from 16rpm to 78rpm' (FBI, 1964, p.6). There is, however, a mild obscenity hidden in the recording: at 0:54 drummer Lyn Easton can be heard to shout 'fuck', reputedly due to his dropping a stick. What the investigation demonstrates is a generation gap in the thinking about popular music, with teachers and the FBI working to stop poisoning youth with music they felt promoted insurrection. In this thesis the generation gap is once again exposed, with authorities, in the state of Oregon, such as the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, employing somewhat draconian laws around drinking, thereby limiting access to music for those under the legal state drinking age of 21.

Authoritative intervention on the morality of youth is not the only issue we find in 'Louie Louie'. Whilst the Kingsmen's version is popular, the original by Richard Berry has not gained as much attention. Throughout the history of popular music, as with the Kingsmen's single, the music industries have often

privileged cover versions by white performers to the original performances by black artists, in order to sell a song to a mainstream white market. In the historical reception of the 'Louie Louie' the Kingsmen are often believed to have recorded the definitive version of the song. It is important to note that while other covers by black artists such as Otis Redding and Toots & the Maytals have received some critical attention (Stokes, 2015) their versions are always compared to the Kingsmen's. The fact that the Kingsmen represent Portland, the major metropolitan centre of the only state, Oregon, where black people were not permitted to own property until the second half of the twentieth century, merely adds to the complexity of this discourse. Even today Portland is still living in the shadows of its past and its ties to far-right white supremacist groups such as the KKK. As I show in chapter seven, policing of the hip-hop scene has led to community divisions, with the hip-hop scene being driven underground as a result of the disproportionate responses to it by local police, situations many local scene members feel were driven by racial bias.

'Louie Louie' remains a definitive sonic artefact of its age and points to one of the first national successes by a group from Portland. The remaining members of the group are still revered for their role in the city's musical history: in addition to the plaque hanging outside 413 SW 13<sup>th</sup>, they have had 'Louie Louie Day' declared in their honour as April 11th, a world record for the most people performing the song, and even a donut named after them from local trader Voodoo Donuts. The embracing of this song as part of the city's heritage has allowed a musical narrative to develop, and new possibilities for a reflexive heritage-driven area of tourism to emerge.

## Research Questions & Thesis Structure

Through my fieldwork I have discovered three main categories in which music is used as a resource in Portland: social, political and economic. These are the focus of my thesis. As I have already shown, there are many musicians living in the Portland metropolitan area. Music is a binding common interest which can be the basis for social interactions, whether between music-makers themselves or music-makers interacting with audiences or facilitators (promoters, recording engineers, publishers etc.). Music can be used as a political resource in many ways; in the context of Portland, the idea of music as part of 'the arts' has become an important civic policy objective. Politicians are required to engage with cultural policy to maintain continuing support of the citizens, as discussed in chapter five. The use of music as a geo-political resource is particularly noticeable in Portland, and the musical branding of 'Portland' has both fostered public pride and helped develop a narrative around tourism.

Throughout this thesis I explore issues of the Portland 'scene', its composition and its infrastructure, and its impact on the local economy. Focusing on the period 2013-2014 I take an ethnographic approach to these key themes, exploring the position of key stakeholders, who I have identified as either music-makers (primarily musicians, but also music teachers, non-profit workers who might not give regular public performances, DJs, and others) or music-facilitators (those who play a role in music infrastructure, those who make the conditions

for music to be performed, recorded and sold, and those reviewing and reporting on the scene).

In chapter one I explore the geography and demography of the musical life of Portland, giving a picture of the musical activity across the city both historically and during the period of my fieldwork. Chapter two then establishes my methodology for an ethnography of the Portland music scene, detailing the various tools I utilised to gain accounts of music life, and reflecting on my ethical responsibilities as researcher.

In chapter three I explore the question, 'is there a Portland sound?'. In doing so I draft the sonic landscape of my fieldwork and explore whether any genre can ever define the city. I examine the role of collaboration across genres in fertilising a diverse output of music, and the role of geography in shaping the sounds that are produced within it. Chapter four is an exploration of music venues, the vital infrastructure of the Portland's music scene. I interpret the series of maps Portland residents drew for me, showing how they view and understand the relationship between music and urban space.

In chapter five I consider the role city authorities have played in supporting and governing music across the city, and the utilisation of music as a political resource. The issue of 'the arts' is an important election issue, and I explore The Arts Tax, a key piece of legislation supporting artistic endeavour and education in the city, the role of then-Mayor Sam Adams in advocating for changes in arts policy, and the ways in which musicians have engaged with governance and mainstream political issues.

Chapter six looks closely at the key issues of all-ages access to music, and restrictive legislation taken by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission. I contrast this with the work of PDX Pop Now!, which creates opportunities for young people to interact with Portland music. In chapter seven I outline the legislative changes required to enable more people to access music as it relates to the nature of policing in Portland's music scene. By focusing on the tensions that have developed between the Portland Police Bureau and the hip-hop community I focus on the achievements of the hip-hop community and the ways in which infrastructure has increased to ensure development of hip-hop across the city.

In chapter eight I show how music operates as a social resource in Portland, mapping the networks that connect participants of this study. I invoke Ruth Finnegan's concept of 'pathways' (1989) and Bourdieu's notion of social and cultural capital (1986) to help define where power lies in the city. Because music in Portland acts as both a social and economic resource, in chapter nine I explore how musical narratives have been created to sell Portland as a tourist destination. Drawing on contemporary advertising campaigns, festivals marketing, and two key brand exports, the 'Keep Portland Weird' slogan and the television show *Portlandia*, I suggest how cultural tourism might develop in Portland in the future. I conclude with a final assessment of Portland as a political and economic resource in the city, and the potential of music to serve as a sustainable resource.

Portland shares characteristics with many cities that can boast a thriving musical life and a burgeoning tourism sector. But as this thesis will demonstrate,

Portland is unique in its promotion of local music, from volunteer organisations right up to the City Council. In every instance, civic recognition of the economic impact of pro-music policy choices, and celebration of Portland's unique character, provides a model for other cities to use popular music as a political and economic resource, and to foster the social benefits of a vibrant musical scene.

## 1. Portland's Music Life

Portland is a city of just over 600,000 residents (US Census Bureau, 2015), situated in the North-Western state of Oregon, approximately 173 miles south of Seattle. The city sits on the Willamette river and operates a major port as well as hosting an international airport. It is also home to international corporations such as Nike, Adidas and advertising agency Wieden & Kennedy. The city has three major sports teams: Portland Timbers (Men's Soccer), Portland Thorns (Women's Soccer) and Portland Trailblazers (NBA Basketball). The city is also known for its quirks: it hosts an annual naked bike ride, the starlight night time parade, and boasts over 500 different food carts from a wide range of cuisines (Food Carts Portland, 2017), a perfect way to taste different cultures which have come to the city.

The city is politically liberal, with over 73% of voters backing democrat Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election (New York Times, 2016), and with most city council members being registered Democrat voters, despite their having no official political affiliation. The support of cultural policy within a civic agenda is viewed as crucial to secure election, with residents expressing in large numbers the wish to support ballot measures that improve access to arts and culture.<sup>1</sup> The city has become known for its thriving cottage industries, from craft beer, to jewellery, to coffee and, as this study shows, record stores, music recording, and production.

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<sup>1</sup> This is discussed in more detail within chapter five.

## Geography of Portland

Portland is a city that connects the spirit of community with that of its natural surroundings. It uses its physical advantages to create a unique lifestyle that is attractive to creative individuals, uprooting them and transplanting them into the 'City of Roses'.<sup>2</sup> The city is situated on the banks of both the Willamette and Columbia rivers, the latter famous for carrying the explorers Lewis & Clark to the region. The Willamette is a central vein to the city, connecting its two halves by a bridge, whereas the Columbia river runs across the north of the city, marking its dividing line with the state of Washington. Portland sits to the west of the Cascade mountain range. It is surrounded by Mt Hood to the east, Mount St Helens to the north-east and a vast wealth of Douglas Fir trees culminating to the west in the Tillamook Forest. Portland also sits on the Cascadia subduction zone and is prone to earthquakes, which have dictated the methods of architectural construction in the area.

Portland is a city also notorious for its rain, with a climate described by many as 'wet for nine months of the year'. The average yearly rainfall is 35.98 inches (US Climate Data) and has an annual temperature of 12.5 degree Celsius (ibid). Portland's geography and climate impact music making and even become the background to local music, whether mentioned in lyrics or sampled on a hip-hop track.

The Portland scene sits across the city's four quadrants, and within each quadrant lies a collection of neighbourhoods with distinct feels and flavours,

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<sup>2</sup> An alternative moniker for Portland. During my field research in 2013/4 I found that many musicians who had moved to Portland from other US cities, due in part to the historically low cost of living, were being priced out of the city.

mainly centring around streets on the city's grid-based system.<sup>3</sup> During my research I spent time in the NE Mississippi/Williams neighbourhood with its concentration of venues, rehearsal studios and good pizza. I interviewed many participants in the SE Belmont and Hawthorne neighbourhoods, which are characterised with vintage shops, local boutiques, food outlets and bars. I spent time in St John's a neighbourhood in North Portland, the epicentre of hip-hop music making; and the gentrified Pearl District, in North West Portland, which had transformed into a neighbourhood with hyper-inflated houses prices, offices for creative business, and home to the city's main jazz club, Jimmy Mak's. These neighbourhoods are in a state of flux, shaped by economic and social interests, with property prices increasing depending on the area's desirability. The city has transformed from a backwater city into a hotspot of creativity, with music often marking those moments in history.

### **A Brief History of Portland Music**

The musical life of the city had already been established in a variety of forms before the Klingsmen's recording of 'Louie Louie'. As I suggested in the introduction, a hostile racial environment meant that black musicians often struggled to gain national recognition. But it was black jazz musicians who were the pioneers and architects of Portland as a musical city.

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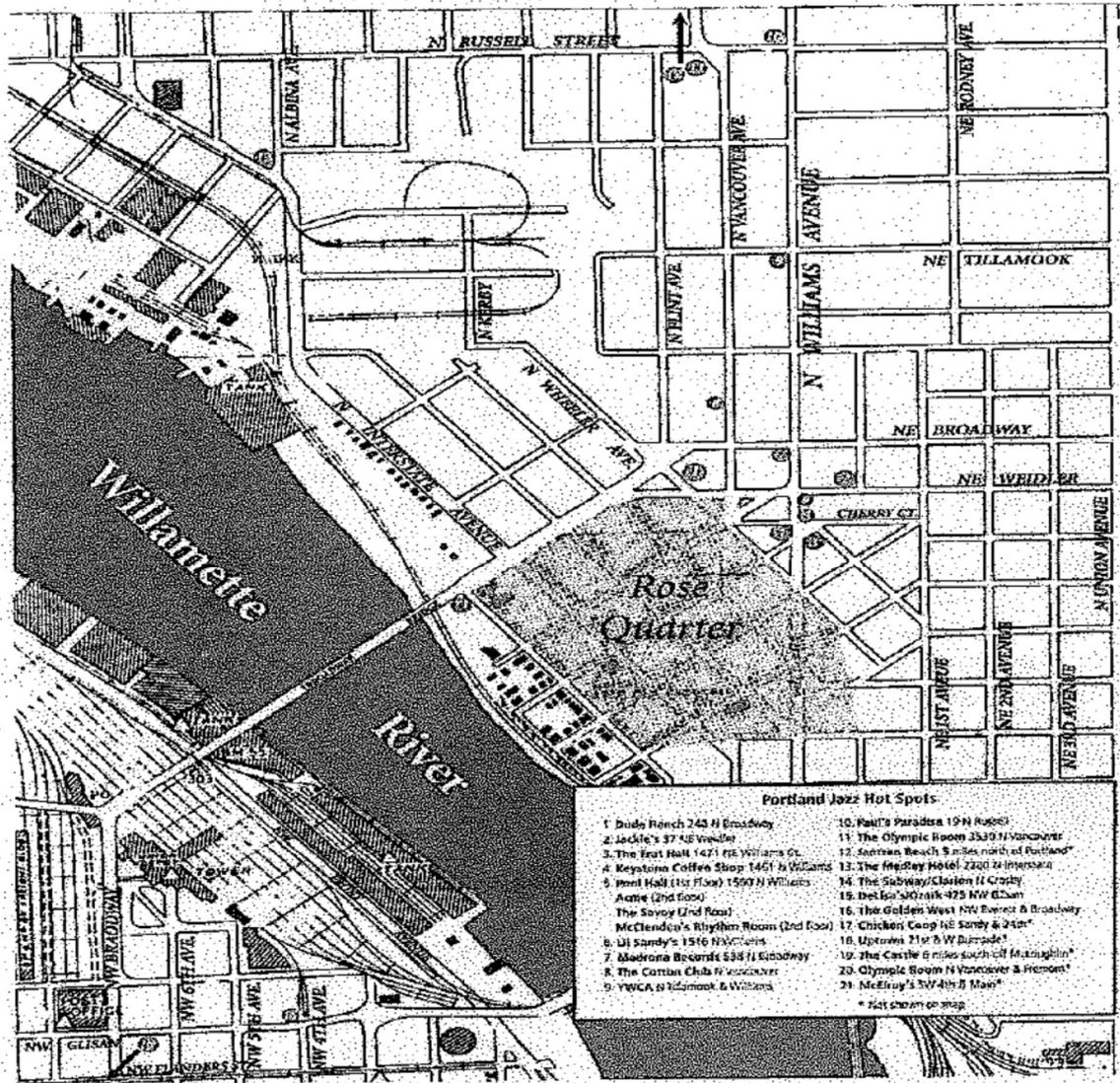
<sup>3</sup> A map of Portland can be found in Appendix 4

Robert Dietsche argues that the development of jazz in Portland was due to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1933 decision to build the Bonneville Dam to the east of Portland:

Had it not been for the lobbying power and the indefatigable perseverance of future Governor Charles Martin and Senator Charles McNary, the Bonneville Dam would not have been built in time for World War I. The grand migration of Black workers from the South and the music they brought with them would not have arrived (2005, xi).

Black workers established a new jazz musical community in Portland occupying the area where the Rose Quarter and the city's main arena now stands. In *Jump Town: The Golden Years of Portland Jazz 1942-1957* Dietsche presents a vivid account of one of the earliest periods in time during which Portland became a hub for musical activity. Its opening paints a picture of what the area around Williams avenue was like:

Fifty years ago, you could stand in the middle of the Avenue (where the Blazers play basketball today) and look up Williams past the chili parlours, past the barbecue joints, the beauty salons, all the way to Broadway, and see hundreds of people dressed up as if they were going to a fashion show. It could be four in the morning. It didn't matter: this was one of those 'streets that never slept'. And what were they looking for? Jazz mostly. There must have been more than ten clubs in as many blocks, not counting the ones in the surrounding area (2005, p.1).



Map of Portland Jazz Hotspots

Figure 3 Map of Portland Jazz Hotspots reproduced with permission from OSU Press

In his account Dietsche delves deep into the lives of musicians at the time including those he ascribed the title of 'Pioneers of Portland jazz' (2005, p.1) such as Don Anderson, Side Porter, Al Pierre, The Castle Jazz Band, Illinois Jacquet and Ralph Rosenlund. The fact that no female musicians are given prominence in Dietsche's account suggests that there are stories yet to be uncovered.

Dietsche also describes visits from internationally renowned jazz musicians to Portland venues such as The Dude Ranch:

What a jazz buff wouldn't give for a tape recorder and a front-row table the night Louis Armstrong dropped in from his dance date at Jantzen beach. Or when Charles Barnett sat in with the Banjoski house band or the August night just a couple of weeks after the end of World War II when Lucky Thompson and most of the Basie Band showed up (2005, p.2).

After reading Dietsche's book I attempted to source recordings to hear what Portland sounded like at the time and discovered a series of recordings made by the Castle Jazz Band in 1949, performing standards including 'Kansas City Stomp', 'Darktown Strutters Ball' and 'Sweet Georgia Brown' in a Dixieland style. Although Dixieland was a 'retro' form at the time, combined with visits by Louis Armstrong, Charles Barnett, and the Basie Band, it could be argued that the Castle Jazz Band connected Portland with a national jazz phenomenon, with the sounds of a nation at the peak of post-war economic growth.

Urban development and regeneration soon saw these venues of musical importance being bulldozed to make way for 'progress', with the heartbeat of one of Portland's first connected musical communities replaced by a stadium where local musicians rarely perform.<sup>4</sup> But Portland jazz still continues: Esperanza Spalding won the Grammy for Best New Artist in 2011, and for Best Jazz Album in 2013 for *Radio Music Society*; and Pink Martini combine elements of jazz with a plethora of other musical forms, tour regularly across the globe, and their music soundtracks a variety of films and television shows.

During my fieldwork the jazz community was centred on Jimmy Mak's,<sup>5</sup> a premier venue playing host to hometown heroes such as Mel Brown. From the

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<sup>4</sup> Local music is still heard locally by DJ OG One, who regularly spins local music during Portland Trail Blazers basketball games.

<sup>5</sup> Jimmy Mak's closed [in 2016], but there is talk of its reopening under new management.

1960s to the 1980s Brown worked as a drummer with many Motown artists, including Martha & The Vandellas and Diana Ross; now a book-keeper, Mel keeps the magic alive by performing with his various ensembles including the B3 Organ group. There were also strong jazz music education programmes, such as the American Music Programme, fostering the talent of new jazz performers, so it is clear that the legacy of Jumptown lives on in innovative new ways.

Another striking account of Portland's musical and cultural past comes from Polina Olsen and her book *Portland in the 1960s: Stories from the Counterculture*. During my fieldwork I assisted Polina in her tour of 'Lost South Portland', which took in the Jewish and Italian communities built up in the South West corner of the city and learned for myself how music often played a prominent role in the city's sacred context. In her book Polina discusses the diversity of music across the city, citing the group The Portland Zoo, whose music embraced the countercultural ethos and incorporated 'gypsy jazz, black blues, Hungarian folk, German avant-garde theatre, Appalachian mountain music and more' (2012, p.52). Olsen also discusses the founding of long standing Portland music institution KBOO radio:

With commercial radio limited to popular entertainment, KBOO's founders sought new directions. They broadcast Portland State University lectures and community concerts. Affiliated station shared tapes by mail. [...] KBOO started the day with classical music followed by bluegrass, blues and jazz. Antinuclear activist Norman Solomon hosted a public affairs show. Nationally known performers like Joan Baez and Country Joe and the Fish stopped by when in town (2012, p.84)

In the 1980s, when punk and post-punk music gained large followings across the nation, local bands such as Dead Moon, Poison Idea and The Wipers brought a dark garage punk sound to the city, which I discuss in more detail in chapter

three. These bands would often perform at iconic venues such as Satyricon, which was demolished in 2011 to make way for the renovation in the Pearl district of North West Portland. Portland then became part of the Pacific northwest grunge phenomenon often attributed to Seattle, an issue I explore in chapter nine. A key venue of the time was the X-Ray Café, a key all-ages venue in the city that hosted not only rock bands such as Everclear, but also influential Portland singer-songwriter Elliot Smith, whose honest, self-reflexive style has inspired many modern singer-songwriters.

What many consider to be the dominant genre in Portland is what is often called indie-folk:<sup>6</sup> indie rock bands with traditional songwriting approaches, vocal harmonies and unusual instrumentation such as the hurdy-gurdy or the bowed saw, represented by bands such as The Decemberists, Ages & Ages, Laura Gibson, Laura Veirs, Loch Lomond, Typhoon, Y La Bamba, Blind Pilot, and Blitzen Trapper. Although all of these bands are still active, many of the participants in my project suggest that the height of the indie-folk period was 2010-2013. It was during this time that The Decemberists' album *The King Is Dead* went to number one on the Billboard 200 chart, and that I began following developments in the Portland scene which would inspire me to write this thesis. But as I show in chapter three, there is no one genre that defines a Portland 'sound'.

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<sup>6</sup> This term is under contention within the scene, but I decided to use this due to the frequent references to it by participants for this particular sound and era in time.

## Demography & Settlement

Portland is known for being a politically progressive and liberal city, but the population is not terribly diverse: the US Census Bureau estimates that in 2017 Portland's population was 77% white, 9.7 Latino, 7.6% Asian, and 5.7% black, 5.2% mixed heritage, and less than 0.7% Native American. (US Census Bureau, 2018). Although there is not a single reason for the migration of particular groups to the city, the migration north-west from the New Deal through World War II is a familiar trope. Today, Portland's universities attract international students, as do local multinational companies such as Nike and Intel. But it cannot be denied that the city is predominantly white. In an article for website *Gizmodo*, Matt Novak explores how prevalent racial discrimination, particularly towards the African-American community, has been in Oregon since the state's founding in 1859:

When Oregon was granted statehood in 1859, it was the only state in the Union admitted with a constitution that forbade black people from living, working, or owning property there. It was illegal for black people even to move to the state until 1926 (Novak, 2015).

Discriminatory practices calling for racial purity were enshrined in the state's constitution. But this history is not as straight forward as it might appear:

The majority of Oregonians (which is to say the territory's new white residents who were systematically and sometimes violently oppressing its Native peoples) opposed slavery. But they also didn't want to live anywhere near anyone who wasn't white (Novak, 2015).

This in itself makes the discussion about Oregon's past more complex, with Novak implying that there was no thirst for slavery but rather a thirst to become a self-segregating white community. This history darkens through Novak's article,

as he shows how racial purity and white utopia were foremost for politicians in the state, as former state senator and house member John R McBride asserts: 'We were building a new state on virgin ground; its people believed it should encourage only the best elements to come to us and discourage others' (John R McBride cited in Novak, 2015). This harrowing statement summarises the ideology behind a succession of legislation denying rights to anyone without Caucasian ethnicity.

In many interviews I conducted participants shared their thoughts on the city's lack of diversity. Global Bass DJ Anjali Hursh explained how she feels various communities have been subjected to gentrification in Portland:

Where we live farther out in southeast lots of Asians, lots of Latinos & African Americans, we've just kind of all been push out to where the rent and mortgages and cheaper. People always tell us 'your party saved my life'. It was the one place you can go an experience diversity. I'm pretty proud of that, you're in a zone, you can fit in. We have a long time queer following. Our parties have been pretty much a safe space for people of all stripes (Anjali Hursh, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Armando Gonzales, a local radio presenter and the booker for the annual Cinco de Mayo festival, also emphasises the importance for spaces in which cultures can be expressed:

In Portland it's still predominantly white. Within Portland there's a whole range of communities in there that are not as visible or as vocal and I think the Cinco de Mayo festival allows the Latino community to showcase their talents and to say hey we're here, don't be afraid of us, it's to have fun, we can work together as a community, we can work together and play together (Armando Gonzales, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The visibility of communities through events like Cinco de Mayo lets people across Portland interact with other cultures and recognise them as part of a

common identity. Music can initiate such connections and its plethora of sounds  
Portland displays a rich musical diversity.

### **Diversity of Music**

During my fieldwork I came across a variety of groups performing in many  
different styles in venues across the city. To illustrate this diversity, I will share  
some of the unexpected musical experiences I had in the city.

One evening I was invited to Mississippi Pizza to see the Balkan brass  
ensemble Krebsic Orkestar perform.



*Figure 4 Balkan Inspired Brass Band The Krebsic Orkestar performing at Mississippi Pizza*

After the band finished playing a DJ took over, playing music I was familiar with  
from traveling to see to my family in Hungary. His name was DJ Global Ruckus, or  
Kurt to his friends, and in an interview a few weeks later he described the scale  
and definition of the musical genres he engages with as a DJ:

My main thrust is Global Bass. Balkan is definitely one of my big influences I also love  
cumbia and Latin rhythms, electro swing. Some people only know my for electro swing  
in Portland. My wife, she's been doing these events with some friends, it's a Chinese

New Year party and I'll do Asian bass sets. It's really interesting, some of the stuff I found from Japan and Cambodia (DJ Global Ruckus, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Kurt is part of a community of DJs spinning what he called 'global bass' music, mainly dance music from cultures outside of the Anglo-American mainstream. In our interview he talked about DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid (Anjali Hursh & Stephen Strausbaugh), who would host Global Bass parties as well as parties specifically for Filmi and Bhangra music. In our interview Anjali talked about the audiences they would attract and the music they would play:

We literally would have the ad in the paper that would list all our genres like Britpop, soul, funk, and it would say Bhangra and all these Desi kids would show up from the suburbs. Some of them would walk in and turn around and leave, some of them would stay and we'd have little Bhangra parties at this indie rock club. At that party we'd play dance hall, reggaeton, grime, North African stuff (Anjali Hursh, Personal Interview, May 2013).

By playing a diverse range of music, they encouraged different communities to meet and interact, and celebrate their culture as a collective experience. I attended several of their successful Bollywood and Bhangra club nights, which had incredibly diverse audiences. During the club night Anjali, a trained Bhangra dancer and teacher, would teach audiences dance moves to involve them in the experience. Those who shared cultural connections to Bollywood and Bhangra music would often jump on stage in groups, request a song, and perform impressive choreographed routines. In our interview Stephen Strausbaugh, aka The Incredible Kid, described the ecology for non-Anglo-American musics in Portland when his parties started:

There were some international music scenes in Portland when we started but they were insular within the community. For instance out in the west suburb there would be Arabic pop clubs, exclusively devoted to that community. We would take the music that we like, pull it out of its home community, and say we want to share this with everybody (Stephen Strausbaugh, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Stephen reflected on how the Global Bass scene brought music out of diasporas to connect communities in experiencing and sharing new sounds. Both Stephen and Anjali present a radio show on KBOO, which provides programming space for a variety of genres. Also, on KBOO is Armando Gonzales, who presents a Tejano and Conjunto music programme, including the latest news from the city's Latino community. Armando also books acts for the annual Cinco de Mayo festivities, and in our interview, he described the music that can be heard at the festival:

You will find mariachi, you will find Mexican pop music, you will find Tejano music, conjunto music, I had a band that played all funk from the 70s. You're going to find an all family band doing a bit of cumbia, rancheros. You find this romantic music where they serenade people, different types of children's and adult folkloric dance troops, and of course we bring salsa in different kinds of salsa music. You can get a variety of flavours. You get a little taste of everything (Armando Gonzalez, Personal Interview, May 2013).

My experience of the festival confirms this: I found traditional dances, modern Latino pop, and Tejano music alongside Mexican food and lucha libre wrestling. The festival welcomes Portlanders of all background to experience Mexican culture and learn about their sister city of Guadalajara.

Jack Falk presented the station's Jewish Hour. Jack is also a cantor and clarinettist, and I came across him performing with a klezmer ensemble at the Global Folk Club Solstice event at the city's Jade Lounge. As a fellow clarinettist I couldn't resist getting in touch and finding out more about Jack and the music he performed. I was connected by my host family, who knew Jack through their work. During our conversation Jack discussed how the Jewish music ensembles he played in would regularly draft in musicians from outside the faith:

In the late 80s, early 90s I had my band and two other bands sprung up. The scene was built by community needs. The way ethnic music used to function is you had weddings and other community celebrations and they would hire a band that played music that was indigenous to the community and the fact that I've never been in an all Jewish band its neither essential nor pragmatic if you live in a community like Portland. I've known so many players, just good players will nail it and if you hire players based on their ethnicity

you deserve what you get. Somewhere in the 90s people stopped hiring Klezmer bands to play at weddings (Jack Falk, Personal Interview, July 2014)

Jack's performing life often involved function performances within Portland's thriving Jewish community in the southwest of the city. I did not have the time to explore the connections between music and faith communities across Portland, but it would be a fruitful topic to revisit in future, particularly if I could bring my clarinet along and learn through practice about these rich musical forms.

### **Legislation & Censorship**

Despite its racist overtones, the constitution of the state of Oregon is deemed by many to include some of the strongest protections for free speech: 'No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever; but every person shall be responsible for the abuse of this right' (2017, Article 1, Section 8, Oregon Constitution)<sup>7</sup>. This constitutional law means that music cannot be explicitly legislated against and attempts at censoring it can be challenged through the courts.

A recent supreme court case has seen this protection also afforded to band names. Portland band The Slants, whose members are all Asian-American, recently challenged trademarking legislation as Joe Coscarelli from the *New York*

*Times* explains:

The group, whose latest release is called *The Band Who Must Not Be Named*, first had its trademark rejected in 2010 on the grounds that it was hurtful to a stigmatized

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<sup>7</sup> The constitution was originally written in 1857 but the reference is to the latest version as it stands.

community; the Slants contended that the name was simply reclaiming a weaponized term, and that marginalized groups should 'determine what's best for ourselves (2017).

When the band challenged the decision the US Supreme Court ruled in their favour. This did cause some consternation, as it meant that any group could use and trademark an offensive name; but equally it could be argued that audiences, not the government, should decide whether or not to support them.

Whilst music itself is not censored, many music-makers and music-facilitators in the city have encountered difficulty with planning legislation, which has caused venue closures and gig cancellations, increasingly a common occurrence in post-industrial cities. There is also some contention about how the music scene is policed, with many feeling hip-hop has been disproportionately targeted. Despite those strong constitutional protections for freedom of expression, other legislative agendas have provided challenges for the scene which I address here through my ethnographic research. To explore Portland's musical life in greater detail and uncover how musical cultures are lived in the city I utilised interviews, participant observation, and mapping. In the following pages I will show how Portland's musical communities are connected, supported, and legislated.

## **2. Methodology**

The aim of this thesis is to carry out a holistic ethnography of the music scene in Portland, Oregon: to explore how musical relationships have had a role in place-making and legislation, and how music-making has become a space where community tensions have been exemplified. In this chapter I will detail my approach to collecting primary data, my self-reflexivity, and the place of this research within the wider literature of popular music ethnography and ethnomusicology, to show the balances and ethical framework of my project.

### **Ethnographic Methodologies**

For this thesis I utilised two main methods of primary data collection: interviews and participant observation. In combining these methods, I could gather first-hand accounts and understandings of music-making in Portland, whilst also witnessing practice in action. I also made a decision to collect ephemera from the encounters and experiences of music-making I had in Portland. I have collected together materials, interviews and observations with a view of giving the most holistic representation possible of Portland music-making during the period of research.

I also wanted to design a plan of data collection to ensure the realisation of the ethical responsibilities I hold as the researcher. In doing so I wished to be conscious of the impact my actions would have upon relationships and was careful in ensuring that I did not display personal preferences towards any particular genre. One example of this was declining to give opinions on bands at

performances due to the impact my words may have had on the performers or other participants. I asserted professional boundaries and assured participants that I would only use material relevant to my thesis. Any information I was given about relationships, or opinions about other participants or scene members, was only relevant in helping to create an idea of the connections between participants.

I studied Portland through an ethnographic methodology as a way to weave together the voices of music-makers and music-facilitators, using the issues they raised to shape this thesis. From interviews certain topics would naturally arise, but participants would also sometimes place importance on unexpected topics. Through my methodology I attempted to address the needs of participants in representing their work. When I began this project, I did not expect to write a chapter about the hip-hop scene, but due to disturbing developments during fieldwork it became important for me to share the voices and experiences of those in the hip-hop community. There was also a need to offer a sense of how people I met were connected, to give a representation of the networks being generated.

In *The Ethnographic Interview*, Spradley bases his ideas 'on an important assumption: the best way to learn to ethnography is by doing it' (1979, p.42). Previous to this project I had conducted two ethnographic studies as part of my master's programme: the first exploring the Limetree Festival in Ripon, where I had performed and regularly engaged with the community that ran it, and the second exploring the roles of songwriters and performers in the Eurovision Song

Contest, an event I had followed as a fan since my early teens and about which I had already accrued some degree of knowledge.

Many ethnographers argue for participants determining the question a study should answer. Spradley supports such a notion, arguing that 'although ethnographers formulate hypothesis to test, these hypotheses arise from the culture studied. They are ethnographic hypotheses that must be formulated after collecting initial data' (1979, p.94). Similarly, Ruth Finnegan formulated the structure of her ethnography *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* out of the responses she had in the field:

The idea of a musical 'world' partly arises from local participants' own descriptions. Brass band involvement was 'a world on its own', and classical art music seen as a 'quite different world' from that of rock music (Finnegan, 1989, p.31).

From these responses Finnegan framed her study through the lens of Howard Becker's concept of 'Art Worlds' (1982). I utilised this approach, allowing the frequency with which topics were raised in interviews and in local music media to construct the main themes covered in this thesis.

I entered the field wanting to find out why Portland was seen as a centre for music-making. I began by exploring my personal connections and understanding of local music as a route to finding initial contacts and people to interview. It was clear, for example, that I needed to interview former Mayor Sam Adams, who had used his term in office to raise the city's musical profile on a national and international level. To reach figures I wished to interview I would track down their email or contact them via social media. I also had help from my

friend Carrie Cushman, who is from Portland, whose family hosted me during my fieldwork trips, and whose friends welcomed me and introduced me to people they knew in the music scene. I therefore utilised a snowball methodology, where participants would mention people they felt I should speak to or felt had an important role in the scene, and with their help I would make contact and set up an interview.

There are of course limits to such an approach, as Spradley argues: 'every ethnographic description is partial, incomplete, and will stand in need of revision' (1979, p.204). Despite attempts to make this thesis as holistic as possible, it is by no means the full picture. There are many individuals making highly valuable contributions to Portland music-making or music-facilitation who I did not get to speak to, and genres of music I did not have the time to pursue.

### **Intersubjective Dialogue**

Within this thesis there is a continuing dialogue between myself as ethnographer and my interviewees, which requires a recognition of the adaptations I needed to make to become a researcher, and to learn about the cultural codes and practices of a city which I had not previously visited. The latter process is often referred to as enculturation, whereby the ethnographer undertakes a process of understanding the language as well as participating in practice. The methods of interview and participant observation I have engaged in for this thesis have been designed to allow for the accruing of such knowledge. These methods also were constructed to facilitate an intersubjective dialogue whereby my understanding and representation of language and issues in the scene would be effectively co-

produced and shared. An example of this is the term 'tastemakers'. Whilst I understood there to be figures who could influence what music others would listen to and which gigs to attend, I had other terms for that role such as 'influencer' or 'touchstone'. When my interviewees would use the term 'tastemaker', I would then test my understanding by equating it to the terms I understood and the concept of the role, before agreeing to use this term due to its frequent occurrence in dialogue. More particularly, the intersubjective construction of this thesis allows for a common understanding of the issues in Portland to be presented through the language and the experiences of those who make and facilitate music in the city.

More traditional ethnographies often remove the ethnographer from the text, an act described as self-effacement (Goulet, 1998, p.xxxviii), but as Edward Bruner argues there is a creation of 'a false dichotomy, which only makes sense if one believes that the data are independent of how those data were acquired' (1993, p.4). In modern ethnographic practice, it is common to be more self-reflexive, exploring the decisions made in constructing an ethnography itself and signposting to the positions taken by the ethnographer in relation to specific events and activities in the field. One such approach has been that of narrative ethnography.

Goulet argues that 'narrative ethnography recognises that the choice is not between writing an autobiography focussing on the Self or producing a standard realist ethnography about the Other' (1998, p.xxix). Narrative ethnography is further defined by Barbara Tedlock as focussing 'on the character

and process of the ethnographic dialogue or encounter' (1991, p.78). Within narrative ethnography there is a place for both self-reflection and an examination of a culture from which the ethnographer does not originate. It allows for a construction of the processes undertaken in the field, from application of methodology to the formation of relationships which have helped develop and shape content.

Such relationships might be with informants, key brokers and gatekeepers of crucial knowledge about the field of study who can grant access to people who would be useful participants. They might also be with participants in general. As Goulet asserts: 'narrative ethnographies provide rich portraits of the anthropologist's involvement with particular individuals in a given place over a given period of time', (1998, p.xl) though he finds failing in the approach: 'they generally fail to examine how the phenomena they describe are actually constituted by those for whom they are real, in the sense that they confront them and cannot be washed away' (ibid).

The solution Goulet proposes is to consider ethnomethodology as a means of further developing the reflexive presence of the ethnographer found in narrative ethnography, something central to his book *Ways of Knowing:*

*Experience, Knowledge, and Power Among the Dene Tha:*

I decided to range beyond narrative ethnography and to couple first-person accounts of experiences with ethnomethodologically inspired analyses. What I have found particularly useful in writing this book are ethnomethodology's concepts of indexicality, reflexivity and competency. Indexicality refers to the fact that meaning is context dependent. [...] In the vocabulary of ethnomethodologies, reflexivity refers to an essential property of accounts and the settings they describe. (1998, p.xl).

The value of such an ethnographic approach is the creation of space for intersubjective dialogue. Whilst the narrative ethnographic approach allows the presence of the ethnographer within the study, ethnomethodological methods allow for an understanding of the context in which interactions occur and the space for negotiation of meaning often required in a process of intersubjective dialogue.

This thesis is what I would term 'conscious' in that it operates in a manner that is self-aware. It points to its constrictions and to its abilities to present new forms of knowledge. My participants were always clear about how they would be contributing to my thesis, and the form in which shared knowledge would manifest. This thesis is also constructed through an ethical framework that places emphasis on participants as the holders of knowledge, and that uses that knowledge to shape the issues and infrastructure detailed within. It is intersubjective through its interpretation of meaning and through the methodologies applied to collect knowledge.

### **Ethnographic Interviews**

In the confines of this research, ethnographic interviews provided the opportunity for the music-makers and music-facilitators of Portland to tell their own story. As a method, interviews allowed me to test out any theories or assumptions I had gained from desk research carried out before the fieldwork, and to be given direct answers and interpretations. Participants would each be

asked the same questions about Portland music-making alongside questions specific to the role each participant plays in the scene. Interviews were informal, so as to provide the best environment for respondents; some took place in people's homes or in coffee shops they would regularly frequent. One such coffee shop, Tiny's Coffee North East, became a focal point for many interviews at the request of participants. At this coffee shop during many interviews another scene figure would walk in, know the participant I was talking to and then enquire about what we were doing, which would often result in sharing contact information and setting up another interview.

During the course of fieldwork, I conducted 75 interviews with 71 individuals in various locations all across the city. Details of the place, people and times I interviewed are available in appendix one. For me the interview process morphed from a mere data collection exercise to being able to hear some incredible stories of music-making in Portland. I feel I have become a story collector, guarding some amazing accounts of important moments in the city's musical history. I have already begun to reflect on the importance of these accounts and how I could preserve these accounts for both the participants and those in the future to learn about what happened during the period of research from 2013 to 2014.

In his exploration of *The Ethnographic Interview* (1979), Spradley discusses various processes of not only capturing data through interviews but also analysing them to form subsequent approaches to be taken in research. Spradley advocates for the use of what he terms descriptive, structural and

contrast questions (1979, p.60). He explains that a descriptive question aims to 'collect an ongoing sample of an informant's language', a structural question aims 'to discover information about domains, the basic units in an informant's cultural knowledge', and a contrast question aims to 'find out what an informant means by the various terms used in his native language' (ibid). I used many of these question techniques in interviews for this thesis, often providing space during interviews to explain why I asked specific questions, connecting them to my developing thoughts for the thesis, so the participants were fully aware of the context into which they were responding.

I began interviews by asking participants to introduce themselves, the role they play in music-making or music-facilitation and for them to describe their Portland music scene. The responses I got would allow me to get a sense of the domains participants were operating in, but also to get a sense of their own self-definition of their role. In the interviews I conducted for this study I found that I had combined approaches in many questions, often seeking to discover the language and terminology used alongside exploring a participant's domain and cultural knowledge. One example of this is when I would ask participants to expand on an initial response to the closed question, 'Is there a Portland Sound?'. In asking them to detail their response I would get participants to build their conception of what Portland sounded like or, in many cases, how a plurality of music genres denied the existence of such a concept. Through those answers I would get a sense of the knowledge participants had about other genres in the

city, any perceived hierarchy of genres and the language used to describe uniquely Portland sounds, such as how the sound of rain permeates recordings.

Comparative questions served mainly to widen my understanding of a scene. To clarify my understanding of age restrictions at music venues, I would describe the UK systems I had encountered, where a person's ID would be checked by the venue before they would be allowed to consume alcohol. This would then elicit a response about the measures music venues in Portland use, which led to a direct comparison of systems.

It is crucial to be responsive to answers and to test new ideas from one interview to the next. Whilst my aim of interviewing was to elicit knowledge about how the music scene in Portland operates, I would modify and update my structure to become more effective. This is necessarily different to the 1970s, when Spradley wrote his proposition for what constitutes an ethnographic interview. The dawn of internet access has provided an ability to research participants' public domain knowledge, and to provide the researcher with some sense of a participant's work, particularly if it is public-facing. In the field participants would sometimes ask if I was familiar with their work and by providing evidence of pre-interview research I could access the information I required from them. By providing evidence of pre-interview research I added credibility to my position as a researcher and fulfilled expectations that participants had of my role. This is possibly the result of the journalistic convention of interviews, where the journalist is expected to have researched a

subject before interviewing them, and the experience of many participants, particularly performers, being interviewed by local media in the past.

I conducted interviews either in person or via Skype, to offer suitable options to participants, many of whom had busy schedules. The in-person interviews often yielded the most information, as they could be conducted in a comfortable setting chosen by the interviewee and would be quite conversational in style; interviews conducted on Skype, by contrast, were often restricted by time limits due to interviewee availability. All participants in this study were shown how their contributions were utilised in this thesis and gave their consent for their inclusion. If after reviewing their interviews participants wished to withdraw their comments, they were offered the chance to do so. I did not decide on a set sample size or diversity quota, but rather let my interview base develop organically, always keeping in mind the need to represent the Portland scene in all its diversity.

During my time in the field I would often find relevant points being raised in casual conversation, and I would ask participants to repeat material into my phone or Dictaphone or would take a moment to write it down. To engage my ethical responsibility as ethnographer I would always make people who I met socially aware when something would be used in my research. People in such a situation were very accommodating and willing to comply, but this did impact social relationships as I would often have to give assurances that I was not having coffee or dinner with a person as part of my study, thus creating clear boundaries to demonstrate when I was in and out of ethnographer mode.

## **Participant Observation**

Participant observation was a complementary methodology in my fieldwork toolbox, allowing me to expand my field of study from collected narrative to a space where I could experience the activities, people and places described in interviews. Over the course of my fieldwork I undertook 82 participant observation activities as can be seen in appendix two. I went to gigs, attended blues dance workshops and events, volunteered for non-profits and festivals, and went to sports games. The full list of my activities can be found in appendix two.

Participant observation allows the researcher to learn the cultural codes within varying contexts by undertaking the same practices as participants. This allows learning in detail about why actions are done in certain ways and the codes of communication surrounding different situations. In his guide to *Participant Observation* James P Spradley notes that 'the participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation' (1980, p.54). It can often be easier to understand the perspective of participants by joining in the activities they do and focussing on the interactions around them to engage with language and context being used.

Using Spradley's types of participation this study utilises two approaches: active and complete participation. Spradley defines active participation as where:

the active participant seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance, but to more fully learn the cultural rules for behaviour. Active participation

begins with observations, but as knowledge of what others do grows, the ethnographer tries to learn the same behaviour (1980, p.60).

Whereas complete participation is 'the highest level of involvement for ethnographers ... when they study a situation in which they are already ordinary participants' (1980, p.61). My combination of these approaches reflects the fact that I am operating as a researcher within a dialect of the wider Anglo-American sphere of popular music. There are some forms of participation I am already used to, such as going to gigs, and volunteer work, for which I took a complete participant approach to enable recognition of the nuances between my British context and the Portland context I was researching. There were other activities which I had never participated in before and had to learn by observation before immersion in participation, which is where active participation was the most useful approach to take, for example learning how to improvise accompaniment to dancers on my clarinet at a blues dance evening.

Often the participant experiences were informed by interviews, but on many occasions, interviewees would challenge me to experience activities they found hard to articulate. Many participants would say that 'it would be easier for you to try it than me tell you about it' or 'you have to experience it for yourself', asking me to construct my own understanding of musical practice.

I regularly attended musical events ranging from formal concerts to house concerts, as well as other events around music-making, such as blues dancing. On my first day in Portland I was invited to witness the bi-weekly event by a musician who organised it and performs there as a DJ and improviser on his

violin. Along with accompanying him during the preparation for the event, which involved driving to various points in town and arranging and setting up equipment, I was also encouraged to attend a pre-event dance lesson, which I found the best way to truly experience the music. Despite my initial reluctance and excuses of jetlag, I found the community so welcoming and encouraging that I continued to develop this skill and attend events throughout the research period. It became clear to me that the dancing and music were inseparable in this particular event, and by participating I came to understand more clearly the experiences that were shared with me in interviews.

I also participated in events held by the non-profit organisation PDX Pop Now!: volunteering to sell merchandise at their annual 'Make it Pop' fundraising gig, and assisting at workshops run as part of their schools' outreach programme. This allowed me to share the experience of a volunteer, a role crucial to the organisation's existence and mission. I regularly drew on all these experiences in my blog, both to describe the experiences and to promote the organisations and events I had been welcomed to participate in.

### **Collecting Ephemera**

In addition to interviews and participant observation, I collected a number of source materials to support my research: local music newspaper *The Willamette Week* and *The Portland Mercury*, records released by Portland artists, locally authored books about historical aspects of the music scene, and ephemera from ticket stubs to official merchandise. I collected these sources to gain a sense of how the scene has developed and how it promotes music within Portland's

metropolitan boundaries. As one example, I found it interesting that even in the age of the internet, telegraph posts are still covered with posters and flyers for band performances. Each item of ephemera I collected defines a specific fleeting moment in the scene: a party hat used at Pink Martini's New Year's Eve concert 2013, coinciding with the 100th birthday celebration of the Crystal Ballroom, and a songbook from their singalong event in Pioneer Square, held in April 2013. These pieces tell the story of Pink Martini's presence in Portland and reflect their personal approach to providing fans with lasting memories of the fleeting concert event.

### **Impact**

Part of the ethical responsibility of the ethnographer is to acknowledge how the conducting of research can have an impact on the field. This can range from making personal connections to influencing decision making at various levels. In acknowledging this I wanted to ensure that participants could have access to my research and so I designed three main impact interventions: a blog, a walking tour and a short series of round table conversations.

The PDX Music Scene Project began with an initial research period of roughly three months during which I interviewed a variety of scene members. During this period, I kept an online blog using Tumblr to generate content. Tumblr allows its users to 'follow' each other's blogs and comment on posts, and also provides a simple way to upload various media forms (video, images and web links). This blog served as my research diary, reporting on all of the various events I attended and people I met.

The blog was a conscious part of my research and always worked in tandem with the academic goals of my visit. At the beginning of every interview I asked my subjects not only for their permission to use the interview material in my thesis and any other academic output, but also in my research blog. In some instances, interviewees agreed to be filmed, and I was able to edit those interviews for inclusion on the blog, always allowing interviewees the opportunity to provide input if necessary before uploading the footage via YouTube. Some interviewees offered to perform a song for the blog as examples of music creation in Portland, which were also pre-screened and edited at the interviewees' request. The blog's text content would include a summary of the interview and of the background of the interviewee as well as the interviewees' suggestions for further themes I could pursue.

My blog grew to have an unexpected local impact: it provided information for Portlanders that was perhaps inaccessible to them prior to the beginning of my research. Most interviewees would distribute a link to a post mentioning them as a way of sharing their involvement in an academic project, thus displaying their self-recognition as part of the wider Portland musical narrative and history. Because the project had an academic base, being associated with Cardiff University through the School of Music website, many participants felt that they were being taken seriously as part of the Portland Music Scene, with the idea of academic study adding value to their conception of their own profession. My blog also had a global reach: it was accessed regularly in the UK via the School of Music's 'Spotlight on Postgraduate Research' section and Facebook page. On one occasion Pink Martini, the internationally-known

Portland jazz orchestra, followed the PDX Music Scene Project blog by way of a Facebook forum asking which Tumblr blogs to follow; this in turn introduced my blog to their global fan base.

During my initial period of research in Portland I reached out to a non-profit organisation, Know Your City, which specialises in public engagement events for promoting the city to its own citizens to increase personal awareness and support. The organisation was then working on a social history mapping project, generating an interactive map of Portland which included audio clips of experts discussing various issues from social upheaval to regulations that are causing shifts in Portland's social dynamic. At the time I had sought to create something similar based purely on musical experience, but after discussion decided that it would not be possible for my thesis, as Know Your City had already spent nearly two years on their map, encountering many issues of moderation and censorship. We decided instead to present my research as a walking tour, which thus allowed a physical music/location connection and relationship to develop.

We began by determining the location of the tour: West Burnside, a street considered the central vein of the city, and a focus of music activity with various venues dotted on and around it. We were able to map specific places for the tour to visit, whether existing musical spaces or the sites of previous venues. Throughout the process I had constant interaction with Know Your City about how to present the tour, drawing on their experience running various other city walking tours. Professor Sarah Dougher of Portland State University,

an academic and musician, agreed to lead the tour. In the final weeks of preparation, Sarah gave valuable input to the script, offering her own thoughts and experiences on the locations of the tour, as well as adding details such as background on legislation that impacted the local social communities. Sarah's contribution offered an alternative academic perspective, and her own public engagement experiences. There was a singing element to the tour, which was led by Lukas Borsten, a musician who performs with local band The Bottlecap Boys. It was important to the walking tour to have a local musician leading the singing as the tour gave a performance opportunity and a chance for Lukas to promote his work. It was equally important to make sure Lukas was financially reimbursed for his performance; he is a skilled-worker and should be paid for his talents.



Figure 5 Prof Sarah Dougher leading the tour (top). Figure 6 Lukas Borstein leading the singalong (bottom). Pictures used with permission from Know Your City ©2013.

The tour accidentally created an ephemeral band, a group who performed together for this walking tour and would never perform again; a performance with a sell-by-date, when the tour ended. At most points on the tour, after Sarah informed the audience about the historical and social importance of a site, she would then invite Lukas to lead the group in a performance of a song. Everyone on the tour received songbooks and at each stop joined in to sing songs associated with Portland's musical history. Most were at first apprehensive, but having Lukas as an anchor made those on the tour more comfortable, and after a few songs everyone joined in. The audience of passers-by also shared a collective experience, and this formed temporary social relationships, creating a positive atmosphere based around a collective goal.

As part of the promotion campaign for the walking tour we released a song list on Know Your City website. One of the songs was 'Live Long in Oregon', written and performed by Laura Gibson, known locally for work with Cover Oregon, an advertising campaign for the federally-subsidised health insurance marketplace introduced as part of the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (also known as 'Obamacare'). Cover Oregon asked to join the walking tour and film the singalong performance of 'Live Long in Oregon', which they then used in a YouTube advert for the company. In return for this the company provided Know Your City with passes to MusicFestNW, a big local festival happening that same weekend, to give away as an incentive for people to book the tour. There was, of course, a risk of political interference with this engagement project which had to

be assessed, but as the script was written and the song was already part of this tour this proposition had no bearing on it. It can also be argued that by a majority Portland is supportive of the Democratic Party and the aims of the Affordable Care Act. The Cover Oregon programme has used various key Portland musicians, including Willy Vlautin of Richmond Fontaine, Lifesavas, Dave Depper and the aforementioned Laura Gibson, to advertise their service. This is all part of the political history of the Portland music scene and was relevant to the context of the tour.

The walking tour achieved several goals in terms of public engagement: it brought Portland's musical history to Portlanders, it had them participate in musical history and create a music moment about Portland itself, and it also educated people about elements of the city's history that may have been unfamiliar to them. Rather than simply walking and listening, the Know Your City tour asked Portlanders to literally Sing a Song of Portland: to engage directly with the texts that have put Portland on the musical map of the United States.

Another positive impact of public engagement events is to invite debate and conversation on issues concerning a music scene, and to connect with people outside of the scene who are facing similar problems. PDX Conversations was the second public engagement event associated with this project and aimed to do just that. Two public panels were held at the beginning of January 2014 at The Waypost. The Waypost is a small bar in North East Portland that often hosts musical events and educational lectures; it is also the regular host of Classical Revolution PDX's Chamber Music jam session, an innovation that seeks to democratise classical music.



*Figure 7 First Panel Session held on January 2nd, 2014 at The Waypost. Permission for image granted by Dr L Anderson.*

The sessions were driven by the panellists' responses to questions covering a variety of topics, from perceptions of race by city authorities to tackling the challenge of securing a wage as a musician in the city. The first session's panel included musicians (both composer-musicians and a cover singer), a booker, a member of a non-profit board, and a radio host. The panel members discussed their crowd funding endeavours – securing funds from fans to record albums, in effect giving an advance through the popular crowdfunding internet platform Kickstarter – and the problems of access to live music faced by those under the drinking age of 21, with an interesting debate about the relevance of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) in the city.

The second session's panel included a blues fusion dance DJ, a global bass DJ, a singer-songwriter of experimental electronic music and a scholar of Electronic Dance Music (EDM) who also works in the EDM industry. The participants of this panel felt they were on the musical fringe of Portland, a city

dominated by its popular representation in the television show *Portlandia*: that of a predominantly white city driven by the indie-rock scene and the fashions (beards, flannel shirts) around it. This panel covered the issue of perceived institutional racism targeting the hip-hop community, and of trying to earn a living as a musician in the city. Although this latter point is a universal problem within most music scenes, it demonstrates that Portland, though widely seen as an artistically progressive city, still views careers in music performance as a hobby as opposed to the skilled work it is.

### **Defining Popular Music**

Within this thesis I explore types of music that I have chosen to define as 'popular'. To make this distinction I have drawn on my experiences and understanding of popular music-making in Portland, and define popular music, within the context of this study, as music which is accessible to wide audiences, and is mass-consumed through recordings, live performance, and media. It is music which invites collective experiences through participation, builds communities through practice or fandom, and has the potential to galvanise social change.

There are naturally many ways in which the term 'popular music' could be understood. It could be defined as music that has mass appeal and is digested by mass audiences; it can also be referential to modes of production, consumption and reception. Whilst some genres such as pop, indie rock and hip-hop fit commercial definitions of popular music being represented within the US Billboard charts, other forms included here, such as Jazz, Cumbia, Bollywood and

others may not have as clear a providence due to their lack of representation in such commercially defined charts. The major issues of applying such a definition to this thesis is that popular music is also not necessarily constrained by commercial metrics. Many of the artists who were interviewed and observed for this thesis do not yet have chart success, and there can be amateur music-making within genres recognised as popular music forms. As Richard Middleton argues: 'it is hard to believe that a few friends, jamming on "Born in the USA" at a party, are not producing popular music' (1990, p.5). A commercial definition therefore would have to be flexible in that it would encompass both commercially successful songs, and amateur music-making within the same style. As a result, it could be argued that commercially successful genres of music have inspired amateur music-making fuelling continued success.

Within popular music studies there has long been a debate over what constitutes the term that the discipline represents. Frans Birrer offers four main definitions of popular music:

1. Normative definitions. Popular music is an inferior type.
2. Negative definitions. Popular music is a music that is not something else (usually 'folk' or 'art' music)
3. Sociological definitions. Popular music is associated with (produced for or by) a particular social group.
4. Technological-economic definitions. Popular music is disseminated by mass media and/or in a mass market (1985, p.104).

These definitions are of their age and fail to satisfy cultural and societal shifts in attitudes towards 'popular' art forms. Popular culture is often celebrated within institutions – popular musicians have received honours from governments

for their works, given awards for prizes traditionally viewed as for Western Art Music, and studied at universities – yet institutional bias does remain. In Portland rock musicians have had days celebrated in their honour at request of the Mayor and are recognised regularly by local government and tourism strategies as important to the city economy. The advent of technology has also challenged the usefulness of Birrer’s definitions, with Western Art Music being accessed through developments such as streaming, a culture shift which has encouraged listeners to become eclectic in their choices of what to listen to. There has also been the adoption of popular distribution and consumption habits within Western Art Music, with many orchestras invited to play ‘the greatest hits’ of classical music in stadiums or at music festivals to reach wider audiences. Popular music has also sought to reach across social boundaries. Whilst originally thought a preserve of the working and middle classes, the ascension of popular musicians up the social ladder has seen the upper class populated with popular music-makers by virtue of their incomes.

Another attempt to define ‘popular music’ was made by Charles Hamm in offering a positivist approach to the term. Hamm argues a need ‘to deal with the pieces which are demonstrably the most popular items of “popular music”, with the most widely disseminated items of music disseminated in the mass media’ (1982, p.5). Richard Middleton critiques Hamm’s definition of popular music arguing that:

The positivist approach claims to be objective, but it is no more ideology-free than any other. It takes a primary level of analysis to be that characterized by the question of size and the phenomenal form of the series. It is methodologically bound, therefore, to the requirements of measurement and to the mechanisms of the market and excludes anything that does not fit these (1990, p.4).

There is however value in acknowledging a definition of popular music that recognises a widespread consumption of a particular genre. Popular music does not have the frameworks within itself to define technical musical talent in relation to the genres within it, so is often reliant on commercial success as a metric to differentiate between musicians. As Richard Middleton has argued: 'In music, the quantitative usage ("well favoured") seems to have come to the fore in the eighteenth century – alongside the development of a (bourgeois) commercial market in musical products' (1990, p.3). With commercial metrics being a historical definition for popular music, it is clear that such value has been implicitly carried through time but perhaps only speaks to one aspect of popular music-making today. In Portland, crowd attendance is usually a metric used to determine success locally. Local music media use attendance often as a barometer for what they term a 'buzz' around a band, or which bands have potential for wider success, with space for other actors to shape an act's narrative of success.

Redefining the term 'popular music' has also been borne from conflict with Theodor Adorno, who took issue with what he termed a standardization in popular music:

The whole structure of popular music is standardized, even where the attempt is made to circumvent standardization. Standardization extends from the most general features to the most specific ones. Best known is the rule that the chorus consists of thirty-two bars and that the range is limited to one octave and one note (2000).

The notion of standardization is a refusal to accept an artistic sentiment within popular music, and to use its limitations as a flaw. Theodor Adorno did not

consider the technological developments within popular music as driving the creativity within it, nor would he engage with the social impact and social change that popular music has driven. Instead, Adorno framed popular music as a threat to society:

Listening to popular music is manipulated not only by its promoters but, as it were by the inherent nature of this music itself, into a system of response mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society. This has nothing to do with simplicity and complexity (2000).

With the original text being written in 1941

<sup>1</sup> and Adorno's passing in 1969, the true potential of popular music and its role in protecting and articulating often liberal values could not have been realised in his initial critiques. He also could not have foreseen the use of popular music in galvanising support for social movements. The pervasive sinister temperament of standardization that Adorno refers to arguably is still in existence with the explicit 'manufacturing' of performers through television shows, although the confines of this thesis make such a debate a disruptive tangent. Adorno does however find a fundamental position that has often served to define popular music:

Popular music becomes a multiple-choice questionnaire. There are two main types and their derivatives from which to choose. The listener is encouraged by the inexorable presence of these types psychologically to cross out what he dislikes and check what he likes. The limitation inherent in this choice and the clear-cut alternative it entails provoke like-dislike patterns of behaviour. This mechanical dichotomy breaks down indifference it is imperative to favour sweet or swing if one wishes to continue to listen to popular music (2000).

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<sup>1</sup> The quoted source is a republished version of the original 1941 article

Such behaviour is typical of human responses to most music, and it would seem challenging to conceive a music you should listen to even if you do not enjoy or like it. Defining popular music by a like/dislike binary is rather reductive, as such an approach could be applicable to other forms of music. Richard Middleton states that 'all music is popular to someone' although 'this would be to empty the term of most of the meanings which it carries in actual discourse' (Middleton, 1990, p.3). Whilst Western Art Music could be considered popular in its uses and consumption there is still a distinction with popular music. Adorno's terms of distinction, however, do not take into account the way popular music can be used as a social, political and economic resource. None of Adorno's critiques of popular music can be substantiated within the Portland music scene, which wholly rejects mass/globalised production of music as a value. Often scene members would speak of other acts they enjoyed in terms of their creativity and individualism, valuing uniqueness; and I show throughout this thesis, popular music serves a supportive role in making and/or galvanising social change in Portland.

The closest definition of popular music to the one I invoke in this thesis is offered by Joseph O'Connell, who defines popular music as:

Music composed ... within the constraints of the established music industries. This music is performed in pubs, clubs, arenas and stadiums – depending on the popularity of the performers – and primarily disseminated in the recorded forms of singles, EPs (extended plays – usually containing around four songs in contrast with the typical two found on a single) and albums (LPs) (2014, p.15).

In this definition O'Connell draws upon the infrastructure created within the genre and the outputs created. Although there is no scope in such a definition to

explore the social role played by popular music in building scenes, communities and making social change, it nonetheless reflects two of the key industrial components of popular music: live performance and recording. What is clear from existing scholarship is that it is difficult to find a perfect definition of 'popular music' that encompasses the variety of expectations that such a term produces. Indeed, Middleton concedes that 'the question of the "popularity" of popular music will continue to reverberate' (1990, p.33) and indeed it has (Tagg 1982: Shuker, 1994: Frith, 2007).

Despite a lack of clear definition there is still an implicit sense of when music-makers, facilitators and audiences recognise 'popular music'. Whilst Western Art music performances are dictated by convention, from not clapping between movements to sitting in silence, popular music performances encourage interaction through conventions such as sing-alongs, and standing venues that create space for dancing. Most Western Art musicians study notation and music theory classes, whereas many musicians performing popular music engage with informal learning styles such as learning by ear or using tutorial videos. The definition I have chosen to use, whilst not perfect, has been forged through an exploration of previous attempts to define what popular music can mean, and is most in keeping with my understanding of how music-makers and facilitators in Portland interact with the term, drawing wholly on the context of fieldwork conducted for this thesis.

## **Position Within the Field of Study**

This thesis is constructed both through reflection of my own ethnographic practice and hermeneutic understanding of the Portland music scene, alongside the intersubjective dialogue conducted with music-makers and facilitators. After establishing my methodologies and approaches to the key themes of this thesis, I will now explore my position within the field. This will be followed by a deeper examination of how I have managed to construct an insider perspective. I will then use this to inform my construction of the personal geographical experience I had in the field.

When beginning fieldwork, I often thought of myself as an outsider, subscribing to a notion that because I was not American I could not understand the variety of that culture's codes and interconnections. I also feared that not being an insider in the culture could be a disadvantage, or that my work would be seen as an act of examining the Portland culture under a microscope and not being sensitive to the multiple interpretations they hold. I feared I would position Portland culture within the scope of my own exposure to the city and not tell the story of the city itself. Bruno Nettl explored the problem of this central binary, arguing that:

The culture's 'insider' and 'outsider' provide different interpretations, both valid. Reasoned thought accords primacy to the former view; it is clearly the more important. It is the insider who provides the perspective that the culture has of itself (Nettl, 1983, p.152).

What is not clear is what qualifies a person to be an insider, as cultural language can provide degrees of distance between the subject of study and the ethnographer. Timothy Rice argues that:

Because ethnomusicologists find themselves at some cultural and historical distance from the music they study, appropriation is the dialectical counterpart to that distancing. Even so-called 'insider' ethnomusicologists, those born into the cultures they study, undergo a productive distancing necessary to the explanation and critical understanding of their own cultures. As we shall see, productive distancing is not the only characteristic of outsiders and scholars; individuals operating within tradition continually appropriate their cultural practices, give them new meanings, and create their own sense of 'being in the world' (1994, p.6).

By breaking the binary of 'insider' and 'outsider' Rice has allowed for the position of the author to be crucial in interpretation of cultural acts, whilst recognising the limitations of the authorial position itself. As he argues:

Hermeneutics thus helps to recast the problem of understanding the experience of music from a fruitless and methodologically unsound search for an unknowable, untalkable, subjective, inner quality in the self or the Other to an interpretation of the world of music by a self-operating within finite but expandable 'horizons' (1994, p.4).

So, it is that my interpretation of the experiences I had in Portland shape this thesis. My understanding of musical acts and social conduct have informed these chapters and it is from within my own experiences that my analysis is drawn. A recognition of this altered my understanding of my own position within this field of research.

Despite certain unavoidable cultural differences, I was still operating in an English-speaking western field of study, within a shared US/UK musical tradition, a shared tonal system, and realised the weight that these commonalities held to my experiences as ethnographer. I came to realise that my interpretations were of a different cultural dialect, as opposed to a separate culture, which enabled me to interpret the music-making and facilitation in Portland through my existing understanding of such practices within my own cultural environment. Having

been a performer of popular music in the UK I felt during interviews that I could articulate an understanding of the experiences surrounding performing and rehearsing that could put interviewees at ease and reassure them that their experiences would be represented with knowledge. It is from this recognition of the cultural codes I had interacted with that I have moved to construct an insider perspective.

### **Constructing an Insider Perspective**

In acknowledging that this thesis can never be a definitive historiography of Portland music-making, it is important for me to define the world constructed around my perspective during fieldwork. Earlier in this chapter I pointed to an undertaking of the process of enculturation whereby my chosen methods of interviews and participant observation helped me build a knowledge and understanding of not only the cultural musical practices in Portland, but the language which surrounds it. This is done through an intersubjective process, which allows the knowledge I have collected to be validated by the original source of information.

As an ethnographer I sought to build knowledge during my fieldwork. The aim of this was both to be able to make accurate representations of and responses to issues discussed by participants, and also to be able to effectively connect and communicate with music-makers and participators in their language. This was made easier by the shared cultural connections I had with the scene: speaking the English language, familiarity with Anglo-American musical practice, and understanding rituals around performance. By the end of the

research period I had several experiences of being asked to share my knowledge about the scene in a social setting. Through my fieldwork I had constructed a holistic picture of Portland music across different genres and would be asked by participants to share my knowledge of other genres they had not encountered in the city. In many cases participants, often performers of indie rock, would express a desire to know what I had learnt, and I would share with them my experiences of the various genres they were unaware had a presence in the city. Through my impact events I also generated opportunities for participants who had never met each other to connect: for example, as a result of one of the PDX Conversations session, two of the panellists ending up sharing a DJ bill.

Since carrying out the fieldwork and returning to the UK, I have been viewed as having insider knowledge of the scene. I was invited to talk on local radio about a parking initiative that I had researched in Seattle, invited to speak at a conference about my research, and consulted by local authorities to learn from Portland's cultural policies. Through these instances I have unintentionally become a trusted representative of Portland because I have accessed knowledge from the scene and have a closer perspective of it than other people. Participants in this study would often ask for help in connecting with venues and press in the UK whilst touring here, and I would try to assist in various ways, becoming a conduit for Portland in the UK.

Some people even expressed envy in my project. This caused me to reflect on my position within the field and wonder if someone from within the scene could research it in the same way. Whilst ethnography at home has a place

in the study of popular music-making and can construct ethical frameworks to allow the removal of bias, approaching a location from outside can often provide valuable assertions about a place and culture that could be restricted by the relationships and connections a person has within a culture. In writing this thesis I found that I had an ability to create knowledge of musics that are either siloed or not often engaged with, in a way that an ethnographer at home might find difficult.

Being from 'outside' often allowed me to be perceived as a more objective researcher than someone who was aware of existing scene issues, connections and challenges. Participants in this study were aware that I sought all perspectives surrounding an issue. My position as a PhD student also carried gravitas, in that my contribution to knowledge is formal and my processes were assessed. Knowing that I had to construct an ethical framework for such a study, and sharing this information with participants, allowed us to create a trusted ethnographer/participant relationship. As an ethnographer I feel privileged to have established and maintained such relationships, and to have learnt about the Portland music scene from the people who have built and maintained it. On a personal note, it is fascinating to be able to discuss in detail the creative processes developed and undertaken across the city.

Constructing this thesis has been a process of learning from participants and being introduced to new people through them, who could provide new perspective and knowledge. From learning about the terminology of the scene and the people who are considered important to music-making or facilitation, I

have been able to construct an inside perspective. Participant observation has also helped me experience and carry out shared cultural practice. As I noted earlier, one example of this is attending blues dance lessons, which were usually followed by a free-dance session. By returning for several weeks in a row I learned more about the practice from those who initiate it in Portland, as well as learning the language and experiencing it in use. By being a regular attendee, I could also demonstrate a commitment to learning the codes and language of practice, which in turn would be rewarded by eliciting more knowledge and connection brokering by participants.

Constructing an insider perspective is determined by the interactions I have had within the field, although this can never be definitive. It is also bound to the personal geography of the city which I inhabited, so that the constructed perspective is also the result of a constructed geography. In making these connections, and as an ethnographer, I can reflect on the conditions in which it has been developed and recognise what such a study can communicate. Also, in constructing an insider perspective it is important to be aware of the ethical impact of being in the field, and how such a perspective is represented, requiring a refined ethical approach.

### **Developing an Ethical Approach**

One way of developing an ethical framework is to reflect on the role taken by the researcher in the field. To gain an understanding of how to approach ethics in the field, I found it best to explore existing fieldwork accounts, and learn from

the lessons found. One influence on my approach to ethics in the field was the work of Nicole Beaudry, who has explored the notion of fieldwork as an opportunity for self-reflection: 'looking at oneself from outside one's habitual setting offers a privileged vantage point. In other words, the fieldwork experience and its introspective correlate accelerate personal growth' (Beaudry, 1997, p.64). Beaudry appears to argue that an ethnographer can use the opportunity of being removed from their 'natural habitat' to see how they react and respond to the new environment in which they place themselves. This may be a crucial element for a self-conscious ethnographer. By recognising oneself as out of one's native culture one can approach new cultural interactions with not just a new perspective, but a mindset to avoid misrepresenting a culture as well.

Beaudry suggests that ethnography is improved by an inclusion of human aspects and credits ethnographers who are mindful of humanity: 'Not only do these authors write about personal feelings and emotional responses, they are also able to weave their own and their hosts' personalities and expectations into their perception of the other culture' (Beaudry, 1997, p.65). Beaudry seems to support a basic tenet of anthropology: the study of humans and humanity within a specific cultural context. Drawing upon her own experiences in the field 'meant a growing awareness of the variety and richness of human behaviours including my own' (Beaudry, 1997, p.65). The ethnographer's experience is crucial to their study as it provides an opportunity to connect their own cultural values to the values of those within the field of study. It is now almost commonplace in ethnographic literature to explain how personal experiences are relevant and not just included for a sense of the 'exotic'. This is a condition rooted from the

failures of colonial anthropology and comparative musicology to recognise that what to a western eye appears as mysterious and new is in fact daily life for different cultural communities.

Beaudry illustrates how her position as an outsider in a community provides complications in social situations, as in one incident in which her position was compromised by a friend she had made:

When I left the hall, a friend of mine, rather drunk and funny, followed me out. In his drunken state he made lewd remarks and [an] offer that I just walked away from. [...] A few hours later... the band council leader came to me, unsmiling, and said, 'No recording tonight!' [...] My drunken friend had announced on the radio that I had come to study their community and culture so that the government would learn how to trick them better. [...] He went back to the radio station of his own free will and made a public apology.... I was truly grateful for his gesture, but the harm could not be undone (Beaudry, 1997, p.79).

Beaudry had been compromised by one small act in the field, in part due to her position as an outsider, which made it easier for the community to believe her research was for ill intent. This example also highlights the danger of becoming too ingrained in social relationships during fieldwork, a cautionary tale to demonstrate that even though humanity is crucial to ethnography there have to be ethical boundaries, limits and precautions. It is of course hard to plan for such occurrences in the field, but one may consider the potential social impact they may have.

What is clear from Beaudry's ideas of how to approach ethnography is that the human aspect of such a study is crucial to its development. One cannot afford to make cultural assumptions and must become part of social customs. It is also crucial for the ethnographer to remember that they are a human studying another human, a commonality that asks the ethnographer to be cautious with their approach. The ethnographer should offer a sense of the personality of their

subjects and bring them to life as opposed to assigning them an indistinguishable number and treating them like animals under observation. Self-reflection is crucial: by asserting one's position in the act of studying a culture, one can be conscious of representing things which are not familiar.

## Scenes

A key term I refer to in this thesis is 'scene'. Scenes can be defined by the activity of a genre within a locale or in a virtual existence. In many studies, music scenes are determined by a place's strict boundaries or by musical genre. Notable studies have focused on one specific genre within a demarcated space of music-making, whether virtual or physical (Shank, 1994; Kibby, 2000), whereas other scholars have examined cities such as Seattle (Prato, 2000) and Detroit (Smith 1999) through notions of pre-existing genre canons – prescribing Detroit as the city of Motown, and Seattle as the city of Grunge. The latter raises an important issue for this thesis: although Seattle sees itself as a capital of Pacific Northwest music and has enshrined its output in the Museum of Pop Culture,<sup>2</sup> this is a status that aggrieves many Portland musicians. The term 'scene' itself is also fairly problematic. As Will Straw has noted:

The place of 'scene' within cultural analysis seems forever troubled by the variety of tasks it is called upon to perform. How useful is a term which designates both the effervescence of our favourite bar and the sum total of all global phenomena surrounding a subgenre of heavy metal music? (Straw, 2001, p.248).

As Straw suggests, 'scene' can refer to space or genre. In the age of the internet this term is further complicated. Sara Cohen suggests that 'the term "scene" is

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<sup>2</sup> The Experience Music Project (EMP) was founded in Seattle in 2000; in November 2016 its name was changed to the Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP).

commonly and loosely used by musicians and music fans, music writers and researchers to refer to a group of people who have something in common, such as a shared musical activity of taste' (Cohen, 2008, p.239), demonstrating that a scene can also exist as a collective experience.

In this thesis 'scene' is defined firstly as music-making activity within the Portland Metropolitan Area, or the Portland Metro region, which is comprised of three counties: Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington. Although my fieldwork fell within the metropolitan boundary, the Portland scene is not solely defined by the music-making activity within it; it is also defined in the fluidity of collective musical experience, from performance practice to fandom. The parameters of 'scene' include the infrastructure created to support music-making, the politics involved, and the creation and curation of taste that can lead to bands having national and international success. The connection that nationally successful musicians still feel with Portland provides the background to a discussion of performer identity, and the maps shown above suggest further dimensions to the Portland 'scene' – restricted in geographical scope but revealing richness within the city's borders.

The geographical boundaries of Portland serve as another definition of the scene, with the city itself inspiring songs and being brandished onstage by performers as a badge of representation – 'we're from Portland, Oregon'. Portland is presented in this way to the rest of North America and indeed the world, and I will explore these representations of Portland and the perception in Portland of the scene's projected image.

## Virtual Scenes

A modern challenge facing ethnographers is the internet. The virtual spaces the internet provides for people to interact and socialise can, in fact, be virtual cities: spaces used to construct existence. In the introduction to her study of online fan communities of the country singer John Pine, Marjorie D. Kibby makes convincing arguments for the validity of research into such virtual spaces:

Developments in communication technology have contributed to a 'deterritorialization of space within a global cultural community' (Fenster, 1995, p.85), to a point where [the] 'local' is no longer disconnected from the 'global' and the identity of a specific place is located both in 'demarcated physical space' and in 'clusters of interaction' (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992, p.8 cited in Kibby, 2000, p.91).

Kibby suggests that virtual spaces can facilitate communities from all across the globe who define themselves by a shared common interest. She balances social exchanges from the John Pine online fan forum with email interviews 'which took the form of multiple choice questions plus an "any comment" open section' (Kibby, 2000, p.94). The problem with this approach is in limiting the collected data to a set number of possible responses. Kibby seeks to counteract this through her qualitative analysis of social exchanges in the public domain chat site, as 'chat is a method of building communities and a way to cultivate loyalty' (Kibby, 2000, p.99). In this particular case the virtual space was created for commercial reasons, to enable a synchronisation between product and its placement: fans could talk about a record, purchase it through the Oh Boy Records page, and promote it to other fans in the chat room.

When exploring this thesis, I consider how Portland has been constructed in the virtual world alongside a sense of how music in the city manifests within physical geography and space.

## **Building a Geography of Sound**

Music can have varying relationships with the places it inhabits, defined through the interactions it facilitates. In exploring Portland's musical geography, I aim to draw connections between music and its specific environment. There are many environmental factors in Portland which might be perceived as influencing music-making. For example, when exploring the nature of a 'Portland sound', I seek answers within a connection of music and geography. Many participants felt the climate in the city and the wider state was characterised by its regular rainfall, something many felt permeates the music itself. As the National Climatic Data Centre defines Oregon's climate, 'the state as a whole has a very definite winter rainfall climate. West of the Cascades [where Portland is situated] about one-half of the annual total precipitation falls from December through February; about one fourth in the spring and fall and very little during the summer months' (NCDC, 2017). This can also have infrastructural implications with many participants pointing to a 'basement culture' where rehearsal room and recording studios would be in basements, and during the regular rainy period music-makers would hide away and create new work, to arise in the summer when festivals take place.

In his book *Music and Urban Geography*, Adam Krims terms the 'urban ethos' as a tool to connect music with the representation it can make of the city:

I posited the urban ethos as a determinative and interpretive tool for a symptomatic reading of expressive culture. There, the urban ethos offered a historical window on publicly circulated and shared ideas about how cities are and how people live in them and move through them. As a regime of poetic procedure, the urban ethos clearly forms an aspect of representation, in the broad sense that the word has developed in (postmodern) cultural studies. [...] It forms something of a continuum with the real unfolding [...] of urban space related to changes in capital accumulation (2007, p.27).

Whilst musical representation can be explicit, it is still difficult to evidence any strict sense of determinism of geography on music: the sound of rain might appear on some records, yet it is difficult to determine that the environment in Portland has strictly caused such a musical occurrence. Therefore, this thesis does not contemplate determinism, but rather explores representations as influenced by environment. I consider how Portland is represented through music, and the impact of such representation.

Krims also proposes that an urban geographical approach to studying music can open up more possibilities in research:

I pursued academic research in urban geography because I found that it answered a lot of questions that musicologists and music theorists were asking about music [...] and since it approached those questions from a totally new perspective. I found that the answers were uniquely convincing and coherent (2007, p.IX)

The geographical approach is key to unlocking an explicit relationship of music and environment, as well as music and geographical place. The main tool I have used to explore this has been cartography, allowing the mapping of activities directly onto the metropolitan area of Portland, and in some cases further afield in the state or Pacific Northwest. This has allowed me to directly explore decisions made in positioning infrastructure, an ability to see if clusters of activity have emerged, and the routes or 'pathways' taken through it. This thesis considers the geography I have explored as a researcher, as well as residents' interpretations of how they have seen the Portland music scene. The aim of this is to uncover perception of the spaces music inhabits within the city, whilst

reflecting on the limitations of this study through exploring the places I inhabited during fieldwork and works of popular music scholarship that have also adopted a jointly geographical and musicological approach (Finnegan, 1989: Cohen, 1991: Shank, 1994: Cohen, 2007: Cohen, 2012: Grazian, 2013: Holt, 2013: Polk O'Meara & Tretter, 2013). My work is placed within this tradition of popular music ethnographies, which connects geography and music through additional sociological approaches that allow a mapping of human relationships onto the geographical picture.

### **Researching Music and Place**

Whilst building a musical geography may be considered an explicit analysis of music's relation to a particular location, an exploration of music and place takes a nuanced approach to how people use the environment around them. Another distinction between place and geography can be through an analysis of components which form infrastructure of a music scene. Many cities will have components such as venues, music press, recording studios or rehearsal rooms, and observing interactions and evaluation of such spaces can be done in relation to understanding how such components focus more generally in global society.

*In Sound Tracks: Popular Music Identity and Place*, John Connell and Chris Gibson propose analysing such a relationship through a concept of spatial fixity

Where continuity is valued over change, stability preferred to cycles of fashion, and which links music to particular place and establishes those links as traditions and genuine aspects of local culture. It examines how authenticity is constructed for particular styles, genres, artists, and releases. (2003, p.19)

Spatial fixity relies on the status and evolution of place, rather than being a geographical analytical tool. This concept bears relevance to a situation in Portland in which constant changes in policy, closure of venues and restriction of spaces to perform for certain genres has challenged stability. Like most cities Portland is subject to change through migratory patterns, anecdotally ascribed by participants as the movement of mainly white Americans from other states to the city. Often Portland residents would make jokes if they saw a Californian number plate and credit out-of-state Americans as driving up property prices. I explore Richard Florida's Creative Class theory as part of a wider discussion on the external perceptions of the city, particularly examining its role in what residents call 'gentrification'. However, I made the decision as researcher not to respond to the trope of migration impacting the city, as this would be difficult to evidence, and based only on anecdotal evidence. The concept of spatial fixity can also be applied when exploring which sounds define the city, and in evaluating the authenticity of such a notion. Whilst spatial fixity can offer a method in which to find an authentic connection between a city and sounds, Connell and Gibson admit that 'no one theory could examine all permutations of the links between music and place' (ibid).

The relationship between music and space is explored by the ways in which music-makers and facilitators function within spaces, and use spaces to maintain, create and renew social connections. But I also consider external reflections on space through narratives around tourism, and in the distinctions of language, race, and gender. The variety of individual experiences of music-

making and facilitating cannot possibly be covered in a single thesis. The position I hold as a white middle-class male researcher creates challenges in interpreting these various experiences. In recognising my position, I have aimed to let the words of participants articulate their experiences, with further analysis led from their thoughts, although this approach also has its limitations. Perceptions of geography and space can help understand how those in Portland interact and make connections between music and location, and mapping is an explicit way to demonstrate such a relationship in detail.

### **Mapping Portland**

There were many qualitative and quantitative methods I could use to unlock the cultural system within which my participants operate. While this study included typical methods of data collecting – interviews and participant observation – the technique of mapping provided a more original perspective to my ethnography. In scholarship, notably the work of Sara Cohen, mapping has been refined as a way to explore the relationship of geographical space and music making. Cohen has explored different ways of compiling musical maps of the city of Liverpool, considering ‘the nature and significance of live music as urban culture’ (Cohen, 2012, p. 587). The term ‘urban’ carries many connotations; it has a connection to living in a city, to metropolitan life, but more recently it has become a term associated with hip-hop, a music that represents ‘the streets’. For her study, Cohen asked participants to draw maps that illustrate their relationship to the urban space, to demonstrate subjective ‘territory’. One poignant example of maps demonstrating territory Cohen explores is that of the hip-hop MC Pyro:

Whilst drawing his map, Pyro explained: 'I don't venture too far from my crib. I don't even go out much. It's not my map, it's my bubble'. According to Pyro's map, Wavertree was thus a bubble (and he labelled it as such) that encompassed his everyday social world (Cohen, 2012, p.143).

Pyro's sense of territory is directed by his everyday activities, which Cohen interprets from both the graphic representation and the accompanying interview. This has a wider relevance to the concept of space within the hip-hop community, as Cohen explains:

In many UK hip-hop and grime-music scenes, postcodes and home territories matter, and gang wars have been fought over these boundaries, boundaries that musicians involved with other local, genre-based musical cultures might not notice or might attend to or care about in alternative ways. Pyro told us of a dramatic increase in local gang rivalries over the previous five years, a phenomenon that he attributed to urban deprivation, and of the palpable web of 'invisible borders' that criss-cross the city so that 'you just know' when you have crossed a line (Cohen, 2012, p.142).

In her exploration of spatial relationships with hip-hop Cohen has found that there is sense of territorial ownership and dispute that often relates to pre-ordained boundaries such as wards, boroughs, postcodes or metropolitan boundaries. These pre-existing boundaries formulate music communities and senses of identity.

When applying Cohen's ideas to the Portland context, the recognition of spatial distribution of music can help us to consider and de-code many music/location issues through graphic representation. For my final period of research for this study, I undertook a short mapping project, where I handed out pre-drawn maps to attendees at the PDX Pop Now! summer festival. These maps, provided by local non-for-profit organisation Know Your City, only included the borders of the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. Contributors were then asked to draw their music scene onto the map.<sup>3</sup> These map-based

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<sup>3</sup> Participants were informed that their maps may be used in this thesis and were asked to sign their maps and indicate their occupation. I met the majority of participants in the festival's Beer

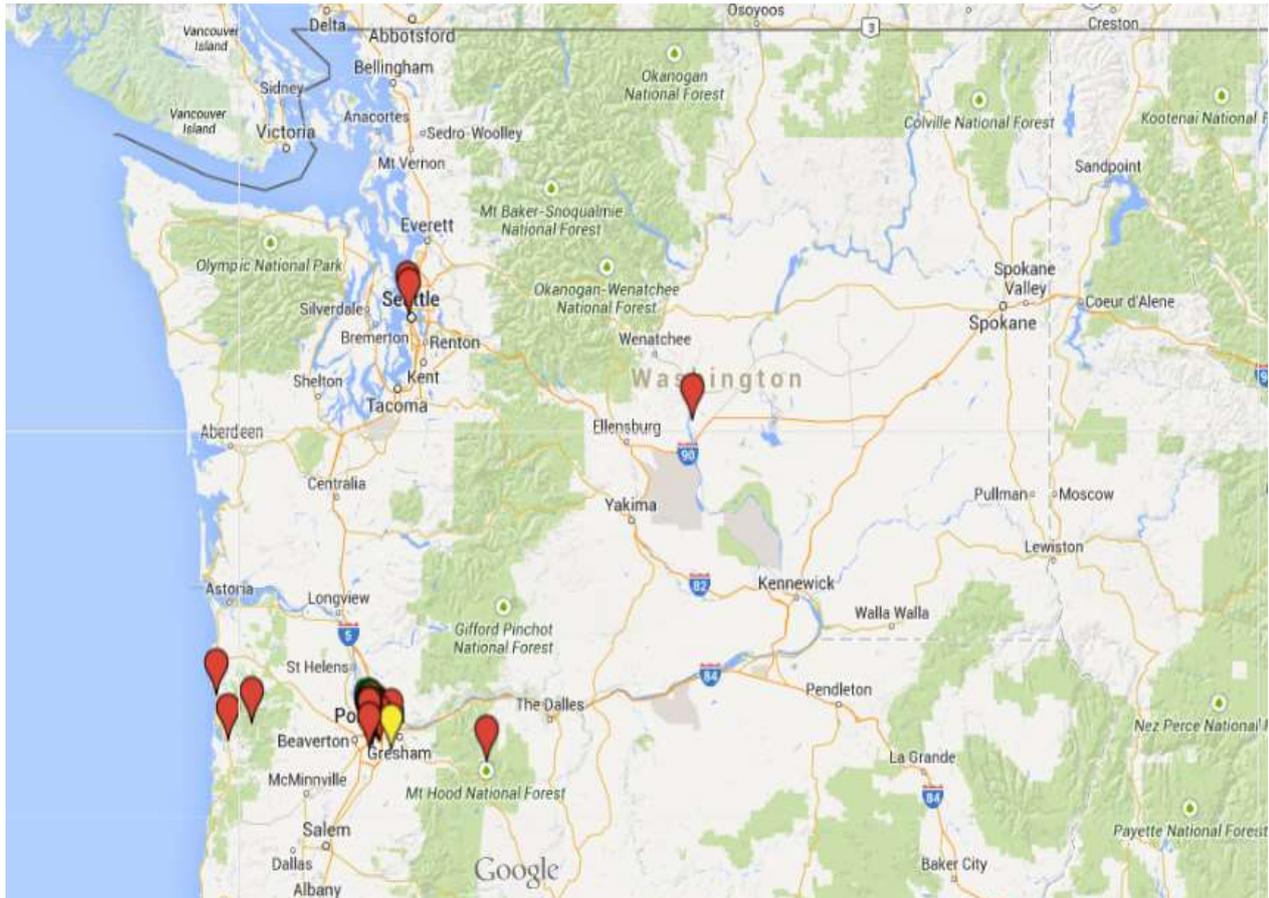
illustrations of musical Portland were naturally varied, and each had a unique awareness of space. I also devised my own maps to record the locations I was interacting with, using Google Maps to drop virtual map pins on locations where I did interviews and conducting observation, to mark out the geography I encountered in Portland.

### **An Author's Geography of Portland**

In exploring the geography of the city, it is important to take into account my own personal perception of the locations in which I conducted fieldwork. The geography I encountered during my fieldwork gives an insight into the scope of the scene I experienced, demonstrates the habits of interviewees, and shows where music making takes place.

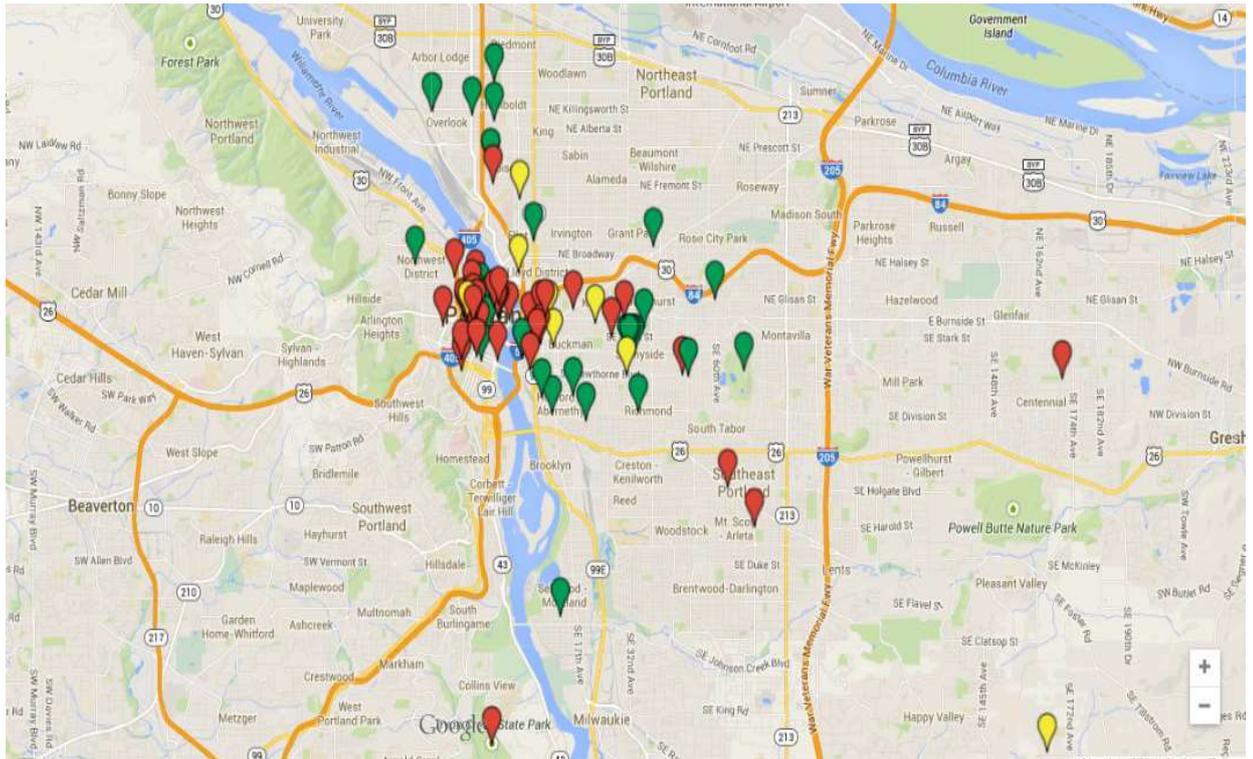
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Garden, as this was one of the only spaces with surfaces to draw upon. This of course meant that participants were generally aged 21+, which was an unavoidable restriction of circumstance. Another important factor to note is that contributors to this study, unlike those in Cohen's study, did not provide commentary with their maps, so my analyses were directed by the graphic representations and annotations.



*Figure 8 Map of Thesis Locations*

The map in Figure 8 shows the wider Pacific Northwest context of this study, showing the areas in Oregon and Washington State where I undertook fieldwork. The sites in Washington, mainly the Gorge Amphitheatre and Seattle, are commonly used by Portland-based artists. Other sites in Oregon are mainly places of natural interest: the Pacific Ocean, the Tillamook Forest, and Mt Hood. I visited these sites as they provide a sense of the natural environment that inspires the artistic output of local musicians and provides the reason why many chose Portland as their home.



*Figure 9 Map of Thesis Locations in the Wider Portland Metropolitan Area.*

Figure 9 shows a map of the sites I visited for interviews and participant observation, the majority of which were in the centre of the city. In Portland the ‘local scene’ stretches to the south at Happy Valley, to the south east at Tyron State Park, next to the city of Lake Oswego, and to the east at the site of Lynch View Elementary school; but all other sites are in the designated City of Portland. Figure 10 shows a more detailed distribution of those sites within the Portland City area.

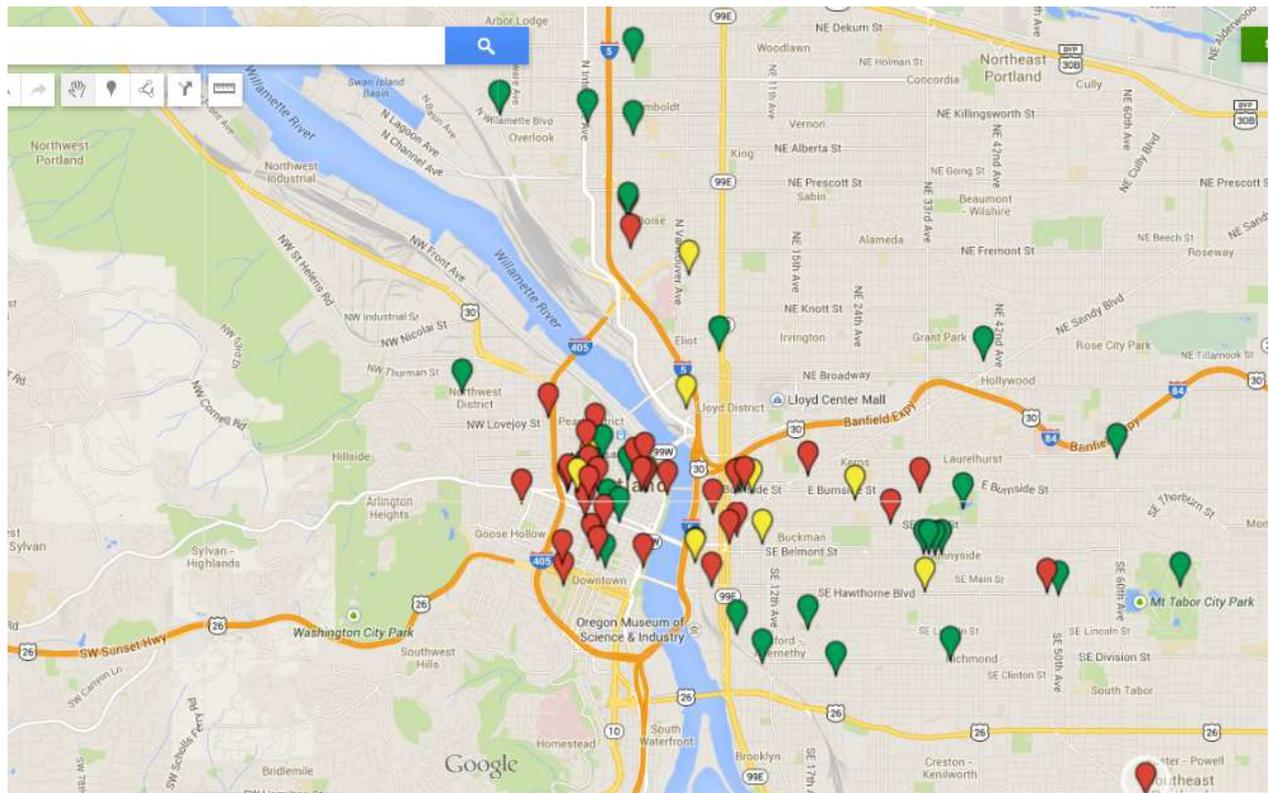


Figure 10 Map of Thesis Locations in the City of Portland.

Alongside the large concentration of sites in the downtown area where I conducted participant observations and Interviews are the civic administrative and cooperate buildings. Amongst the corporate towers of downtown Portland is an assortment of music-related spaces, from venues to record shops. Downtown is also the city’s transportation hub, with a dedicated transport mall on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> avenues accommodating buses and the light rail service, MAX.

The pins on the east side of the city are primarily interview locations (see appendix 1). Most were based in coffee shops due to their convenience; I have not identified my interviewees’ private homes for ethical reasons, but the majority of homes I visited were in southeast Portland. Many contributors chose to live in southeast Portland for its affordability, though towards the end of my study many feared that gentrification in the area would drive up prices. Many

contributors suggested that they would either move to north Portland or further east if they were priced out of the southeast rental market.

In demonstrating the explicit relationship between music and location which I encountered, my field of study is constructed as well as my understanding of how music-makers and music-facilitators operate in the city. Through these locations I unlocked a sense of a sonic landscape and experienced a variety of musics across the city. I did not find one sound to define the city, so the question of a Portland 'sound' remained at the heart of my research, as I will show in the following chapter.

### 3. The Portland Sound

What does a scene sound like? I asked the participants in this study to define a 'Portland sound' to gain a sense of the sonic journeys Portlanders go on, but many struggled to answer, and some described Portland music simply as a shared common attitude. Yet there have been instances where the sounds of a particular genre have come to dominate the media coverage of the city, although, unlike Seattle and grunge, Portland is not normally associated with one genre. Many in the scene see this as an advantage, as it allows for a sense of equity amongst musical communities, while others argue that Portland fails to export its music to the rest of the country and beyond.

Despite the fact that no one genre has come to define Portland in the scholarly or popular imagination, the city still has points of historical musical interest. Unsurprisingly, there are disputes as to where a timeline of notable musical success may begin. My introduction pointed to 'Louie Louie' as Portland's first major musical moment, but many look to the post-war Portland jazz scene as a starting point. As discussed in chapter one, the area now known as the 'Rose Quarter' was the centre of the African-American community, boasting popular jazz clubs that hosted legends such as Count Basie and Louis Armstrong. In this period Portland also had its own jazz heroes such as Don Anderson, Sid Porter and Julian Henson; but few if any of these names have had the acclaim for their work to solidify their place in the narrative of jazz. Unlike 'Louie Louie' the jazz scene did not reach national attention or wider critical acclaim.

When The Kingsmen recorded their version of 'Louie Louie', The Kingsmen's sound, often called 'garage rock', still did not come to define Portland, and their success did not herald a notable boom of local bands playing the same style.<sup>1</sup> Other key moments in the Portland musical timeline include the rise of punk in the late 1970s and early 1980s and the local response to grunge in the 1990s; but no single genre has had the national or international impact sufficient to define the city, although there have been 'close calls', according to one of the participants in this study.

This chapter offers a sense of the sounds produced by the music-makers and facilitators interviewed in this study. Their words are used to articulate their sonic local experiences, to allow the scene to be defined by its stakeholders, not an academic rooted in his 'outsider' perspective. This chapter explores the binary argument of sound vs attitude in defining Portland's common musical denominator, first by focussing on the spirit of collaboration via two examples of cross-genre collaborations project: the Portland Cello Project and the TxE collaborative indie-sampling rap record, *VS. PRTLND*. Both of these projects also have had social impacts in terms of community organisation, and in the case of *VS. PRTLND*, have helped place a marginalised genre of music into an accessible space.

Second, I explore critical touchstones such as the PDX Pop Now! compilation CD and *Willamette Week's* 'Best New Band' poll. I consider these moments when the musical output of the city has been received by national or

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<sup>1</sup> The garage rock sound is generally associated with Michigan and in particular towns such as Ann Arbor and Milwaukee. For more information see Joyson (1997), Hicks (2000), and Roller (2013).

international media, and the impact of this attention on the city's sonic output. I argue that 'near misses' are the dominant sounds in the city, rather than its defining sounds. I finish by exploring the participant-constructed idea of 'Old Portland', the ways it informs perceptions of the Portland sound, and how the musical past of the city can inform the present.

### **The Portland Sound?**

How do Portland's music-makers define the sounds they create? How do musicians 'find themselves' in Portland, and how do they situate their music – in their immediate community, in the wider musical community and as a citizen of the city of Portland? Musicians forge a series of complex relationships not only to sustain their artistic endeavours but in some cases to negotiate the spaces in which they exist. Portland's musicians articulate through music their social existence and habitation within the unique natural environment the city presents to them. It could be argued that this set of musical responses is what defines Portland's musical sound.

One question I asked my interviewees, whether musicians or those who support the infrastructure of the music scene, was 'has there ever been a definable Portland sound?'. Some scene members rejected the inference that a Portland sound exists or has ever existed, such as Laura Veirs: 'I don't really think there is a Portland sound. It's not like grunge where you can tell that's Seattle grunge!' (Laura Veirs, Skype Interview, May 2013). This idea is echoed by Matt Singer, Music Editor of the *Willamette Week*, who explained that: 'if you ask people who really pay attention they'll tell you that the idea of imagining a

typical Portland band is kind of a falsehood, that there isn't really a definable Portland sound. [...] I think that's become true in the last few years' (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

If a sound has yet to define Portland's place in musical history, what unifying factor can be gleaned from the scene's approach to music making? Some interviewees suggested that an attitude to music making was the more appropriate way to find commonality in Portland music. Cary Clarke, PDX Pop Now! founder and former arts policy advisor to Mayor Sam Adams, explained that: 'I think Portland's been defined more by a shared musical ethos. [...] It is an unusually collaborative artistic environment where people are excited about being part of musical projects that are maybe out of their wheelhouse a little bit' (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013). Cary implies that this collaboration by nature allows musicians to expand their musical horizons by leaving their comfort zones. There are many projects that have exemplified this 'ethos' of 'unusually collaborative' music making, two examples of which will now be explored.

### **The Portland Cello Project**

The Portland Cello Project, founded by Douglas Jenkins, performs a variety of musical material in a variety of performances spaces, with the only constant being a core ensemble of cellists. The group has arranged songs from a diverse range of artists, from Pantera to Taylor Swift, as well as performing classical repertoire. They have recorded with a variety of local performers: singer Patti King, also known as a member of group Radiation City; Magic Mouth singer

Chanticleer Tru and Jon Brophy, the founder of Baby Ketten Karaoke.<sup>2</sup> Douglas explained the ethos of the group as follows:

The Portland Cello Project is a group of loosely knit cello players in Portland who play all kinds of music, kind of with the goal of breaking down different barriers between music, and then also building bridges between the different people and different cultures that are connected with those types of music. [We] bring everyone together and see commonalities (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014).



Figure 11 Portland Cello Project Perform at Ecotrust's Sundown Outdoor Concert Series

The Cello Project has become one of Portland's prime examples of collaboration across genre, audience and space. Because of the group's somewhat broad mission statement they are able to adapt to various musical situations and reach out and work with different scene members and material. Douglas described the group's interaction with the space they perform in:

[We've played] everywhere from punk rock clubs to big symphony halls. The first place we played was the Doug Fir. We'll adjust our performance based what's going on: if we're in a punk rock venue we'll play classical music, if we're in a symphony hall we'll play punk rock stuff. We kind of keep that inverse relationship going' (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014).<sup>3</sup>

This defiance of musical conventions is often dictated by spaces:

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<sup>2</sup> Portland Cello Project recordings include: *to e.s.* (2014), *Winter: The Best Nine Months of the Year* (2013), *Portland Cello Project Play Beck Hansen's Song Reader* (2012), *Homage* (2012), *Thousand Words* (2010), *The Thao & Justin Power Sessions* (2009)

<sup>3</sup> The Doug Fir is a club located on East Burnside, which generally hosts touring rock and indie bands, with a capacity of 299 (see appendix 3). Portland venues are discussed in chapter 4.

That's always the goal to break the rules and also fit them to a tee. Ok we're in a symphony hall but playing Kanye West. This specific song, it actually sounds like it belongs here but it really doesn't belong here at all. Pantera can be incredibly complex, so people will hear it and be like what, 'was that piece' and I'll be like, 'oh that's Pantera'. It's been really positive (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014).

In our interview Douglas explained the early process of collaborating with musicians: 'I remember those first rehearsals with Portland acts. There was this double-sided thing – they're just as afraid of us as we are of them – and after that we started to adapt a little bit more' (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014). This of course outlines the risks involved in translating approaches to music, but it is a risk that has worked for the Portland Cello Project, and has become commonplace in Portland, or as Cary Clarke suggested, 'musical projects that are maybe out of their wheelhouse a little bit' (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013). Douglas also described how the group came to foster an audience:

At first it was classical music in bars. We did a show at Holocene – let's ask our friends to jump on stage with us, let's ask Laura Gibson and Peter Broderick. We also did Britney Spears's 'Toxic' for the first time. The concept of having that going on, the line was around the block. It always has to be a part of the community at its roots to be important; our community is what you are. We wanna bring people together. The idea is to have a nice community and that then turns into an audience (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Holocene is a space often associated with musical experimentation and collaboration, both attributes associated with the Cello Project, and the group's watershed performance there brought them into the heart of the Portland community. The very fact that Portland Cello Project has the city in its name is a clear gesture of belonging.

## ***Vs. PRTLND***

Another important Portland collaboration was the record *Vs. PRTLND*, created by hip-hop group TxE with various indie bands and fellow rappers and released in 2014.<sup>4</sup> For this record, producer Calvin Valentine remixed indie rock tracks made by local artists, sampling lyrics and using the music as a basis for beats. The lead single, 'This Town', samples a Sallie Ford hook, 'who gives a shit about this town?', which Calvin Valentine shifts from its original rock context into a hip-hop beat, whilst rappers Tope and Epp trade verses alongside Portland hip-hop icon Vursatyl, from the group Lifesavas. This album attracted attention for its fusion of culturally-different musical communities. *Oregonian* journalist David

Greenwald remarked that:

if there are barriers between Portland's well-known indie rock culture and the city's hip-hop scene, a new album is determined to smash them. [...] It's exciting, engaging music, made more so by representing not just Portland rap, but Portland, period (Greenwald, 2013).



Figure 12 TxE Live at Mississippi Studios. Photo used with permission from Kai Hyashi.

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<sup>4</sup> TxE, pronounced 'T and E', is a group with two rappers, Tope and Epp, and producer Calvin Valentine, who creates beats and plays instruments in a live setting.

Epp explained that *Vs. PRTLND* was born out of a love for both hip-hop and rock: 'We do branch out like the *Vs. PRTLND* album. We each like rock music a lot and we've all been to shows' (Epp, Personal Interview, January 2014). Calvin Valentine went on to explain the group's relationship with indie rock:

We were already tapping into the indie rock scene. We would do shows with bands here and there and Tope put out a solo album on an indie rock label. We like making all sorts of music. Nothing is ever forced in our musical exploration; it always sounds like TxE (Calvin Valentine, Personal Interview, January 2014).<sup>5</sup>

Despite the album's originality the group feel that *Vs. PRTLND* has not changed the social relationships between the indie rock scene and themselves:

I don't feel like they accepted us. They're still like, 'I don't know about hip-hop'. It's yet to see if *Vs. PRTLND* is the thing that really cracks it in the indie rock community. It's really about who you hang out with at the end of the day. They accept us on the musical level' (Calvin Valentine, Personal Interview, January 2014).

Whilst Douglas Jenkins of Portland Cello Project suggested his group's collaborations cultivated community, Calvin Valentine sees TxE's indie rock collaborations as a purely professional musical relationship.

On a subsequent trip to Portland I found a stronger sense of connection between the Portland indie and hip-hop communities. I interviewed hip-hop journalist and former rapper Mac Smiff and he expressed his thoughts on *Vs PRTLND*:

TxE did a project *Vs PRTLND* took a lot of band music and remixed it and made hip-hop songs out of them. They got picked up on Jay-Z's blog, a lot of people came to Portland looking for 'hey what's this indie-hip-hop thing'. There is a synergy – especially with the indie rock crowd, a few promoters have got slick in mixing genres. A lot of the fans have cross-pollinated in that way, because indie rock scene is so dominant there's definitely a local cross-over (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that this collaboration has been a natural process for the group. Before *Vs. PRTLND*, Calvin Valentine had been involved in a project where he remixed samples from Radiation City's album *Animals in the Median* for the record *A Different Animal* (Tender Loving Empire, 2013), which featured different Portland rappers within the scene, including Tope and Epp from TxE.

This of course does not mean *Vs PRTLND* is responsible for an increase in collaborations with the indie rock community, but Smiff appears to frame the record in this context. This collaboration has also been framed in the context of the city's relationship with its hip-hop scene, and the scene's general objection to the police shutting down hip-hop shows. The police have disrupted events, for reasons such as crowd capacity issues, health and safety legislation and suspicions of gang activity. Some scene members feel this is an unwarranted response, when police in riot gear will outnumber audiences and create an air of intimidation. There is also a sense that hip-hop shows are disproportionately targeted as compared to other genres, with some fearing an underlying racial motivation to this targeting.<sup>6</sup> I will explore these issues further in chapter 6 as they relate to the way music is utilised as a response to civic political situations.

### **How Genres Sound in Portland**

Along with defining Portland's sonic landscape in terms of a 'Portland attitude', some scene members expressed a view that certain broader genres had their own Portland sound. Throughout the city there are many communities based around specific musical genres. Even though these groups co-engage in collaboration to a degree, as Calvin Valentine suggested, this collaboration is perhaps only musical, and not necessarily social. These genre communities have

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<sup>6</sup> It is also important to mention that Portland has a somewhat chequered history of race relations and civil rights. The city was known for many years as a breeding ground for White Supremacists and in particular the Ku Klux Klan. The city, although changed by progressive national civil rights, is still struggling with local community tensions in race relations, as I explore further in chapter 6.

cultivated their own Portland sound, influenced by a variety of factors from the political climate to the ecological climate.

In terms of political engagement, some members of the hip-hop community feel that the city produces rappers with more social consciousness.

As DJ OG One, the official DJ for sports team the Portland Trail Blazers and Portland Thunder, expressed it:

Portland does not have a sound. [...] We have not found it, or we're in a unique position that we have it all. We have socially conscious rappers; we have guys who are street. We have everything in between. We have pot luck of everything here, and I think it makes it great. From Jazz to RnB we have this eclectic mosh pit of talent and genres that makes our city real unique (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

He seems to suggest that this social consciousness draws on a variety of pre-existing hip-hop sounds that unites in drawing attention to particular issues.

Whilst perhaps disagreeing with OG on the presence of a specific Portland hip-hop sound, Mac Smiff supports this notion in part by discussing how Portland hip-hop has an intellectual edge:

It's much more of 'I'm reading a book drinking coffee, listening to hip-hop'. That sound prevails as intelligent people are reading books. Powell's books a huge influence here. It's less about what [you] can show me [and] more what can you tell me? (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

It is interesting that Portland's book culture, centred on local bookstore Powell's City of Books, has explicitly influenced hip-hop. Mac further described hip-hop's encounters with literature saying: 'I do run into rappers at Powell's books, I do run into rappers at the colleges on campus doing other stuff, taking classes' (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014), showing the thirst for self-education one can assume feeds the social consciousness at the heart of Portland hip-hop.

The climate of the city has become part of the actual music, for example a hip-hop sound that is distinctive to Portland. As Mac Smiff described it:

If you listen to Portland hip-hop enough you'll hear a lot of even lyrical rain references: 'listen to the rain', 'falls like the rain', even in the beats. Producers here they always drive the culture. Our biggest producer out here is Trox, he make excellent beats. A lot of the sound people are drawn to is that crackle sound. If you listen to Portland beats you'll hear it enough, there's the analogue sound. Talk about any of the producers I hear, talk about Psycho and those guys from the old skool: you'll hear thunder, you'll hear raindrops. There's a feeling of, hey if I can make these beats sound like a rainy day, it makes it relate to people in Portland. It's just a feeling that we're all comfortable with, we love a hot day and all. At the end of the day, I say I like this weather, I get 50 likes. On the one hand we're depressed by it, the other we're used to it. Portland hip-hop, and Seattle as well, has always capitalised on the darker edge of the sound (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Portlanders from every genre community mention the rain as part of their city identity. According to a local saying, 'it rains eight months of the year,' and rain only ceases for the summer. The influence of the rain on Portland music was also discussed by journalist Bim Ditson: 'There's definitely a consistent feeling with Portland music but it's not something you can define, you can just tell. There's something there that's different that sounds like it lives in the rain' (Bim Ditson, Personal Interview, April 2013). The rain itself is a common influence across Portland's genres. Punk, for example, is felt by many to have a relationship with the rain. As punk photographer Bryan Phippen explained:

I feel like the biggest influence for most of the bands is post-punk and death rock, the climate of [the] Pacific Northwest, dark dreary rainy bands like Shadow House or Lunch, it's a darker image than 'we're working class fighting against "the man"' ideal (Bryan Phippen, Personal Interview, June 2014).

Bryan is also perhaps suggesting that rain fosters a darkness in sound and attitude. This is something that was echoed by music attorney Peter Vaughan

Shaver:

One of the main reasons I moved to Portland was the band the Wipers. I had seen them twice in Boston. They had this brooding dark grinding sound. I'd go see them and I saw Greg Sage. When I moved here, right about November when we had rain for three weeks, I understood the Wipers were the perfect soundtrack. What they sound like is what Portland is like most of the year (Peter Vaughan Shaver, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Understanding the local climate therefore helps one unlock and understand the city's musical creativity.

Along with the rain, Portland's punk community has been inspired by a diverse range of punk subgenres. Punk musician Samantha Gladhu, from the groups *Piss Test* and *Dottie Attie*, explained how she interpreted the local scene:

The Wipers are obviously the go-to band when people think of Portland punk, or *Poison Idea*. You see the *Poison Idea* sound carrying over with [a] long knife. There's no definable sound. People come here from all over the place, there's so many trends within punk that people will decide 'I want to start a hard-core band' or 'I want to start a noise band' and there's no similar sound. Right now there's this hard-core revival that's happening again, that's certainly happening here. There's a bunch of kids from Boston who moved here who are starting bands and encouraging established bands to start side projects in hard-core bands (Samantha Gladhu, Personal Interview, July 2014).

As Samantha notes Portland's punk community is rooted in 'many trends within punk'; there it is not necessarily a single sound that defines the musical output. It is interesting also to see the influence of immigration from cities such as Boston. But if music is not tying together these bands there must be another common denominator linking punk musicians to the community. As Bryan Phippen told me:

It is punk musicians working with other punk musicians. I think that could partly be due to the general sound of the punk scene here, very much that post-punk throwing back to *Killing Joke*, *The Wire*, *Gang of Four*. There isn't much of the 80s East Coast hard core sounds; that hyper aggressive scene is kept separate from the group that at least I photograph for most. There is a fairly active, more pop-punk based scene as well *Faithless Saints*, *Second Best*. Within the punk scene, at least within the umbrella of what could be punk there's different kinds of groups. There's the pop-punk groups, they play with *Bouncing Souls* and *Company*, and you don't really see them playing the same shows with *The Estranged*, *Arctic Flowers*. Even within that it's very compartmentalised, there isn't a lot of collaboration between genres within the punk scene (Bryan Phippen, Personal Interview, June 2014).

Bryan is acknowledging the diversity of punk subgenres performed in Portland, but also seems to suggest there is a lack of collaboration between punk and the

outside musical world.<sup>7</sup> He then described how collaboration is more insular within punk: ‘of the numerous sub-genres of punk, bands are definitely willing to play on the same bill with each other. For example, Arctic Flowers will play a show with the more “subdued” post-punk bands one night, but then play with bands that are more aggressive or “hard core”’ (Bryan Phippen, Personal Interview, June 2014). It would appear the punk community has been formed in part through these bill-based relationships where bands for the various punk sub-genres will play together. This has also helped establish Portland within the wider international punk community, as Samantha explained:

Portland is really supportive of not only each other but also touring bands because they know what it’s like to go on tour. Portland punk bands have a reputation for being good, and also succeeding having their records put out and going on tour and even touring Europe’ (Samantha Gladhu, Personal Interview, July 2014).

The hip-hop community demonstrates its own identifiable sound within Portland whilst maintaining its identity as a genre-specific community, but punk in Portland embraces all available subgenres, collectively works with a DIY ethos to create performance opportunities not only for Portland based artists but for touring artists and reaches out to a more international network for which Portland is one calling point. It could also be argued that both of these genres have been side lined due to media coverage, the crackdown on performances by the city authorities, and the dominance of other music genres in the city. Punk’s experiences of this strict regulation of performances is not as extensive as hip-hop’s, although there is a distinct fear that if the hip-hop scene collapses punk

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<sup>7</sup> This is explored in more detail in chapter 8.

will be targeted due to the misplaced and generalised associations of the genre with deviance.<sup>8</sup>

### **Dominant Sounds**

Although a city may become defined by a single genre, is it important to recognise the many other genres also at work in the same space. On one of my fieldwork trips I accompanied Portland global bass DJs, DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid, to Seattle where they supported British act Quantic at the Nectar Lounge. There was no palpable trace at the venue of the stereotypical Seattle 'sound'; its walls were plastered with posters for a diverse range of acts. It is of course the media that created the singular musical perception of Seattle;<sup>9</sup> but Seattle is being reinvented as a city of hip-hop following the success of home-grown rapper Macklemore and his producer Ryan Lewis. It may therefore be more useful to discuss a city's 'scene' in terms of dominant sounds.

Many of the participants in this study referred to Portland having dominant sounds: according to Matt Singer: '[folk] was such [...] [a] dominant sound when I first moved here' (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014). Many in this study also alluded to Indie Rock or Indie Folk being the most dominant genre. When asked about what Portland sounds like Cary Clarke responded: 'If you ask people to ascribe particular sounds, what's the main kind of music they play here, people would say indie-rock. Indie-rock doesn't tell you very much about what kind of music somebody's playing' (Cary Clarke, Personal

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<sup>8</sup> This will be explored in more detail later in chapter SIEX.

<sup>9</sup> This isn't to say that grunge did not emerge in Seattle out of a series of city-specific conditions; just that it represented a moment in time and a culture that has since evolved.

Interview, April 2013). Traditionally the term 'indie' refers to independence from mainstream record labels, and therefore creation of a non-mainstream product.

When discussing the dominant Portland sound, singer Allison Hall, from the group Goose & Fox, commented that

People joke around that 'that's so Portland sounding': large bands, lots of weird instruments, screaming, clapping intermixed with singing, just kind of being 'Hey!', using your voice as a more percussive element. I would say that that's probably indie folk genre (Allison Hall, Personal Interview, January 2014).

Here Allison gives an idea of what indie folk sounds like in terms of instrumentation and ensemble. The sound she is describing does align with a sector of nationally and internationally popular groups such as The Decemberists, The Shins, Modest Mouse, Horse Feathers and Typhoon, all of whom are either based in or originate from Portland. Jenny Conlee, pianist and accordionist for the Decemberists, has a similar view:

I wondered if that kind of twee-indie rock started here. I give a lot of that to Rachel Blumberg. She was our drummer for two albums and she was the one who brought the glockenspiel, the melodica and a kind of twee/sweet girl vocals. Rachel brought this element of sweetness that Colin really liked; it really defined the sound. Now I play all those parts. It now seems to be a defining "Indie Rock" thing to have a viola, glockenspiel, and/or melodica (Jenny Conlee, Personal Interview, July 2014).

It is interesting that both Jenny and Alison see instrumentation as a crucial defining aspect of indie rock, largely seen as the dominant Portland sound. The Decemberists, in particular, have often been parodied for their use of instruments like the hurdy-gurdy, banjo and bouzouki. Another indication about this sound was made by Jenny with regard to production:

We worked with Larry Crane from Jackpot on our second record, and then we had Chris Walla from Death Cab for Cutie produce our third and fourth records. Picaresque was recorded in a church, and the Crane Wife was Chris Walla and Tucker Martine doing dual producing at a studio called Kung Fu Bakery. Then we had Tucker do the next 3 records: The Hazards of Love, The King is Dead, What a Terrible World... Tucker Martine has produced the music of many of our peers like: Laura Veirs, My Morning Jacket, and Neko Case. People also come to just work with Larry Crane at Jackpot. I just did a session with Larry where his client was really looking for that Portland sound, whatever that is, so he

hired me and other Portland musicians like Paul Brainard on pedal steel. Also, Adam Selzer at Type Foundry Studios, is also an important creator of the Portland sound. His band Norfolk and Western, M. Ward, Scott McCaughey all made many records there. Maybe there is something to be said about the water, or maybe it is just that we all use the same producers and the same studios (Jenny Conlee, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Many of Portland's successfully exported artists have worked with Larry Crane and Tucker Martine at Jackpot and Flora studios respectively. They also attract a high calibre of artist to the city to record with them. Throughout popular music history producers have been seen as holding the key to particular sounds through their studio technique, such as Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound' and Giorgio Moroder's work in disco. Despite this suggestion no participants defined what these local producers did to create specific sounds.

Producers are not the only people responsible for generating income for the city. Portland is home to the influential advertising agency Wieden + Kennedy, and Marmoset music is a music licensing company. As Marmoset's Music Supervisor Kat Olsen told me:

Marmoset itself is numerous sounds of the northwest. I was very hesitant to embrace that there's a Portland/Northwest sound but there really is. It's that organic, that home-grown type sound. Marmoset's catalogue has a lot of that so a lot of our clients when they come to us, they're looking for that (Kat Olsen, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Whilst Kat does not name a specific genre, it would seem that she is describing indie folk music, though there are surely reasons why she was hesitant to define the sound in stark genre terms. This 'organic' Portland sound has been used by the city and the state to promote tourism, as well as to soundtrack an infamous series of TV spots for 'Cover Oregon,' the state healthcare aggregator.<sup>10</sup>

Some scene members felt that the most identifiable sounds of the city had changed over time. One such person was music booker, Radio DJ and

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<sup>10</sup> Discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

musician Theo Craig, best known in the scene for booking the Sunday Sessions at the venue Rontoms:

Part of the Portland sound is this authenticity. People sing about things that matter to them, they make statements: this is my ethos, this is who we are. What I noticed in Portland was a rootsy quality to the music. There is a lot of open rooms and string instruments playing with folk instruments. For that time 2007-2009/10 there's a whole lot of Americana folk country/ folk pop going on here, I feel like it died down a little bit. Maybe 2009 through 2011/12 we are looking at a lot of dance-oriented groups coming up, a lot of groups that came from that basement scene, a lot of synth pop and still some of that Americana rock like Blind Pilot. I'm thinking Starfucker and Unknown Mortal Orchestra and even Wampire who are hitting right now, these people who are doing a kind of dirty lo-fi high concept pop. I feel like in this last year there's been an exposing of this garage psych scene. There's been a lot more rock (Theo Craig, Personal Interview, April 2013).

All of the categories Theo mentions could be considered part of indie rock to some degree. His timeline indicates a series of musical reactions as the progressions in sound seem to be in stark contrast to each other. Americana and Synth Pop, for example, are at opposite ends of the instrument spectrum, with Americana looking towards acoustic formats as opposed to the electronic sounds of synth pop. It is interesting that he uses this term 'authentic' – a term which would sit appropriately with Kat Olsen's notion of Portland music being 'home-grown' and 'organic'.

Portland has fostered sounds that have become dominant due to the success of certain bands from the city. These dominant sounds can be an attraction point for musicians outside of the city to come and be part of it, as well as encourage others to come and challenge reigning ideas with original and unique approaches to music making. Bands in these genres can often be touchstones for those outside the city to penetrate its culture, allowing people to connect musical dots between bands and communities, following internationally

known bands back into the city through side-projects, collaborations, touring partners and advocacy.

If Portland music-makers can define the commonality of Portland through the city's musical output, it is important to access the sounds they are describing. I could not cover every musical style being created in the city during my fieldwork but am able to describe the sounds I experienced personally.<sup>11</sup> There are other ways to gauge the current popular musical sounds, such as tracking polls conducted by local newspapers, or listening to the compilation CDs circulated by non-profit organisations. Through explicit measures of popularity (i.e. the Best New Band Poll), charted by scene figures such as bookers and broadcasters, and yearbook-like collections of 'quality' music from a variety of genres (i.e. PDX Pop Now Compilation) a more holistic picture of musical trends in Portland can be examined. These local initiatives work as guides for the uninitiated into Portland music.

### **PDX Pop Now Compilation CD**

One of the most enduring records of Portland music has been the PDX Pop Now! Compilation CD released annually since 2004. PDX Pop Now! is a non-profit organisation founded in 2003 with an ethos of bringing music to all ages, set against the backdrop of a scene where entry to many venues is age restricted at

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<sup>11</sup> This is an important assertion, as some Portlanders may feel the music communities they are passionate about or involved in have been left out of this study; again, this is purely down to restrictions of time and not a reflection of my own musical preferences. Throughout the fieldwork periods, I issued calls for information on Portland music and often received emails from people asking to meet so they could tell their story of a genre. This is how Portland punk entered the study, as members of that musical community wanted to share their stories with me, and I was happy, if not excited, to oblige.

21+ due to alcohol licensing laws. They run three main projects: a yearly festival, education outreach programmes, and a compilation CD. Co-founder Cary Clarke described how the CD fit into the organisation's goals:

Along the way we thought 'oh recorded music is important as well' so let's do a compilation of Portland music that's sort of a companion piece. That then became an annual project along with the festival – a double disc compilation of Portland music that would help fund the festival, amongst other things (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Cary sees the CD as not only helping fundraise for the free festival the organisation runs annually but also as a standalone piece of work.<sup>12</sup> This view is corroborated by local radio DJ Jeremy Peterson, who sees the compilations as a standalone piece of art:

Every year the compilation comes out in the springtime and it's the unofficial beginning of the festival season. It's always slightly different than the festival. There are bands on that compilation whose song[s] you love, and you never hear from them again, which is great – one moment of magic' (Jeremy Peterson, Personal Interview, August 2014).

These songs effectively become captured in time even though, as Jeremy says, bands will disappear and may leave this as their only mark.



<sup>12</sup> It was not possible to find out statistics on how many copies of the compilation sold and what income it generated for the organisation. As the organisation is non-profit any proceeds would have been reinvested into PDX Pop Now!'s main projects. Not having these statistics does make it difficult to assess the reach the organisation has and thus any potential taste-making influence on the scene. I have only been able to utilise anecdotal evidence from participants to illustrate this.

Figure 13 PDX Pop Now! Compilation CDs 2013 (front) and 2014 (back).

The compilation CD includes a variety of songs from a variety of genres with the aim of building a wider picture of the Portland music scene. Track lists are determined through a democratic process where bands submit songs to be reviewed by a listening committee of volunteers of a variety of ages and backgrounds. Mechanisms are also put in place to ensure a diversity of genres on the CD, to be as representative of music making in the city as possible, as Cary Clarke explained:

We created a system that controlled for [making] sure that music is coming from ‘fringe genres’. How do we make sure those weird things that only appeal to ten people or great specimens of their universe, how do you make sure there’s room for those as well? By 2006 we’d gotten much better [at] having systems for that. If there’s a harsh noise track in here it might not get a bunch of yes votes but is it important for it to get to the next level so that people can consider it on their own terms. [Head volunteers for each listening group] keep their eye out for sort of outlier tracks (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013).

The system Cary describes suggests that tracks that are outside of the dominant sound of Portland; those that are not part of the indie-rock/indie-folk phenomena are specifically sought out during the process.<sup>13</sup> Former board member Benna Gottfried described another part of the process that the compilation PDX Pop Now goes through:

We sometimes reached out to those niche music communities to make sure they were represented, even if they weren’t comfortable submitting through the general submission pool. We did some of that more intentional outreach. It was just trying to make sure we fulfilled the mission of the organisation (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

This process of reaching out to under-represented musical communities is a strong statement of inclusivity as it facilitates direct engagement. Whilst diversity

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<sup>13</sup> During our interview the organisation’s use of the term ‘pop’ was not discussed, but upon post-fieldwork reflection the use of that term opens up questions around how they define ‘pop’. PDX Pop Now! does not produce a festival and compilation around a sole genre, but rather expands in its selection to a wider definition of popular music, such as I explored in chapter two.

is ensured there is also a need to have better-known 'names' on the CD to boost sales and to attract the interest of radio stations outside the city. Benna discussed this consideration:

[People] don't necessarily need to have the Decemberists on the album for it to be something that they look at, although it does help for distribution of the compilation to have Pink Martini or Decemberists, to get people to pick it up who don't have a bigger idea of what's going on in Portland (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

This positive promotion of the record through having more nationally recognised names is also reflective of the growth of certain groups. This includes groups who have appeared on earlier compilations through the selection process to then find success and return to the compilation to help boost its distribution. The CD has another impact, as Cary Clarke told me: 'With the compilation, [...] I think it remains the best single point of entry into the music community' (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013). These compilation CDs present a snapshot of how Portland sounds at a specific point; it also acts as a document of more recent Portland history, as PDX Pop Now! volunteer co-ordinator Beth Martin told me:

We always want new tracks. We don't necessarily take older tracks; mostly it's all new. I look forward to it every year, there's a certain feel for every year, it does a really good representation of the times. In twenty years they are gonna be really fun to listen to. It will be a little time capsule of the year (Beth Martin, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The compilation CD already acts to archive musical progression in Portland and may in future be seen as a crucial root into the city's musical past. It is also notable that the CD only introduces listeners to new music to grant opportunities for diversity amongst the well-known bands who may not release new material every year. Making the CD available in download format also allows wider access

to the music, to include those who do not use CD technology and those outside of the state or indeed the country.

### ***Willamette Week's Best New Band List***

Another useful route into a music scene is through the local media. Of the many accolades local musicians can hope for, one is the title of *Willamette Week's* 'Best New Band'. *Willamette Week* is a free weekly newspaper distributed across Portland, known for its focus on politics and the arts, with substantial review and preview sections for music, theatre, film and art. The 'Best New Band' is determined by 'a coalition of more than 200 journalists, musicians, promoters, label owners, radio hosts and local music fanatics' (Cottell, 2014) and culminates in a special edition of the paper introducing readers to the band and giving reasons why they were chosen. For those uninitiated in Portland music it is useful to see who the major scene members, from journalists to bookers, rate highly. The *Willamette Week* is available in both physical print and digital editions and can be archived easily as a document of Portland music at a particular time and place. This allows for examination of trends in musical sounds and other subtleties, such as the size of a group and instrumentation within it.



Figure 14 The Cover of Willamette Week's Best New Band Edition 2013.

During the course of this study two bands were crowned best new band: Shy Girls and Ural Thomas & The Pain. In awarding the title to Shy Girls on May 1st, 2013 *Willamette Week* described their sound as 'A make-out session that started in 1989 with the radio tuned to a contemporary R&B station and has continued, uninterrupted, ever since – and with the dial untouched' (Singer, 2013) at a time when their 'total recorded output is four songs' (ibid). it is interesting that their success came with a small recording catalogue; but as the paper explained, 'over the past year, the group has built a following around its swoony, unguardedly romantic performances' (ibid), showing that live performances have helped the group gain impact within the scene and pique the interest of those voting on the poll.

When in 2014 the group Ural Thomas & The Pain was awarded the title, their sounds were described by the paper as 'A delayed radio transmission from an alternate version of the '60s, where the world's greatest soul man is from Portland and Hitsville USA is made out of recycled plywood' (Cottel, 2014). It is

this idea of an alternative history to soul music that has underpinned the band's success. The story of this group is a local legend, connecting a romance of vinyl culture with a soul singer thought lost in time. The *Willamette Week* was one of the first publications to bring this story to light and indeed refer to it in their write-up of the group's Best New Band victory:

A few years ago, the 40-year-old [Scott] Magee, previously a member of indie-folk acts Loch Lomond and Y La Bamba, became obsessed with soul. He began collecting 45 rpm singles and spinning them around town as DJ Cooky Parker. 'Push 'Em Up' a wild dance tune Thomas recorded with his original doo-wop group, the Monterays, found its way into Magee's rotation—a gift from [Eric] Isaacson [Owner of Mississippi Records, a store and vinyl-only label], who re-issued two rare Thomas singles on his label in 2011. When Magee started talking in vain about starting an act that would re-interpret those old tunes live, Isaacson saw an opportunity. A month later, Magee, [Ben] Darwish and Thomas, along with bassist Eric Hedford and guitarist Brent Martins, were in a rehearsal room together. We were all just standing there, like, 'do we just play the song?' Magee says. He counted off into 'Pain Is the Name of Your Game' a sweeping ballad Thomas released in 1967, sans the recorded version's big horns and backing vocals. 'Ural came in on the first verse, and it was really powerful,' Magee says. 'Within seconds, in my brain, I'm like, "We're good". If we can hold it together and if Ural wants to do it, this is going to be fantastic' (Cottel, 2014).

It is easy to understand the appeal of the legend: the journey of a soul vinyl DJ, to Portland's vinyl-only re-issue label Mississippi Records, to discover the music of Ural Thomas, and then to form a group that becomes the best new band in 2014. Ural Thomas & The Pain are also notable for their diversity in age, from backing singer Moorea Masa, in her twenties, to Ural Thomas, in his seventies, which shows a mutual respect for musicianship and the wide representation of the musical community. The power of a story like this and the media attention it has generated has given the band publicity and exposure to a new audience; it was not a surprise to see the group top the poll and the story capture the city's imagination.



Figure 15 Ural Thomas & The Pain Performing at Pickathon Festival 2014.

Members of the winning groups certainly feel that this poll helped advance their musical standing in Portland and begat a variety of opportunities they may not have had otherwise. Ben Darwish, Keyboardist for Ural Thomas & The Pain, amongst many other projects, discussed the impact the poll had on the group:

It's kind of been massive. I know the *Willamette Week* nomination thing really [was] a huge deal. We were already booked at Pickathon, we ended up playing the blues festival, we just got asked to play New Year's Eve at the Crystal Ballroom with this band Motet. We can always reference that if someone is asking how much we need to get paid and that's a legitimate paper. It's Portland's biggest free weekly. It definitely helps (Ben Darwish, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Winning the poll gained the group important bookings for larger audiences, largely due to the legitimacy of the paper and the poll. The positive impact of the poll is something Shy Girls' manager and Holocene Booker Gina Altamura echoed when I interviewed her shortly after the group won in 2013:

The best new bands issue, I feel it's like one of the most widely read issues. Anyone in the top 10 will suddenly find themselves probably getting two or three times as many offers for shows as they used to, and they'll find their shows two or three times as well attended. People pay attention as to who's in the top 10. I'm [excited] to see what that means for Shy Girls, if that means if their next show will be doubly packed (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The poll is valuable and influential because it is agreed upon by scene members.

Gina, through her role as Holocene talent buyer (or booker), is also a contributor to the list. She described the decision-making process to me:

You pick five and you assign them a ranking and a number, and the higher you rank them the more points they get. I like to put a couple of artists on, bands I want to put in my vote for. Our lists get published in the paper. There are a couple of bands I want to give a shout out to (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).<sup>14</sup>

The Best New Band poll not only measures success of bands in relative terms but also can be seen, like the PDX Pop Now! Compilation, as giving an indication of the state of the music scene on an annual basis. The poll can often indicate interesting changes in terms of a band's existence and personnel as Poll Editor Matt Singer told me:

That was the biggest thing of our best new band this year. So many of the bands had connections to other bands who had been on our list before. All the top bands had the connections to these other bands, so you see this constant turnover happening. That's accelerated even more than it was. We haven't really broken a huge band here in ten years (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Matt sees the poll as illustrating the regenerative nature of Portland music with bands coming and going and changing personnel, as well as noticing the collaborations that spawn groups that end up on the list. One of the most prominent examples of the latter is the group Tiburones,<sup>15</sup> whose members Luz

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<sup>14</sup> It is of course important to assert that Gina would naturally have a vested interest in promoting the bands she works with through this poll. The poll itself, however, is not the decision of a single person but requires consensus from those selected by *Willamette Week* to nominate bands.

<sup>15</sup> Tiburones' sound is described by *Willamette Week* as 'Post-*Graceland* Paul Simon, if he spent his time listening to Beach House and cumbia and watching footage of Nina Simone on YouTube' (Widder, 2014).

Elena Mendoza and Nick Delffs were in groups who had been previously on the list, Y La Bamba and The Shaky Hands respectively.

### **Sounds of Old Portland**

In this chapter I have shown how musicians define commonality in their music making (as an attitude charged with a spirit of collaboration); how some genres have been stylistically developed in Portland (rooted by the city's influence); and how some genres have dominated the national/international focus on Portland. It is important now to reflect on the musical history of Portland. Whilst my fieldwork focused on the period 2013-2014, a recognition of Portland's musical history will help explain the musical changes in the scene today.

My first introduction to Old Portland came through a walking tour led by internationally known Portland rock band The Dandy Warhols in celebration of their album *Thirteen Tales from Urban Bohemia* (2000). According to singer Courtney Taylor-Taylor, 'most of [the sites we visited] we have a distinctive moment in history with' (Courtney Taylor-Taylor, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Other members of the band added the choices of venue for the tour:

Peter Holmstrom [PH]: The first one was outside of the venue where we played our first show, yeah, the x-ray café.

Courtney Taylor-Taylor [CTT]: The second one was the owner of the x-ray's grown-up venture Voodoo Donuts, which is a Portland favourite. Most of them we have a distinctive moment in history with.

PH: All of them except See See [Motorcycles].<sup>16</sup>

Zia McCabe [ZM]: [See See Motorcycles] is new Portland, which was cool. It's got motorcycles in it.

CTT: The second video has motorcycles in it!

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<sup>16</sup> A motorcycle shop and café in North East Portland

ZM: And [there is an] old Portland that doesn't exist anymore.

(Courtney Taylor-Taylor, Zia McCabe, Peter Holmstrom, Personal Interview, April 2013)<sup>17</sup>.



Figure 16 The Dandy Warhols performing outside Ray's Ragtime.

This interview was my first encounter with the concept of 'Old Portland' and it became apparent through later interviews that there is a dividing line between notions of what Portland was, has become, and is to become. In our interview Matt Singer tried to pinpoint where this dividing line fell:

The years between 2002 and 2004, and particularly 2003 there was [a] dividing line between new Portland and old Portland kind of in general. Chuck Palahniuk's *Fugitives and Refugees* book, when you read it there's only a handful of things that are even still recognizable about Portland; it was more this guide book to old Portland in 2003. That was the year Voodoo Donuts opened, that was the year PDX Pop Now! started, that was the year Elliot Smith committed suicide, that was this flashpoint year. If you look at the music, Decemberists are these hyper literate songs, sea shanties, there's a certain amount of quirky nerdy whimsy there. You have the Thermals, who write great power punk songs with a political bent based on these hyper bright melodies. That's where Portland is now. Pre-2003 the stuff that defined Portland was Elliot Smith, who wrote these super depressing songs – a lot of them set in Portland, referencing Portland

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<sup>17</sup>This passage includes multiple voices from a single interview to demonstrate the conversation which took place between band members as they explained their choices of venue. The script format is to be clear on what contribution was made by each band member. For more information see interview conventions.

landmarks, The Wipers and Dead Moon. Dead Moon had this sense of the back woods foreboding darkness, and the Wipers were this urban interpretation of that. The tone shifted at some point to the quirky weirdness we really marketed, and that became *Portlandia*. Greg Sage of the Wipers called it Doomtowntown, this was a gritty fucking town, there was a lot of drugs which went along with the weather. It was weird, but it was more this depressive weirdness, as opposed to a thing you would really sell your city on. Before 2003 things were darker; after 2003 things became quirrier (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

This division between dark and quirky also defines the great contrast in musical sounds Portland has become notorious for. It is interesting that Matt pinpoints the year that things shifted, but even he struggled to find a definitive reason for such a sudden change in sound and style. This may be due to an increase in media attention, musical reaction against the current state of affairs, the economic growth and success of Portland as a city, or the 2008 global financial crisis. Whatever the cause this ‘flashpoint’ came at a time when The Decemberists had already gained a following.

Matt mentions Chuck Palahniuk’s *Fugitive and Refugees: A Walk in Portland Oregon* as a document of Old Portland. The book explores a wide range of topics from ghost stories, to recipes from the author’s favourite restaurants, to how to solicit sexual encounters of a diverse variety. It may come as a surprise to see music barely mentioned in the book. In fact, its only appearance is in one of Palahniuk’s postcard memoirs where he discusses appearing in the videos for Cavalcade of Stars’ song ‘Butcher Boy’, where he had to ‘give the lead singer, Rhonda Kennedy, a come-hither look and make love to her in the meat locker. While dry ice fog cascades over us, we writhe naked in an antique bed surrounded by frozen sides of beef’ (Palahniuk, 2003). Palahniuk’s glimpse into the musical world perhaps affirms this ‘darkness of old Portland’. Yet, despite advances in technology the video is unavailable, so one must not rely on

Palahniuk's account. The book is filled with explorations of various quirky places including graveyards and self-cleaning houses, but the tone seems darker than the light whimsy of recent television comedy show *Portlandia* (first aired in 2011), which has its own guide book to the city.

Mike Lastra, studio engineer and member of the noise band Smegma, described how Portland used to sound:

Portland's sound was all over the place and people were tolerant. Weird bands like Smegma, all kinds of noisy, out-there bands, they were tolerated. There were a few close calls – what I call the grunge era, that's when I found out I could work too much in that era. In this town there was a band called Hazel and they made a pretty good impact (Mike Lastra, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Mike attributes the lack of a single defining Portland sound to a tolerance of what he calls 'weird bands' and a general encouraging of diversity. The 'close call' of the Seattle grunge scene suggests that Portland may not be in danger of becoming pigeon-holed. In many of my interviews, Hazel joined a list of bands such as Dead Moon, Crackerbash, Poison Idea and The Wipers, as important to Portland's music history. No participants sought to give a strong definition of what these bands sound like, apart from the connection noted earlier in this chapter between The Wipers and the Portland weather. It can be difficult to define a band's sound, as many musicians in Portland prefer to resist classification to ensure the uniqueness of their project.

This alternative punk rock/grunge sound was not the only one to define Old Portland. There are many other bands who have had varied success on a national and international stage. Former Mayor Sam Adams described to me his first personal encounters with Portland music:

Nu Shooz was a band back in the eighties. Nu Shooz had this breakout – that was my first experience of the Portland music scene. There were bands when I was in high school in Eugene, that would come down and play the University of Oregon campus

from Portland and I would sneak into the bars from high school to listen (Sam Adams, Personal Interview, March 2013).

Nu Shooz had an international hit with their 1986 track 'I Can't Wait', but other genres also had a presence in Portland: as local jazz guitarist Dan Blamer explained, '*Willamette Week* used to have a reader's poll of the best jazz musicians [...] [in] town' (Dan Balmer, Personal Interview, April 2013). And as I have shown, modern Portland shares a great deal with this 'Old Portland'.

Portland's music scene has always embraced a diversity of styles; it cannot be defined by a single sound. It is often the spatial positioning of music-makers within the quadrants of the city that inspires pockets of sound to appear and impact the wider city, whether on the Best New Band list or PDX Pop Now! CD, and one day perhaps into the Oregon Music Hall of Fame. In the following chapter I will bring my perspective as outside ethnographer to the experience of publicising Portland's musical history and apply theories of place to the city's living scene.

## 4. Portland Venues

The city of Portland is dotted with venues of different shapes and sizes. Some are run at a high professional level, some accommodate music to accompany dining or drinking, and some are pop-up venues set up in living rooms to truly ‘bring music home’. In this section I will explore venues in Portland, their connection to ‘the scene’, and their relative levels of success. Using the work of Fabian Holt and Carsten Wergin (2013), I will also consider the impacts of gentrification on these venues, and in view of the local need for a mid-sized venue, I will suggest a possible solution to these problems in a way that can connect the musical community with the performance space. Venues in Portland are a crucial part of the music scene’s infrastructure, with live music contributing to the economy as well as local culture; this chapter therefore also considers how music can be valued as an economic resource for the city.

In *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, Roy Shuker discusses the role of popular music venues with music making communities:

The equation of live performance with musical authenticity and ‘paying your dues’ as a performer remains a widely-held ideology among fans, musicians, and record company executives. Clubs have historically assumed mythic importance for breaking new acts. [...] A community network of clubs or pub venues can help create a local club scene, at time based around a particular sound. (Shuker, 1998, p. 53).

Shuker’s assessment marks the club venue as part of a musician’s career training, a process in line with other careers, as opposed to the ‘overnight star’ model offered by media outlets such as TV talent shows, which challenge notions of ‘authenticity’.<sup>1</sup> Shuker also reveals how the connected network of club-based

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<sup>1</sup> Space prevents me from expanding on this important debate. For a more detailed exploration see Moore (2002), Meizel (2011) and Marshall (2006).

performance spaces are constituent to a scene. Portland's club venues are indicative of such cultural practices.

During fieldwork I attended the PDX Pop Now! Festival and asked festival goers to draw me maps of how they viewed music in their city, asking them to draw their own musical worlds. These maps would often revolve around the many venues in the city and gave an idea of the different people who engaged with them.

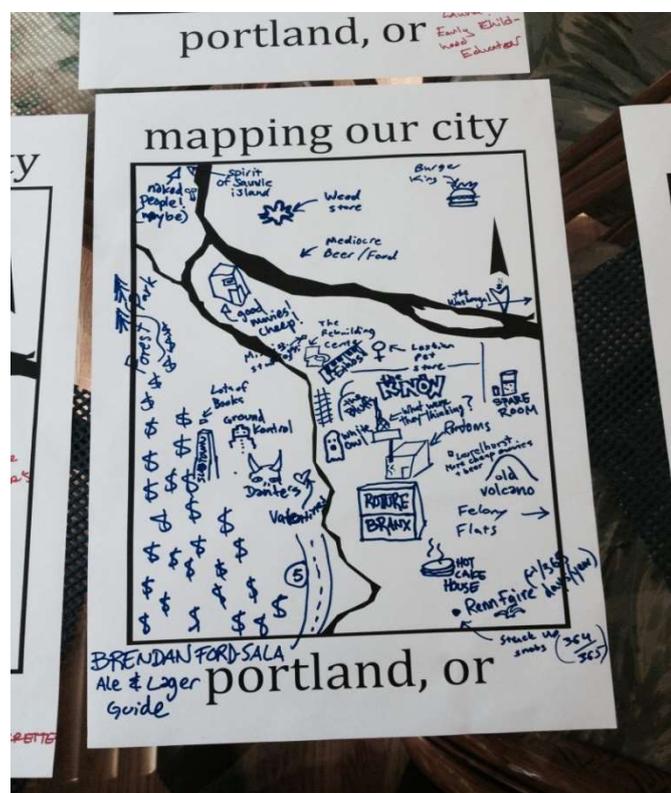


Figure 17 A map of the Portland Music Scene drawn by Brendan Ford-Sala.

The map by local journalist Brendan Ford-Sala (fig 17), proved to be the most highly detailed response I received. Brendan's map is mainly graphic in nature and includes not only specifically musical locations but those encompassing the scene's culture: a book shop, a pancake house, and the marijuana store across the state line in Vancouver, WA. Brendan only shows two roads on his drawing,

one being Interstate 5 (I5), connecting Portland with California to the south and north through the Pacific Northwest corridor to Washington, the other not labelled. Brendan's map shows the dispersal and variety of venues, from downtown spots such as Dante's and Valentine's, to the northeast Portland punk venue The Know. It is also notable that Brendan sees the city's distribution of wealth being centred on the south west of the city, which is indicated by a mass of dollar signs.

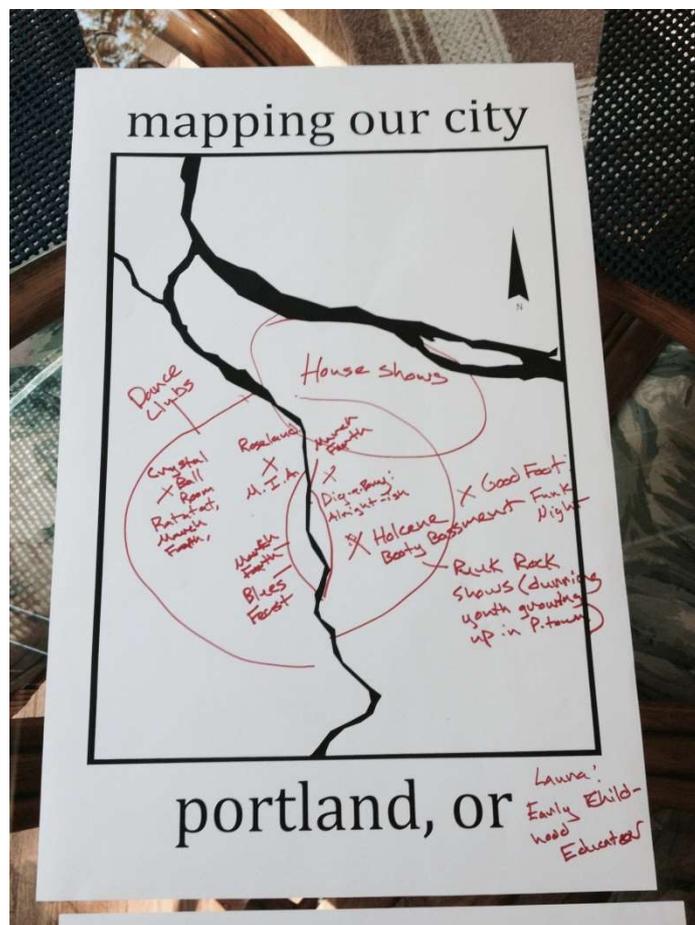


Figure 18 A map of the Portland Music Scene drawn by Laura.

Local children's educator Laura's map (fig 18) has a more personal awareness of space than Brendan's: not only are venues listed and specific musical performances or club nights attached to them, but Laura's use of

spheres is interesting to note. House shows in the northeast are separated from venues, which seem to be centred in the northwest of the city. The venues Laura lists are both those still in existence and those of her youth, as indicated by the label 'Punk rock shows (during youth growing up in P. town)'. Although Laura does not identify herself as a musician, she shows a real engagement with different genres, from the marching band March Fourth, to popular international hip-hop artist MIA, alongside the annual Blues Fest and the funk night at The Goodfoot.

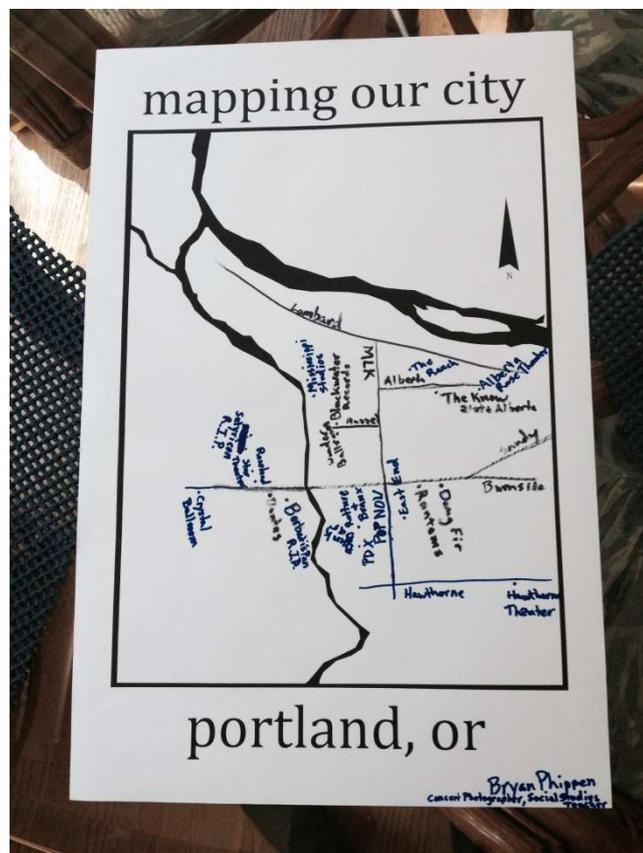


Figure 19 The Portland Music Scene drawn by Bryan Phippen.

Bryan Phippen is known in the music scene for his photography, in particular that of punk musicians. His map was one of the few to use roads as a crucial part of their representation of the scene. In figure 19 Bryan shows the

central street Burnside, which separates the north and south quadrants, and focuses most of his attention to the east side of the city. Like Laura, Bryan marks venues present and past with reference to 'Satyricon RIP'.<sup>2</sup> Bryan also notes the site of the 2014 PDX Pop Now! Festival, where he drew the map, and his was one of the only maps to include a reference to record stores.

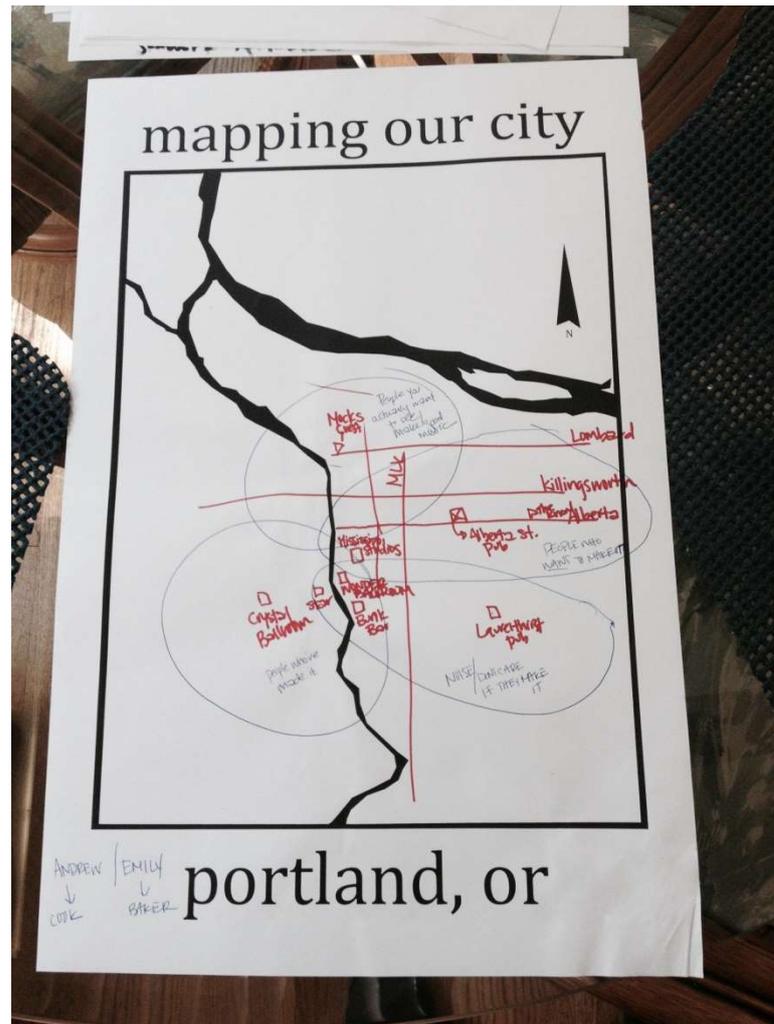


Figure 20 The Portland Music Scene as drawn by Andrew and Emily.

<sup>2</sup> Satyricon was open from 1983 until October 2010. It was famous for its anarchic approach to programming, as described by Mike Lastra: 'The good thing about that club, almost anything could happen there, and maybe did. Almost no one else would let things like that go on, whether it was people taking their clothes off, or exploding jello in the room, or bands like Brown Hornet with a show with metal grinders and sparks flying' (Mike Lastra, Personal Interview, April 2013). It also has a place in local music folklore, reportedly being the place Courtney Love met Kurt Cobain.

The map drawn by Andrew and Emily (fig 20), a cook and baker respectively, suggests a sense of musical hierarchy in certain areas of the city. Each of their drawn spheres refers to a level of popularity and purpose in the scene, divided into four categories:

1. People you actually want to see/make good music
2. People who want to make it
3. People who've made it
4. Noise/don't care if they make it

The geography of Category 1 includes the streets MLK, Killingsworth and Lombard, all located in inner North/North East Portland, in particular the Mock's Crest neighbourhood. The geography of Category 2 includes Alberta and eastern parts of Lombard and Killingsworth, intersecting with the first sphere at MLK. This sphere shows specific venues such as The Know and The Alberta Street Pub. Category 3 focuses on the downtown area of the city, referring specifically to the Crystal Ballroom, and intersecting with venues in Category 4: The Star Theatre, Wonder Ballroom and Bunk Bar. As well as these intersecting venues, Category 4 also takes in the Laurelthirst pub in southeast Portland near the eponymous park. All of the categories seem to intersect for Andrew and Emily around Mississippi Studios, a venue on Mississippi Avenue often lauded for the variety of genres on the bill.

Seen together, these four maps provide a sample of opinion on how Portlanders see their own city and its relationship with music. In all of these examples venues are shown as markers of musical communities and as the most important part of the scene. Although these examples omit well-known record

stores, recording studios, label owned premises and instrument shops, it would be unfair to speculate that the mappers have little or no contact with these places.

In my ethnographic work, I asked my interview subjects – musicians and promoters alike – several questions about the place of venues in their lives. This was to determine how venues connect into the music community, if they were specific to certain genres, which venues were popular with the community, and why. The majority of performers indicated a preference for three main venues: the Doug Fir Lounge, Mississippi Studios, and Holocene (see venues map in appendix 4). Many also expressed a sense of nostalgia for venues passed: venues such as Satyricon, crucial to Portland mythology, and Backspace, for its accessibility to for all-ages audiences. I will discuss this latter venue in the following chapter.

As part of this study I asked participants not only to identify their favourite spaces to perform, but also to suggest what makes a good venue. I left this question intentionally open-ended, and participants responded accordingly: among their qualifying factors were sound quality, treatment of musicians, diversity of booking, and the booking of local musicians.



Figure 21 Summer Cannibals performing at the Doug Fir on March 28th, 2013.

### **Sound Quality and Intimacy**

Most Portland musicians say that sound quality is an important venue characteristic: musicians seek a public-address system that is mixed with sensitivity to the type of music being played, and an on-stage monitoring system that enables a rapport between instrumental and vocal parts is also important. Many musicians expressed a preference for the Doug Fir Lounge for their sound system. As Jenny Conlee, Pianist and Accordionist for The Decemberists and Black Prairie, amongst other groups, told me: 'I like The Doug Fir. I've played there a lot, it's like home. I like the engineer, his name's Mick. He's great' (Jenny Conlee, Personal Interview, July 2014). Sound quality seemed a respected asset of the venue, according to David Appaloosa from the band The Hugs: 'when you can get a venue that sounds good, and you can hear yourself on stage you play

better. [...] The Doug Fir sounds great' (David Appaloosa, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Kat Olsen, guitarist and senior music supervisor of Marmoset Music, explained why Doug Fir is one of her favourite venues: 'I think one of my favourite venues is Doug Fir. It's an amazing basement that's very intimate, even though it's a great sound set up, and you can fit a ton of people in there' (Kat Olsen, Personal Interview July 2014). This issue of intimacy is important for performers who want to be able to connect with their audience. The term 'intimate' in this context often refers to the physical distance between the performer and the audience, and how accessible performers seem to be. Kat is suggesting that the Doug Fir enables this connection between audience and performer.

Intimacy within a venue can create an atmosphere for certain kinds of performances. An artist might choose to perform at a venue to create a specific atmosphere. Singer-songwriter Laura Veirs now holds an almost traditional New Year's Eve performance at the Laurelthirst Public House in northeast Portland. For this event she gathers musician friends to perform cover versions of her favourite songs to ring in the New Year. In our interview, Laura discussed why she feels The Laurelthirst is a suitable venue for this event:

The Laurelthirst, that's a more old-timey Portland institution and it's been around forever. A lot of people do weird one-off, more small, more community shows there.... I do a show called Two Beers Veirs there every New Year's. [...] It's really small – if you pack it out 100 people can fit in. [...] It's got brick walls, it has kind of a vintage feeling, it has a western bar kind of feeling. [...] Two Beers Veirs is one off, it's once a year, it's a party for our friends, it's all covers. [...] I would say the Laurelthirst would be my favourite place (Laura Veirs, Skype Interview, May 2013).

Whilst The Laurelthirst's intimacy is important for Laura, she is also drawn to the venue because of the environment created through its aesthetic appearance. Laura recognises how the 'western bar kind of feeling' adds to the audience experience in consuming her music, perhaps alluding to the authenticity such an environment can create. Laura also points to the community spirit surrounding the venue. The Laurelthirst has a reputation for hosting bluegrass and American folk musics and has become somewhat of a hub for such musical activity. By fostering and cultivating a relationship with musicians around them, venues can create a desirable atmosphere to perform in, and become part of an acknowledged hierarchy of venues where it is important to perform for success in certain musical genres.

Another venue praised by agents in the Portland scene for both its intimacy and sound quality is Mississippi Studios, situated in the north quadrant of the city. Lucas Warford, bass player for Three for Silver, shared his thoughts on the venue:

I do love playing at Mississippi Studios. For our kind of music, it works really well. It's not so big with three acoustic instruments. [...] It's intimate enough to have direct contact. It's very good sound there – those guys there are all total professionals. (Lucas Warford, Personal Interview, July 2014).

### **Treatment of Musicians**

For my interviewees, a venue's sound environment is important, but so is the management's treatment of musicians. The Portland musicians I interviewed expressed a desire to be fairly paid, to be offered appropriate amenities, and to

be treated with respect. If a musician is treated well by a venue they are more likely to recommend it to colleagues as a performance space.<sup>3</sup>

Liz Vice is a soul singer whose music is an expression of her Christian faith. In our interview she told me how she felt her beliefs were respected by Mississippi studios:

My favourite has been Mississippi studios. It's not so much the space; it's the people that I've worked with. I'm singing about Jesus, no apologies, I'm not even just saying God. I'm saying Jesus the son of God, the one who died for my sins, no apologies, and they continuously invite me in to sing at their venue. They appreciate the music and they treat me well. (Liz Vice, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Portland is known to have a largely atheist population, so it is important for performers like Liz to be allowed the right to express their faith. This also demonstrates that a venue like Mississippi Studios respects its performers and allows them a platform for expression. Mississippi has also been commended for fostering an audience that respects musicians. As Melanie von Trapp, a member of the group The Von Trapps told me:

I've mostly been in the symphony scene, so Mississippi Studios is one of the first smaller club venues that I've played. [...] I love going to shows there, just the vibe of everyone. It's very vocal and the audience talks back and there's a lot of communication with the audience. That never happens at a symphony show. (Melanie Von Trapp, Personal Interview, August 2014).

This kind of interaction allows performers to foster a mutually beneficial relationship with their audience: a performer grows their audience and ultimately gains access to larger venues on the live circuit. Mississippi Studios has also gained respect from performers for their diversity as a venue. TxE's Calvin

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<sup>3</sup> Participants were directly asked to discuss their favourite venues. As a result of this, no participants talked about particular venues they disliked but rather held their favourite venues as models for others to copy. Anecdotally, some members did raise concerns, mainly about audiences at some venues, with several participants discussing how they felt the audience at the Doug Fir Lounge in particular talked during performances and displayed disrespect to artists – although this did not cloud their general opinion of the venue. Participants did not point to a venue they uniformly disliked, although my questions did not elicit such a response directly.

Valentine explained that: ‘Mississippi studios, where we just played, I would say they’re more open’ (Calvin Valentine, Personal Interview, January 2014). With the hip-hop scene struggling to find a hub venue, it is important that a recognised and respected venue such as Mississippi Studios books acts such as TxE to facilitate performance opportunities.

### Diversity of Booking

Music venues often become defined by the genres of music that are regularly showcased there. The following is a map of venues by associated, though not exclusive, genres:

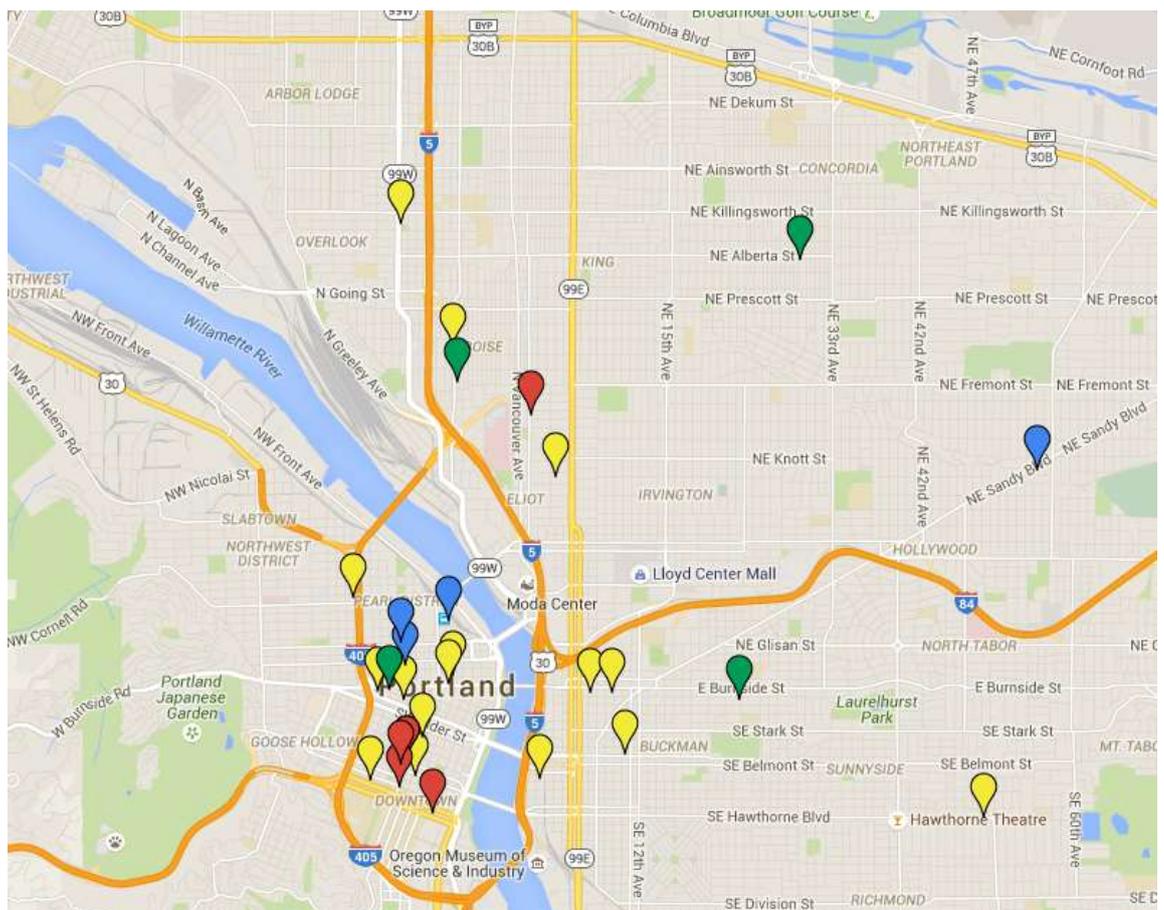


Figure 22 Music Venues by Genre - On this map: Indie-Rock (Yellow), Classical (Red), Singer-Songwriter (Green), Jazz (Blue).

This map shows that in comparison to jazz, classical, and singer-songwriter genres, indie dominates the city's venue network. Whilst these performance spaces have become hubs for certain genre communities, they do not have the same audience reach as venues that diversify their bookings. Several venues in Portland took the decision to diversify their booking, to extend the artistic possibilities of their performance space, and to access a wider audience. One such space is the Doug Fir Lounge. Douglas Jenkins, musical director of the Portland Cello Project, explained how the Doug Fir's openness to a musical act like theirs played its role in the group's narrative, as the group play 'everywhere from punk rock clubs to big symphony halls. The first place we played was the Doug Fir. We'll adjust our performance based on what's going on' (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014). By giving the Portland Cello Project its debut performance, this shows that the booking team was willing to experiment with their programming.

Holocene is another venue known for its willingness to offer experimental bookings. Holocene's talent buyer Gina Altamura explained the various kinds of events she books for the venue:

I try to keep it in the community and curate local unconventional events. [...] We'll do nights where a small press will release a book and also local bands play, combining literature and poetry and music and film. We do live score film nights. I'm kind of an all-purpose curator. (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).

By creating unusual combinations, a wider audience can be attracted to events at the venue, and although the experimentation is for artistic endeavour it also helps the venue bring in more revenue. The booking diversity enables the venue to be a space for a variety of creative endeavours, not just musical, through the encouragement of collaboration across the arts.

## **Booking Local**

In music scenes venues are often on the frontline of the dispute between localism and trans-localism (and in some cases trans-nationalism). This dispute often follows a narrative of local bands feeling they are denied access to locally important venues due to the venues' preference for touring bands. Arenas are a main flashpoint for such conflict, as only a band that has demonstrated an ability to sell enough tickets to fill the space would ever be contracted to play there. It is therefore important that venues show a dedication to developing local music, so as to aspire to such a level. Portland currently lacks a venue that bridges the gap between small-capacity clubs and the local arena. The scene has therefore been focused on venues that encourage, develop and, most importantly, book local talent.

Bookers themselves have also recognised the importance of cultivating a relationship with local musicians. As Gina Altamura explained: 'In terms of local talent, I'm really just trying to be as embedded in the community, and like available to the community as possible, so that people will come to me and be like, oh this local band wants to release the record. The hope is we have fostered this relationship' (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013). By being an active community member Gina can cultivate loyalty and relationships with bands, enabling her to be an authoritative voice on local music. Another booker who recognises the importance of local music is former Rontoms Sunday Sessions booker Theo Craig, who decided to give local music prominence at his

event by having a playlist of local music between acts. Theo explained the impact of this decision:

[I thought] I could focus the playlist on Portland music. People come to the show and might hear their own band. I'm gonna look at whose coming and who's RSVPed, look at the friends of the people who are playing, I'd tailor my playlist to that. People were pretty excited by that, I watch them [bands] get excited about it when they heard their music over the loud speaker. That'll be part of what the Sunday sessions are all about. (Theo Craig, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Theo's idea is simple: by celebrating local music through the in-house playlist he demonstrates a dedication to cultivating a local scene, which affords him a level of authority and respect similar to Gina's.

Another important booking decision is to allow Portland acts to open for touring bands. Erik Carlson, owner of SoHiTek Records and musician with the band Doubleplusgood, explained how this is beneficial to performers: 'I really love the Doug Fir and I really love Mississippi Studio and I love Holocene too. They like to encourage bands. They sometimes try to foster and hook up bands with touring acts they could see complementing and trying to go with connection wise.' (Erik Carlson. Personal Interview, April 2013). By opening for a touring band, not only are bands exposed to new audiences, they are offered an opportunity to network with the touring act, potentially initiating future collaborations.

### **Venue Gentrification**

As Portland continues its city government-instituted programme of urban regeneration, it becomes more difficult for local performers to be part of the city's development. The disruption of culture and heritage by urban regeneration

is not new to the city. As described in chapter 1, Portland historically had a thriving jazz scene, as documented by Robert Dietsche.

The picture Dietsche paints is of a vibrant community-built jazz scene operating throughout the night, where people would take pride in their appearance. Dietsche's description further points to jazz being an important cultural manifestation of the city's African-American community: 'Any cabbie worth his fare in those days would have known that Black Broadway, the other side, coloured town, all meant the same thing: the Avenue, namely Williams Avenue' (Dietsche, 2005, p.1). Jazz today has become somewhat more sporadically distributed across town, impacted by the closure of Jimmy Mak's, the city's main jazz hub. Alongside the decline in jazz has been a stifling of hip-hop music, which points to an overall decline in venues supporting African-American cultural expression.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars have made witness statements about the changes brought about by property development as part of local government packages to attract the creative class to specific areas in many different music scenes including Sydney (Gibson & Homan, 2004; Homan, 2008), Omaha (Seman, 2010), New York (2012) and Liverpool (Cohen, 1991 and Cohen, 2007). This is perceived by some as systematic gentrification in a bid to attract wealth and prosperity at the cost of those already residing in the given areas. Fabian Holt and Carsten Wergin offer thoughts as to what constitutes gentrification:

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<sup>4</sup> Although many can point to rock's roots within African American musical forms (Chapple and Garofalo, 1978; Wicke, 1987; Friedlander, 1996; Marcus, 2014), in Portland rock has been dominated by white musicians.

Gentrification commonly has negative connotations in the cultural sphere. [...] It is associated with commodification, standardization, popularised luxury commodities, and brand retail environments of chain stores. [...] Gentrification, moreover, also carries negative connotations because of the pricing out of not just artists and arts spaces but also low-income residents more generally. White middle-class dominance has been a defining characteristic. [...] This has culminated in increasing homogeneity of entire neighbourhoods (Holt & Wergin, 2013, p.9).

Holt and Wergin's description of gentrification seems to describe a threat to the individual character of neighbourhoods whereby development is aimed at advancing one social class and ethnic group in pursuit of wealth, to the detriment of another group.

Holt and Wergin also suggest that gentrification impacts artistic populations directly: creative work is often irregular work, and artists often do not have the consistent income to afford increased rents, hence they are 'priced out'. This highlights the irony of gentrification: it drives out those who made the area attractive in the first place. Gentrification then stalks artistic and creative communities from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Roy Shuker suggests the problems that may occur in such a situation, where for example live spaces are gentrified, are in part due to a conflict in values and outcomes of interested parties: 'There is a tension between concerts exemplifying a sense of community, albeit a transient one, and their economic and promotional importance' (Shuker, 1998, p.60). Here Shuker recognises the tension in prioritizing economic interest before fostering community so as to maximise the profit of commercial ventures. This stands in fundamental opposition to providing opportunities for creativity and for a community to control its own destiny.

One important study to note here is Fabian Holt's exploration of the impact of gentrification on independent venues in three major cities: Berlin,

Copenhagen, and New York. Holt describes the development faced in these cities as ‘the post-industrial process of gentrification’ (Holt, 2013, p.153), showing how gentrification attracts the creative class who then replace traditionally working-class, industrial areas. Holt argues that ‘the growing white middle-class presence creates new markets for more upscale leisure consumption, including the headliner-orientated concert venues that are marked by a certain distinction in relation to mass culture such as arena entertainment’ (Holt, 2013, p.153). In essence, if wealthier residents occupy certain neighbourhoods, the leisure services will also develop to meet their needs. A homogenization of venue culture is taking place within larger performances spaces, such as arenas, whereby an agenda for high profit has led to performance bills succinctly determined by an act’s financial success or radio play. What is compelling about Holt’s studies in particular is that the stories of each venue have remarkably similar fates.

Holt begins his case studies with an exploration of venue gentrification in Berlin, paralleling two venues, SO 36 and Kesselhaus:

In spring 2009, SO 36 was threatened by a lawsuit filed by neighbours frustrated with the noise level. The management started a fundraising campaign for constructing better noise isolation. [...] The city government did little to support SO 36; a government that had recently provided 100 million German marks<sup>5</sup> for turning the large old Schultheiss brewery in Prenzlauer Berg into a multi-venue cultural centre. [...] A local tourist organization adopted this narrative by presenting the Kesselhaus a space in which the old, industrial charm of the former boiler room had been preserved. [...] The Kulturbrauerei opened in 1997 and now includes a cinema, a café, and three music clubs. Kesselhaus is the largest, with an audience capacity of about 1,000. [...] These venues appeal to the dominant tastes of the gentry in this neighbourhood rather than a distinct subculture or community of music fans (Holt, 2013, p.160).

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<sup>5</sup> The investment made by the Berlin city government predated the introduction of the Euro as the principle currency of Germany. Although Holt suggests a ‘recent’ government intervention, as the quotation later explains the Kulturbrauerei opened in 1997.

These venues are put in opposition through their respective demographics, SO 36 being a heritage site for music fans and Kesselhaus being built to suit the needs of the neighbourhood gentry who have the economic advantage. It could also be assumed the 'gentry' are behind the noise complaints against SO 36, as the subsequent legal proceedings are themselves expensive and not easily accessible. Holt then presents a case study in Copenhagen, paralleling scene venue The Youth House (Ungdomshuset) with the commercial enterprise venue, Vega:

Ungdomshuset acquired a legendary status from presenting influential international alternative rock acts. [...] The in-house promoters were volunteers, [...] the city government and the mainstream media became increasingly sceptical of the place. The building was demolished in 2007 following a yearlong drama in the public sphere and one of the largest police operations in the nation's history. There were protests and people mourning, crying, and laying flowers in front of the building. [...] The Vega complex involves a couple of concert clubs and party spaces, and it was created within a larger agenda for urban regeneration. [...] The passionate scene entrepreneurs also had a commercial interest in Vega as a platform for a growing urban concert business. [...] Vega had not come into existence had it not been for entrepreneurial agendas outside the music scene. [...] Urban renewal was the main motivation behind the start-up capital from the city government. [...] Some felt it was too polished; others that rock finally had a culturally dignified space (Holt, 2013, p.161).

This Copenhagen case study also shows the tragic loss of a venue that had particular significance for the community around it. Local government opposition to the venue prompted a passionate response, which led to more direct action. The interesting development here is the mixed response to the Vega. Although Holt does not specify who offers their opinions about the space, he introduces the positive notion of new venues granting cultural dignity. Whilst this is not the opinion of the overriding majority it points to a more positive function of new spaces: that of granting rock music a more recognised place within the local cultural narrative, in a building supported by government finances. Though a

space like Vega is likely to be new and in turn perhaps more aesthetically clinical, it does provide better facilities for musical creation. There is naturally a concern with a space that it is governed by what Holt terms 'entrepreneurial agendas', but this opens a wider debate about how professional a space should be, and how spaces can serve the dignity of performance.

This debate drives a wedge into the romantic narrative that all urban development is detrimental to musical communities. Whilst the concept of culturally dignifying a space does not override the financial drive behind more commercial mainstream venues, it may balance the political argument for local authorities. From a political standpoint, governments in particularly progressive left-leaning cities need to enable community-based enterprise as well as urban renewal to provide revenue streams for frontline services. There is a potential compromise therefore in enabling the building of a commercial venue that supports a local musical community, but the crucial factor in such a decision will be how accessible the venue is to the musical community.

Holt's final case study focused on New York, 'where gentrification has been more intense' (2013, p.172) than in Berlin and Copenhagen. Holt discusses the conditions that led to the closure of the iconic venue CBGB and the rise of venues such as The Mercury Lounge:

CBGB evolved into a rock club within its first year, as artists on the underground cultural scene were looking for a place to perform. The clubs that emerged in the following years formed a platform for a music and social scene shaped by the dirty, noisy, post-industrial environment, as well as by drugs and crime. [...] The closing of legendary clubs has created a strong focus on decline amongst insider discourses of music scenes. [...] The Mercury Lounge, however, was the beginning of a change. It gained the position of rock clubs such as CBGB and Brownies as a hotspot for new rock music. Focus was on indie rock, the genre that eventually became popular among the gentry and boomed in mainstream blogs and larger concert venues and festivals in the 2000s. The management of the Mercury Lounge developed relationships with bands in this genre, including bands such as the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the Strokes. [...] The Mercury Lounge

served as a 'feeder club' with a business rationale that pre-gentrification clubs did not have (2013, p.164).

From this example we again see the old and the new pitted against each other, but this example strikes a more fascinating dynamic. Whilst it is undeniable that CBGB enjoyed legendary status, it is interesting that the club was part of an unstable environment including crime and drugs. Although this adds to (perhaps romantic) notions of 'rock n roll' mythology, this is something inappropriate for any government to support, either implicitly or explicitly.

Holt mentions the Mercury Lounge as a place that seeks to gain local support by fostering relationships with local bands, but also as a place that has 'business rationale'. Of all of Holt's examples, The Mercury Lounge seems to have achieved the political balance of being a new space involved in progressive urban development, while involving the music community in its processes. The Mercury Lounge 'was at the beginning of a change' (2013, p.164), effectively straddling the past scene and the future to come. Holt asserts that this position enabled the venue to grow with the music scene, and to work with it to gain competitive advantages:

The management had a strategic focus on young indie rock artists and 'tested' a large number of 'baby hands' to develop relations with talented artists and gain expertise in the indie rock scene. This curatorial investment on the part of the management proved to be an important competitive advantage in relation to corporate promoters such as Live Nation when some of the artists and the indie rock genre started to gain wider popularity (2013, p.165).

In other words, by cultivating a kind of loyalty, if a local musician becomes successful, they will return to the Mercury Lounge, and ultimately raise the profile of the venue. If an artist prefers a venue where they have a relationship with the management, this gives the venue a competitive advantage. The competitive advantage that companies such as Live Nation enjoy is financial

capital: they invest in larger venues with ease, and their sponsorship of venues can increase audience impact.<sup>6</sup>

### Filling the Venue Gap

Portland hosts a variety of venues with a variety of capacities. The following map provides an overview of all the venues I visited or discussed with participants during my fieldwork:<sup>7</sup>

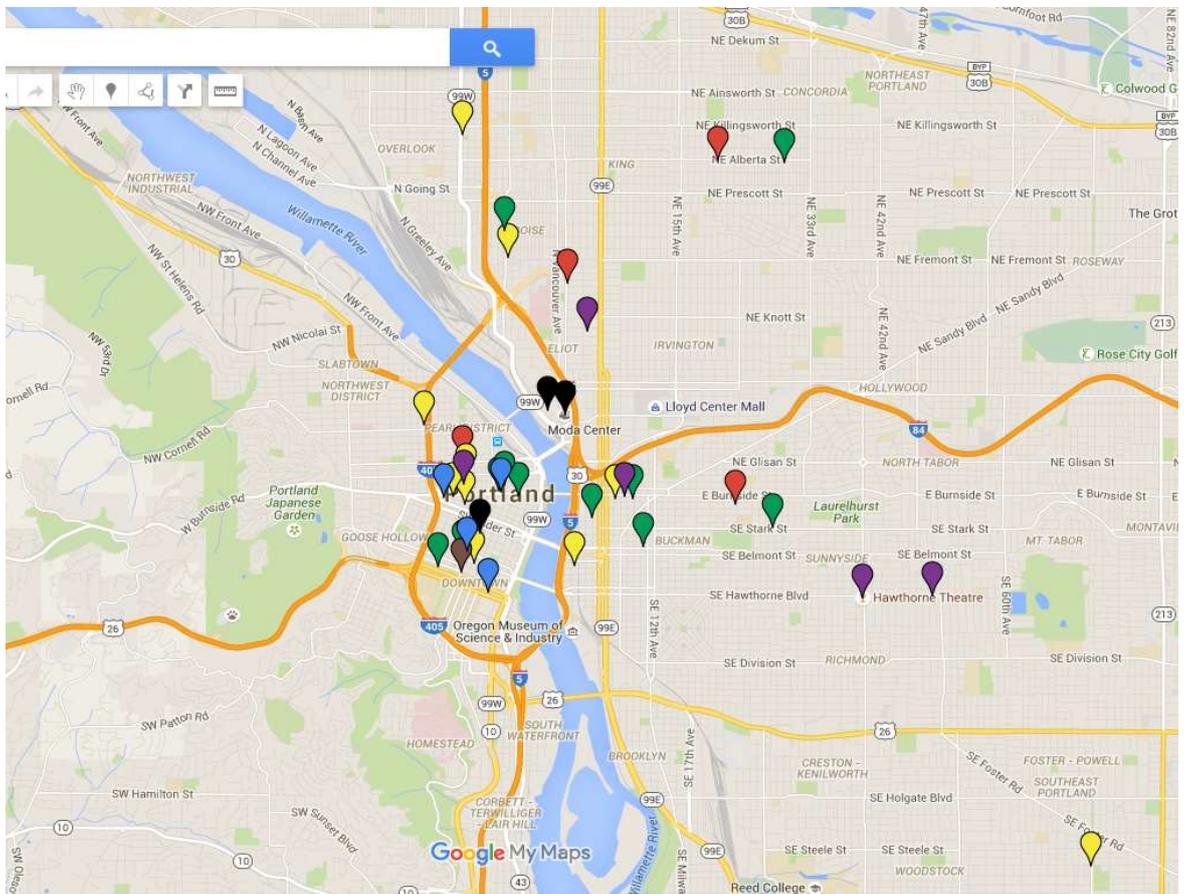


Figure 23 Music Venue Capacities - Red = < 100; Yellow = 100-200; Green = 201-500; Purple = 501-700; Brown = 701 – 1,000; Blue = 1,001 – 5,000; Black = > 10,001. See Appendix 3 for Venue Capacity Chart.

<sup>6</sup> One example of this is the Academy chain in the UK, currently sponsored by the mobile telecom giant O2. Having O2 as the sponsor means information about concerts can reach all those with an O2 phone in their pocket, and it also allows O2 to attain brand loyalty through their ‘priority’ scheme, in which customers get advanced access to event tickets before they go on general sale.

<sup>7</sup> There are more venues in Portland than described here, including houses that regularly host gigs, which I have omitted for the protection of proprietors who would be fined if discovered.

This first map shows a concentration of venues around the downtown area, as might be expected. It also suggests that smaller venues are dispersed across the city, particularly those of 100-200 capacity, which stretch out to north and southeast Portland. The largest venues are centred on the Rose Quarter complex, as this has been a city council-demarcated space for mass cultural activity. Here venues play host to sporting events as well as mass commercial concerts. It is important to note that I found no venues with a capacity of 5,000-10,000 – that is, a mid-sized venue, and an important marker of a performer's success.

Some members of the Portland music scene feel that the city needs a mid-size venue to bridge the gap between the Rose Garden Arena (known in 2015 as the Moda Centre due to venue sponsorship), and the Crystal Ballroom.

Former PDX Pop Now! Board member Benna Gottfried articulated this problem:

We have a big gap, from once you reach capacity at the Crystal Ballroom the next biggest venue you can play is the Memorial Coliseum, which is gigantic. [...] I went to an Arcade Fire show at the Memorial Coliseum, and they blocked off the seats and had just the floor. [...] It felt weird to be there. I didn't feel the right place for that performance. [...] Now probably Arcade Fire could fill a stadium now. [...] We're really missing that mid-sized venue. [...] Bands will play the Crystal Ballroom because they don't wanna play a stadium show. [...] There's not anything between where Justin Bieber and Beyoncé play and the Crystal Ballroom, and I think that's a challenge in the venue world in Portland (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

This lack of a medium sized venue is a detriment to the scene. Whilst those not ready for the stadium may choose to play the Crystal Ballroom, the venue's capacity does not provide the size of audience that a certain professional level of musicians would want. There are important points to consider about the social and economic impact of filling this gap. Whilst the premise is simple (that of building a new venue), the questions remain: how will capital investment be

raised? What will happen to the surrounding location? What will happen to the existing space chosen for development? In the next section I explore various models, taking into consideration the political and social climate of Portland.

### **The Chain Venue**

In conflict with the success of Portland-based companies such as Nike, Intel and advertising giant Widening & Kennedy, the local music scene seems to reject notions of conglomerate business. This anti-corporate stance makes it difficult to imagine a medium-sized venue being built, as most are run by national events companies like Live Nation. Live Nation boasts that 'somewhere in the world every 20 minutes is a Live Nation event' (Live Nation, 2015). They would certainly have the upfront capital to repurpose an existing building or indeed construct a new venue. There could be other musical corporate interest as well: AEG Live ran the Moda Centre Portland's arena venue, when I visited it in 2014 and there could be scope to further their investment in the city with a medium-sized venue. This model could work in two ways: the venue could be owned, constructed and built by an events corporation, or someone else could create the building and lease it out to a corporate events company. There are also various opportunities for sponsorship of the chain venue: even though a company such as Live Nation may own a series of venues, each one could be sponsored by a different company, thus providing a diverse revenue stream.

Chain venues have a distinct advantage when booking larger touring acts because an artist can enter into a block-booking contract, where they could embark on a national tour only playing venues owned by one company. This is

mutually advantageous: it simplifies the tour scheduling for an artist's tour management, and the venue company gains exclusivity. The disadvantage falls upon the local artists who are not likely to have a chance to perform at the space. Block booked tours in most circumstances will have a pre-arranged support act as well, further reducing involvement of local musicians.

### **A City Owned Venue**

A corporate model could still effectively be owned by the city, but it would provide less income for the city than if the city owned and operated such a space itself. The city of Portland already owns and runs the Portland 5 venues. The concept of direct state intervention in the music industries is something Martin Cloonan critiques in *Popular Music and the State in the UK*:<sup>8</sup>

While the government has become increasingly interested in popular music, it has never examined questions of ownership within the popular music industries. [...] Too often the phrase 'the music industry' is used by politicians and in places such as official reports in ways which undermine an understanding of the realities of those industries which concentrate on the production, distribution or retail of music. [...] Initiatives have been developed for the music industries which have been based on a lack of critique of those industries (Cloonan, 2007, p.3).

A prioritisation of the industry viewpoint is particularly pertinent in the American political context. Although Portland leans to the political left it must be acknowledged that the American political spectrum in general is further to the right of that in Britain; regulation of business, or indeed nationalised services, are therefore scarce. A venue run by local government could be perceived as challenging ownership relations by making the state the owner. This could be seen as setting a dangerous precedent: it could be misused by the state through

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<sup>8</sup> I use the term music industries in agreement with arguments for plurality put forward by Mike Jones in *The Music Industries: From Conception to Consumption* (2012)

cultural propaganda, and it removes a marketplace or indeed competition.

Freedom of the market is a crucial tenet in the political freedoms of the United States, so any such move could be challenged through judicial process by events companies.

In 2011 the office of the City Auditor in Portland released a report entitled *Portland Centre for the Performing Arts: Outsourced Management good for the City, but agreements and oversight need improvement* (Griffin-Valade et al, 2011). The report details the city's existing contracts with the Metropolitan Exposition and Recreation Commission (MERC), who manage the city-owned performing arts spaces Keller Auditorium, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, and the Antoinette Hatfield Hall. The report explains the financial relationship in explicit terms:

Most of PCPA's [Portland Center for the Performing Arts] income was from charges for services including theatre rentals, admission fees, ticket commissions, food and beverage services, as well as income from the Transient Lodging Tax, and contributions from the City of Portland. [...] PCPA reserves go into a restricted fund for an employee pension programme, and accumulation fund for capital maintenance and improvement, and a contingency fund to help ensure that PCPA has sufficient resources to remain operational if they experience a significant loss of revenue or increase in costs (Griffin-Valade et al, 2011, p.9).

The agreement allows the venue to control its own revenue streams, enabling sustainability whilst still receiving financial support from the city. The venues maintain their own independence without direct intervention from local government. Also bolstering this arrangement from the City of Portland's perspective are the agreements on insurance and liability:

The City has diverted primary liability through the current management arrangement. Metro insures the PCPA building as part of a blanket policy that covers all Metro buildings. [...] Metro told us they would pay the deductible if there was damage to PCPA buildings or if someone was injured in the buildings (Griffin-Valade et al, 2011, p.16).

By not having to accept any insurance liabilities the City has less risk in its involvement with PCPA, so does not risk public monies on the venture. This perhaps is the integral benefit of management outsourcing for the City.

If the City were to extend their ownership portfolio to a new venue that would fill the gap between the Crystal Ballroom and the Moda Centre, a similar arrangement would be expected. This could allow a venue to be financed by the City yet run by an external partner who would be liable for insurance and keep out political interference with its programmes. There is of course a risk that the management would not be committed to local performance opportunities, so it is important to draft a mission statement allowing local music to thrive within the space. With regard to the PCPA, the city auditor received reports of local inaccessibility:

Throughout this audit we heard concerns about lack of affordable theatre space for small performing arts companies. RACC staff told us that many companies in Portland are unable to use PCPA facilities because of limited availability, and because the rental rates and user fees are too high. [...] The PCPA Director and MERC interim General Manager told us rates cannot be eliminated since they cover many fixed costs like electricity and labor. [...] Non-profit users of Brunish Hall [in Antoinette Hatfield Hall] are not charged rent but must also have insurance and pay a user fee on tickets sold (Griffin-Valade et al, 2011, p.12).

There is a difficulty for venues such as PCPA to balance aiding the community with covering its costs. It would seem the only solution to progress would be for the City of Portland to cover the funding gap created by reduced or free rates. This naturally would be an important consideration if a new venue space were to be city funded. A development of this funding model for the interest of the local music scene might be for the city to create a more restrictive contract that foregrounds a focus on booking from the local music scene alongside the pursuit of profit, although this could be difficult to sell to MERC.

## A Cooperative Venue

There is a strong musical infrastructure in the Portland scene. Musicians are all stakeholders and could potentially be part of a creative solution. But is it realistic to seek investment from the music community to ensure that a mid-sized venue is not isolated from its own scene?

One comparative model to consider is the publicly-owned American Football franchise, the Green Bay Packers. Patrick Hruby of ESPN explains the advantages the Packers have from being publicly owned and how they came to have such a structure:

In 1923, the Packers were nearly bankrupt. The desperate club held a stock sale. Today, the franchise has 112,158 shareholders who own 4.7 million shares. Only none of those individuals receives dividends. They don't even get free tickets. Instead, all profits are invested back into the team. As such, Green Bay's board of directors is mostly motivated to: (a) remain solvent; (b) field a competitive team. They're not driven to make money for the sake of making more money, and as such, far less likely to risk a short-term, franchise- and community-wide financial hit – via a no-games, no-revenue lockout that could cost the league an estimated \$1 billion or more – for the sake of surplus cash in ownership's coffers down the road. To put things another way: because the Packers are publicly owned, they are the only NFL franchise to open its books (Hruby, 2011).

The Packers' owners are fans with an interest in sport, as opposed to profit, which enables the club to be run for and by the people. Their interest in the sport also allows the needs of the team to be met through player investment as fans would not prioritize diversifying income above the game.

The advantage of such a proposition as a cooperatively-owned venue is that the arts community, being stakeholders, can plot the artistic and financial direction of the venue, ensuring both the needs of the performers and audience are met. This would in theory enable musicians to make a living from performances and the audience would be able to afford ticket prices. In practice this could be difficult to achieve, as either the audience or the performers would

have to be prioritised, and there would still be a need to strike a financial balance. The stakeholders would have to be organised and prepared for compromise, which is often difficult in practice. The main problem for such a venture would be the need for upfront capital investment, an undeniable challenge for a venue of this scale.

### **A Proposed Solution**

Portland is a city whose population is quite resistant to multi-national corporations. A chain venue with corporate sponsorship would not suit the city's general political ethos and would result in a potential lack of performance opportunities for local artists. A cooperative venue, although managed by artistic stakeholders, would struggle to remain profitable and competitive enough to attract touring bands, which would ensure the audience necessary to cover overhead prices such as electricity, wages and other outgoing costs. To fill the mid-sized venue gap the easiest approach would be for City Hall to create a venue and outsource management to fulfil the needs of the Portland Music Scene.

The city-owned venue outsourced to MERC management seems a viable solution, depending on the economic capabilities of the Portland City Council in providing capital for the building. Not only does this model fit Portland's independent ethos, it also has been tried and tested in the city's context. To achieve this, it would be crucial to foster community dialogue as part of the pre-build consultation process to see how the citizens who are funding the venture can ensure a reasonable amount of interest in it. There would also need to be a

contract caveat and a mission statement to ensure the promotion of the local music scene via performance opportunities at the proposed venue. MERC should consider employing a local music quota on such a venue if it were to be built to allow the music scene to reinvest in its own development.

The creation of a mid-sized venue in Portland not only allows for a clear progression of audience sizes for bands to attract, but also creates the opportunity for more reinvestment in local music making. If local bands can access larger venues then it makes the city attractive to the national recording and performance industries, thus encouraging investment. By having local government involved in the process there could also be an opportunity for the public sector to harness the economic resource music provides through live performance. Local government has a clear interest in such venues succeeding as the audiences at such a venue are likely to contribute to the service sector around attending a performance, paying for hotel rooms and buying food. This already happens with the biggest venue that local bands perform in, the Crystal Ballroom, which has its own hotel attached. Anecdotally scene members pointed to the nearby Ace Hotel as another popular place for Crystal Ballroom attendees to stay.

Local government could be radical and through investment in a mid-sized venue propose taxation on performances or event hire, which could be directly used for improving arts education or supporting the music scene through investment. Portland has already created an income tax to provide education funding, and it is clear that this further move would be popular. It is clear that

Portland is the city to explore radical local government interventions such as these, and harness the economic potential live music has for the city.

## 5. Portland Governance

Portland is renowned for being on the left of the political mainstream in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Like every other city, Portland has an elected mayor who is supported by an elected city commission. The city's legislature is responsible for laws directly impacting venues and commercial music spaces, including record stores and studios, and it also legislates for living and working conditions in the city. As music has become an important economic resource for the city of Portland, it is inevitable that political decisions impact not only on music making, but also upon conditions of the environment surrounding it.

In the next three chapters I will explore three distinct aspects of civic politics: how the arts are legislated in Portland, how hip-hop is policed in the city, and how liquor licensing legislation impacts the access of younger audiences to music in the city. Although distinct in nature, these three aspects combined provide an overview of the internal political relationships forged within the Portland music scene. Through examining how the city council, police bureau and liquor control commission create regulations affecting music in Portland, I will offer a more holistic picture of the ways that music is used as an economic resource within the city.

### Legislation Surrounding Music Scenes

Many scholars have examined the ways in which civic authorities have created legislation that impacts on music scenes. Shane Homan (2000) has shown how

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<sup>1</sup> In the last 75 years there have been only three republican mayors and three independents, compared to seven democrat mayors. There has not been a republican mayor since 1980.

the Oz Rock scene in Sydney is treated as deviant, by exploring the specific legislation – fire inspections, venue décor and capacity regulations, in addition to noise limits – that was passed without regard for musical practice and economic profitability. Homan argues that '[t]hese changes represented not the concerns with the pastoral care of live audiences and performers, but a significant re-assertion of the dual (and related) rights of the home-owner to peaceful, recuperative leisure' (Homan, 2000, p. 41). Homan suggests that legislation is positioned in favour of one social group – the home-owner – as, perhaps, those associated with Oz Rock are believed to lack the moral principles a government expects of its citizens.

To expand on this, Homan discusses a fundamental perception held by civic authorities: 'governance practice was derived from understanding rock music as noise... rather than producing meanings for its audiences and performers' (Homan, 2000, p.41). This legislation has deliberately focused on noise control to ensure rock music is not dignified as music and thus not granted cultural recognition. Homan also argues that 'the legislative reforms documented... reflect a series of technologies of the self, a reliance on policies designed to ensure a constant assessment of individual behaviours (of musicians, audiences and venue owners) more closely aligned with civic notions of good citizenship' (Homan, 2000, p.42).

Legislation of the Oz Rock scene is also motivated by a will to control the behaviour of those within it, to ensure morality and to fight any notion of deviance the civic authorities feel this music promotes. Homan defines the relationship between the Sydney civic authorities and the Oz Rock scene as a

desire for the former to control the latter within the boundaries of the moral notions of what constitutes citizenship. This would naturally lead to tensions as the state is effectively dictating the nature of expression.

A civic authority can either legislate against what it sees as disruptive deviant music, such as the approach taken by the Sydney authorities, or it can seek to understand the economic potential of music, as in the case of Austin, Texas. In their 2013 study of the Austin music scene Caroline Polk O'Meara and Eliot M Tretter show how civic authorities have collaborated with business leaders and musicians to harness the economic potential of the city's music: 'City elites have focussed on how live music serves an auxiliary function, something that can help draw more service or high-technology firms into the city' (O'Meara and Tretter, 2013 p.57). They suggest that music is an attraction that encourages those in the productive creative industry to move to the city and thus to further contribute to its economy, describing Austin City Council as 'treating cultural policy as part of the city's strategic growth policy [...] how music – along with cultural amenities in general – enhances the city's competitive advantage' (O'Meara and Tretter, 2013, p.58). To achieve this Austin City Council facilitates musical creation via legislation which 'promotes Austin musicians, nurtures the music business community, enhances Austin's "liveability" through music, and oversees the city's sound ordinance' (O'Meara and Tretter, 2013, p.58). This positive approach recognises and harnesses the economic potential of music in Austin.

These measures appear to attract what Richard Florida would term 'the creative class' to the city: 'The super-creative core of this new class includes

scientists and engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, and architects, as well as the “thought leadership” of modern society’ (Florida, 2003, p.8). As musicians fall into this class they could possibly be part of a post-industrial economy, a class that inhabits ‘creative centers [which] tend to be the economic winners of our age. Not only do they have high concentrations of creative-class people, they have high concentrations of creative economic outcomes, in the form of innovations and high-tech industry growth’ (ibid). Florida also suggests that the creative class seeks certain prerequisites from these creative centres: ‘what they look for in communities are abundant high-quality experiences, openness to diversity of all kinds, and, above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people’ (Florida, 2003, p.9). Validating one’s creative identity may be interpreted as having an active and communal output for one’s work, for example in performance spaces or galleries. Florida’s work demonstrates how the creative community has become an essential part of urban growth and post-industrial expansion, and how music can be used to create a desirable environment for the creative class to inhabit.

The examples of Sydney and Austin show that legislation impacts music, either by providing an economic output or by limiting it within a moral framework. Whilst a city may encourage creativity, it has a duty to provide safety regulations as well as to ensure a good quality of life for its citizens. These can both be achieved through sensible yet progressive legislation. Legislative approaches to regulation demonstrate how authorities view music and its role in the societies which they govern. It is important to explore this relationship

between the levels of government and the music scene in order to understand how music reacts to the environment around it.

### **The Development of Arts as an Issue in Portland**

In 2008 the independent research group Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates published the results of their survey, *Voter Attitudes Toward the Arts and Culture in Portland*. This study gives a fascinating insight into the perception of the arts and cultural activity and how they operate within the city's economic framework. The statistics drawn from this survey are staggeringly progressive, although it is important to recognise the sample size taken: two hundred participants in each county around the city of Portland, for a total of six hundred participants. The key statistic from this survey is that 'voters support increased ongoing, dedicated funding for the arts and cultural organizations', with 'a clear 70-percent majority believe such funding is needed, while fewer than one in five reject the idea' (Fairbank et al, 2008). This can be interpreted in a variety of ways, one of which suggests that the majority surveyed favour state funding for the arts.

In many of my interviews for this project, Portland music scene members recalled politicians campaigning for support of the arts, such as that by former Mayor and arts advocate Bud Clark.<sup>2</sup> His campaign posters used the slogan, 'Expose yourself to art', and featured an image of Clark doing just that: opening a trench coat so as to expose himself to one of the city's sculptures. Upon his election in 1984, as a result of 'that poster', the *Milwaukee Journal* declared:

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<sup>2</sup> Mayor from 1985 to 1992.

‘Portland elects an art buff’ (Milwaukee Journal, May 20, 1984), and further commented that ‘now that he has been elected mayor, tavern owner J.E (Bud) Clark’s “Expose Yourself to Art” poster is selling faster’ (Milwaukee Journal, 1984). Matt Singer, music editor for weekly newspaper *Willamette Week*, described the impact Clark had on the Portland music scene when in office: ‘Bud Clark [...] was the quintessential Portland mayor. [...] He had a fundraiser called the Mayor’s Ball [where] he had weird kind of death metal bands play’ (Matt Singer, Personal Communication, August 2014). As Singer suggested, a mayor who identifies with the arts is a mayor who is truly representative of the populace.

### **The Arts Tax**

One of the ordinances most often cited by participants in this study was Ballot Measure 26-146, locally known as ‘The Arts Tax’ (Portland City Council, 2012). Calling to ‘Restore School Arts, Music Education; Fund Arts through Limited Tax’, this measure was a unique form of taxation, requiring citizens of the city to pay an annual tax of \$35 toward access to the arts through education in schools, or administered by non-profit organisations with school access prioritised, with funds distributed via the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC). The accession of the bill is quite remarkable for a city in the United States, a country known for its resistance to taxation; yet in Portland, ‘according to the official canvas 178,725 votes were cast in favour of said measure, and 107,953 were cast against said measure’ (City Auditor, 2012), equating to approximately 62% of the voting population supporting this additional taxation. Jenny Kalez, the city’s

liaison officer between the arts commissioner, Nick Fish, the RACC, and other city arts organisations, told me about the impact the arts tax had during its first years of enforcement:

I'm surprised sometimes by how much Portlanders support their art and have really passionate views about it. You're doing something right if there's a strong reaction because art is so subjective. In 2012 we passed the arts education and access fund, better known as the arts tax. It's had its bumps; [it] passed with 62%, people [were] saying I'll pay \$35 a year and you'll restore arts education in schools. It was this huge collaborative effort. They found out what Portlanders would support and got it passed, it's \$10 million for arts. It's pretty amazing what it leverages [as] you're restoring arts education in schools. It's nice to see kids doing music, and creating visual art (Jenny Kalez, Personal Interview, July 2014).

It seems almost unprecedented for a city to budget \$10 million for arts-based education, but this shows the strength of Portland's artistic community, and their dedication to making artistic expression accessible to all. Former Mayor Sam Adams discussed the unintended impacts of passing such a ballot measure: 'We just passed an arts tax. We're the only ones in the United States. [...] Because this tax passed now RACC and I have had enquiries from all over the place' (Sam Adams, Personal Interview, March 2013). As Mayor Adams suggests, the tax was seen by some as politically impossible; yet this socially progressive move has also been part of the city's attraction for the creative class in fostering an environment that invests in the future of its creative endeavours.

The Arts tax received strong support from within the music scene and politically motivated support from those who never normally engaged in politics. Gina Altamura, a Talent Buyer for the venue Holocene, discussed her perception of the campaign for the arts tax and the support it received in the community:

Recently we passed an arts tax which is a pretty cool thing, and that involved a tonne of support across the local music community. [There were] musicians coming out and supporting it vocally. In the music scene there's not a tonne of political engagement surprisingly. It was cool to see that for a change, people getting really heated about a measure, helping it succeed (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The scene is more engaged in creating art than observing the politics around it; but this tax makes a positive impact directly upon the artistic community, which may be what garnered such strong support from the scene itself. But whilst the tax proved easy to pass, its implementation proved rather difficult.

During my first fieldwork visit to Portland the tax was relatively new and was having legislative problems in ensuring all revenue was collected, thereby forcing the city to guarantee to cover any shortfall. As this process of reviewing legislation was taking place I interviewed Evan Neuhauser, President of Music in the Schools, the non-profit organisation run by a group of high school students who aim to provide popular music opportunities for their peers:

In November the city passed the arts tax, but it's turned out that the arts tax is pretty poorly written. The city is having all kinds of problems collecting it. It may be unconstitutional. The city has pledged that if they can't collect money from the tax they'll fill in the revenue gap for the schools who have budgeted for it. Before the arts tax, I can't remember the specific figures, it was [something] like \$7 per person per capita for spending [on] public art and arts programmes. Denver was like \$38 or something. In Portland, two of the public high schools, Jefferson and Benson, don't even have music programmes; another three only have one part time teacher. There's SU Lincoln and Grant [which] have two teachers. Lincoln just cut their choir programme as they lost funding for their teaching. The choir programme had just come back for three years then got cut again. There wasn't a constant funding source that the arts tax was supposed to fix (Evan Neuhauser, Personal Interview, May 2013).

As Evan describes, Portland has been having trouble providing at least an adequate level of music education in schools. This is surprising for a city with such dedication to the arts, and it appears that this tax was driven by the situation. The tax cannot cure these problems completely, but many like Evan responded to it as a positive start.

### **Sam Adams's Portland**

The main architect of the Arts Tax was the administration of Mayor Sam Adams. As I began my research for this study, Sam Adams had finished his term as mayor and there was a combination of reflection on his legacy and deliberation as to what his successor Charlie Hales might do to continue the city's support of arts and culture. As singer-songwriter Laura Gibson told me: 'I think the new mayor is interested in the arts, but Sam Adams, the old mayor, paid a lot of attention [to] what was going on in town musically. It's an amazing thing to be valued as an artist and I think that's why people come here and feel comfortable' (Laura Gibson, Personal Interview, April 2013). Laura's positive views about Sam Adams were echoed by radio DJ Jeremy Peterson: 'I think we were really spoilt with Sam Adams as mayor. He was a champion of the arts, in a big way. I don't feel the same way with the current administration' (Jeremy Peterson, Personal Interview, August 2014). I interviewed Jeremy a year after I interviewed Laura. Although Laura was guardedly optimistic about Hales' administration, when I interviewed Jeremy Hales had declined the arts portfolio, focussing instead on property and policing.

Arts Commissioner Nick Fish continues city presence within the arts, as

Jenny Kalez explained to me:

[Commissioner Fish] has a big passion for jazz and for non-profits. When we fund arts and music, it's non-profits, so a start-up indie band wouldn't necessarily benefit from what we're doing. The commissioner is out there in the music scene. It was natural [for him to take the arts portfolio] because he was attracted to it. Commissioner Fish is a huge arts supporter and arts lover. We'll have a staff meeting on Monday and he'll say, 'oh I went to this concert or this festival'. Mayor Adams was above and beyond, and he was the arts guy, and I think the community misses him in that role, when you have that big of a champion [of the arts] and it's the mayor (Jenny Kalez, Personal Communication, July 2014).

Jenny is confident in her boss's commitment to the arts, although I am aware that the office may simply wish to ensure a positive image of the commissioner in interviews.

Many of the people I interviewed cited a strong link between Mayor Adams and the arts.<sup>3</sup> But what impact can a politician truly have in raising the profile of a music scene? Many city officials will present a biased view, but it is important to seek the opinions of those in governance to determine city support of the arts, allowing actions to speak louder than rhetoric. Mayor Adams developed a working relationship with PDX Pop Now!, promoting it as part of the musical narrative of the city. As PDX Pop Now! volunteer coordinator Beth Martin explained: 'They used to do City Hall shows before I became involved, so like right outside City Hall or maybe Pioneer square. Sam Adams was pretty decent' (Beth Martin, Personal Interview, May 2013). Having a performance at City Hall clearly demonstrated an official support for the organisation and showed that artistic performance was crucial to the life of the city.

Another crucial link between PDX Pop Now! and Mayor Adams was his appointment of Cary Clarke, a co-founder of the organisation, as co-ordinator, and then director, of Arts policy. This appointment had a huge impact on the community and gave the non-profit sector a strong ally in City Hall. This opinion was often articulated to me by participants working for music non-profits, for example Rock n Roll Camp for Girls Executive Director Beth Wooten, who explained how the Adams administration helped her organisation:

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<sup>3</sup> No interviewees gave a negative response to Sam Adams, although interviewees were not asked specifically to give an opinion about him.

I moved here when Sam Adams was mayor and Cary Clarke was in office, and they were very, very pro arts and very accessible. So, when we were looking for a building, Cary Clarke was actually very helpful in connecting the dots (Beth Wooten, Personal Interview, May 2013).

As Beth suggests, this is surely what most people want from their politicians: accessibility.

Alongside support for non-profit organisations Sam Adams became somewhat infamous nationwide for his outspoken advocacy of Portland music, as Cary Clarke explained:

As Mayor Sam was first salesman for the city, he would talk about the arts and creativity in Portland, and music every opportunity he got. There was a big interview with Sam in *Billboard* about Portland music; Colin Meloy and The Decemberists contacted him to record an intro for their tour. Sam is always game for those kinds of things (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013).

It is interesting that a mayor would play such an active role in the music scene. In one notable example in 2011 Mayor Adams recorded a tour voice-over for the Decemberists, suggesting that music was an important economic asset to the city. As Adams explained in an interview with *Billboard*:

One of the key attributes making Portland what it is, is arts and culture. I love live music, so I'm especially proud when our local groups do well. Portland has a great arts and culture DIY vibe. Seattle has the grunge sound. Portland's is very eclectic. I don't think you could say there's a Portland sound. We've got all this great, independent-minded music (Adams cited by Harding, 2011).

Adams appears to see the lack of genre definition and the independence of the music scene as a selling point for the city, and suggestive of a resistance to corporate interference from the music industries. Mayor Adams also explained why investment in the arts is good for Portland even during economic hardship:

If you want to live in a one-dimensional city, I respect anyone's right to do so. I don't. I want to live in a city that has many dimensions to it. The more arts education we offer, the lower our dropout rate will be. The more arts and culture we have in the city, the more innovative we'll be in all other endeavours. It can't be an innovative city and be bereft of arts and culture or have a weak arts and culture scene. My goal is to allow for more full-time, living-wage arts and culture jobs. I think Portlanders for the most part get it, and our polling shows that Portlanders would be willing to spend more money to

promote arts and culture. They want artists to be for-profit and actually profitable. They support their local non-profit institutions. We have some of the highest arts and culture attendance of any city per capita in the United States. Arts and culture has always been a key attribute of what Portland is all about; it's in our DNA. Beyond that, I want Portland to be successful. I want Portland to offer great quality of life and also a great place to do business. Arts and culture is a key part of that (Adams cited by Harding, 2011).

As Adams argues, investment in the arts and culture creates a society that is equipped for innovation and creates a fulfilling work environment. Portlanders' support for this is of course substantiated by the Arts Tax ballot measure's victory. The focus on making the arts 'for-profit' and earning a 'living wage' is interesting within the context of the 2008 global recession, particularly as this clear vision of an arts and culture-based post-industrial economy has not continued in post-Adams Portland.

Adams's successor Charlie Hales, whilst aiming to attract creative industry, focussed on property development projects, such as securing a base in the city for the online service, Airbnb. *Willamette Week* reported on the company's meetings with The Mayor and Commissioners at City Hall, describing the differences in opinion about the impact of such a move:

To supporters, Hales' proposal would place Portland on the cutting edge of a democratic new economy where people make money by renting their property on the internet. Critics say it would give the Silicon Valley company the kind of legitimacy it has nowhere else. [...] Airbnb dubbed Portland its first 'Shared City', meaning it would begin collecting an 11.5% hotel tax from its clients. [...] Local critics of Airbnb warn that legalizing short-term rentals in apartments could jack up rents in a city with a notorious housing shortage (Mesh, 2014, p.7).

Where Mayor Adams pushed for a creative economy, Mayor Hales explored the concept of a property-based economy democratised by the internet. Though this may suggest there is equity, there is still a fundamental problem with exercising such apparent liberty during a housing shortage. This of course impacts on

musicians who, while perhaps not achieving the regular living wage, are renting properties that under new regulations could be subject to price inflation.

Despite Portland's weak-mayor system,<sup>4</sup> the mayor is seen as the most important politician in city governance. As Adams was also an advocate for film and television,<sup>5</sup> this could impact on the city's ability to attract creative industries and the creative class. Since leaving office Mayor Adams has fought for advocacy for artists and other creative people by helping to start the Creative Advocacy Network and encouraging the establishment of a Political Action Committee focussed on promoting pro-arts candidates. Mayor Hales had sought to work within a 'shared economy' framework in a bid to empower Portlanders, seeking different goals to Mayor Adams, and the arts were not part of this vision. And because Mayor Hales did not hold the arts portfolio, the Portland music scene lost its mouthpiece.

### **Oregon Arts PAC**

Alongside the political offices that can be sought through election and voting, there are other ways for Portlanders to engage in the political process. An interesting innovation in this regard is the Oregon Arts (& Cultural) Political Action Committee (PAC). In the US a PAC is a group that is free to fundraise and campaign for candidates who share their aims and principles, but all fundraising activity must be done independently of the candidate. Stan Penkin, co-founder of

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<sup>4</sup> This refers to a system whereby the mayor has equal power to other city commissioners.

<sup>5</sup> Adams often appeared in cameo roles such as playing the mayor's assistant in *Portlandia* and appearing as himself in supernatural thriller *Grimm*.

the Oregon Arts PAC, explained to me the goals and aims of the organisation in our interview:

We started this PAC to go out at political election time, seek out candidates who are running for office, offer to endorse them and support them financially as well, if they would make a pledge to us during an interview process. They would pledge to us that they would support the arts. [They would] support it through their role and be able to provide public funding. The city of Portland does and has provided a certain amount of funding but it's not enough. In this region the counties have also funded a certain amount of money but [it is] miniscule (Stan Penkin, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The Oregon Arts PAC is protecting the political artistic interest shared by many in the city asking candidates to ensure, if elected, that they will protect and expand public investment in the arts. The campaign funding provided through endorsement is an incentive for candidates to support the arts. I asked Stan to explain how they can ensure that pledges to support the arts are honoured:

I did some follow up meetings with them. [I would] just have a little chat seeing what's going on, just to remind them that we're here and we're watching. I was prepared if in fact this city council was going to reduce the RACC funding more than the 10% [it currently provides]. I was ready to put out stuff from interviews that we had, and things that were said in support of the arts. Thankfully it didn't come to that! (Stan Penkin, Personal Interview, May 2013).

What is plain from my interview with Stan is that the Arts PAC has a very clear goal: to ensure that pro-arts politicians who are elected to office will protect arts funding, and to hold them to that promise as a matter of importance: 'Oregon Arts PAC was conceived as a political action committee, something that had never been done before, certainly not in Portland or Oregon. I don't think [even] in the entire United States' (Stan Penkin, Personal Interview, May 2013). The concept is certainly innovative and another reflection of the importance of the arts to the city.

What is also interesting is the process candidates are required to go through to receive an endorsement. As Stan explained:

They [the candidates] went through a written questionnaire process, and then we would follow up with a face to face interview. We would qualify their written statements and create a ratings system, [and] then we would do the face to face interviews. From that process we would decide whether to endorse [or not] and whether or not we would give them money, make a donation and how much. It got to the point where the political season was coming, and I would start getting phone calls and emails from people running for office saying: 'hey are you going to be doing endorsements this year?' (Stan Penkin, Personal Interview, May 2013).

The process has several qualifiers: a questionnaire, an interview, and then a panel decision, all to ensure candidates are genuine in their intention toward the arts. The process also educates the candidates about the importance of arts to Portland, something that Stan believes is worthwhile:

[A] big part of what we do in Art PAC is not only interviewing and endorsing, but is educating political leaders as well, because we had people who came in who didn't have a clue. Some people got it, some people didn't. If they didn't, we didn't endorse them (Stan Penkin, Personal Interview, May 2013).

This allows candidates to learn about the importance of the arts to voters. If a candidate doesn't get endorsed in one election and decides to run again there is also scope to recognise how the arts could unlock more voters: something the Oregon Arts PAC seem amenable to as long as the candidate holds firm to their pledge if elected.

### **Mainstream Politics and the Music Scene**

Whilst provision for the arts is one decisive issue for Portlanders, those in the music scene will also make other considerations at the ballot box to ensure they can afford necessary provisions in order to live. Most musicians in the city do not have a consistent wage and need a second job to afford rental costs and healthcare provision. These issues shape the political territory those in the music scene populate as registered voters.

Music-makers and facilitators in Portland are also vocal in a variety of debates with which they engage to protect their way of life. One prominent example is the debate surrounding fluoridation of the city's water supply, which was presented as a ballot measure in May 2013. This debate polarised the city and indeed the music scene; prominent scene members were seen supporting both sides of the campaign. Some scene members are also part of state-wide campaigning, and support candidates who push for progressive policies such as marriage equality, abortion rights, and the legalisation of marijuana.

## **Healthcare**

During my research, one of the gravest contrasts I found between the United Kingdom and the United States was the public provision for healthcare. In preparing for each research visit I had to ensure I had all pre-existing medical conditions covered by travel insurance to avoid an extortionate bill should I have fallen ill in Portland. The US for-profit insurance marketplace had begun to change with the introduction of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, known as 'Obamacare'. The act introduced state provision of affordable healthcare – something which has greatly impacted the music community in Portland, with many members having access to healthcare for the first time.<sup>6</sup>

In our interview former Mayor Sam Adams expressed his hope that healthcare provision could provide for Portland music-makers and facilitators:

The advent of potential national healthcare with Obamacare, combined with local funding, [makes me] hope that the local music community will see the opportunity there. The basic human unmet needs of artists and musicians locally have been

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<sup>6</sup> Since this thesis was written President Donald Trump has sought to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

profound, and the arts tax doesn't even address that. But now that we're gonna have a national level of healthcare, and now that we have more robust security for a lot of our arts and culture and music organisations, now is not the time to declare victory (Sam Adams, Personal Interview, March 2013).

It is clear that Sam Adams is an advocate for Obamacare, as it helps create a stronger provision for artists in Portland to live more secure lives. Mayor Adams sees healthcare as a 'basic human need', taking a traditionally more left-wing stance on the issue.

This political perspective of universal health care provision has been supported by many music scene members: local musicians Laura Gisbon, Vikesh Kapoor, Matt Sheehy and Lifesavas wrote anthems about being healthy in Oregon for the advertising campaign of state insurance aggregator Cover Oregon. Regarding these advertisements *Willamette Week* reported that 'the ad agency's [North] choice of singers and songs was key, but the innocent, even dreamy images to portray a world under Obamacare have made the spots—and North—a national phenomenon' (October 2013). The vision the advertising company presented in these adverts plays up to pre-conceived notions of Portland and the twee-folk cultural image propagated through products such as *Portlandia*; the contribution from Lifesavas does add diversity in musical style and performance, though this garnered less press coverage.

One notable element to these advertisements is the lyrics of the songs themselves. In Laura Gibson's song, 'Live Long in Oregon' (2013), she lists professions that would be covered by insurance: 'Each logger and layer and stay at home dad/ every back and banker and indie rock band/ each teacher and student and neighbour and friend/ live long in Oregon'. The inclusion of 'indie rock band' in this list suggests that 'musician' is seen as a viable profession in

Portland, and indeed across Oregon. Although this may be the case, finding health coverage is still a struggle for musicians – one of the groups most likely to benefit from state coverage.<sup>7</sup>

Portland is a city with political momentum for the arts, where a supporting majority of citizens can help elect a government to deliver progressive new policies to protect the arts, invest in and develop them. It is the citizens who can empower individuals to make such changes. As artists inhabit the political spaces of the city with performances it is reasonable to suggest it will not be long before they present themselves as candidates for election to represent the political aims of the scene. Musicians have profiles afforded by their performances, and an increase in public meetings on the issues faced by them, facilitated by groups such as Fair-Trade Music PDX (an NGO calling for fairer treatment of musicians) and Oregon Arts PAC. It is only a matter of time before a candidate who truly represents artists, music-makers and music-facilitators joins City Hall and creates greater arts policy change for the city.

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<sup>7</sup> It must also be noted that Portland has its own healthcare non-profit fund specifically for musicians, The Jeremy Wilson Foundation. This foundation helps with medical costs incurred by musicians who struggle to afford operation and medicine costs. Regrettably, I did not have time during my field research to reach out to the foundation, though they have had a profound impact on the music community. Future research will aim to explore this organisation further.

## 6. Portland Legislation

A long-standing argument between the music communities and city officials is that of all-ages access to music. As is true for many public events, music venues make their profit by selling alcohol at concerts, yet state regulations restrict minors from these venues. In Oregon the sale of alcohol is regulated by the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC), which has a catalogue of laws protecting minors from the influence of drinking culture. On their *Oregon's Alcohol Laws and Minors* fact sheet the OLCC define their mission statement clearly: 'Keeping alcohol out of the hands of minors is a priority for the OLCC' (OLCC, 2014b, p. 1). This is a fairly unrefined mission statement to advertise, and easy to enforce:

ORS 471.430 Minor in possession of alcohol/minor in prohibited area: When minors are in possession of alcohol, they are either holding the alcohol, have consumed the alcohol, or attempted to purchase the alcohol. They will be referred to juvenile court or receive a criminal citation. The minor will be fined and/or required to perform community service. Minors/juveniles may be sent to alcohol assessment and treatment (OLCC, 2014b, p. 1).

This conservative approach means that if a minor is in possession of any sort of alcohol they can be given a criminal conviction, resulting in a fine or community service. This could also result in venues being fined and facing closure if minors are caught in possession, so it is therefore not surprising that many venues prevent access to live music by minors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alcohol sponsorship has become more common in Portland, particularly with the recent growth of the Project Pabst festival, sponsored by Pabst Blue Ribbon beer. This festival is a new addition to Portland's calendar, and began after my period of research for this project. For other studies on the relationship between alcohol and audience behaviour, alcohol sponsorship, and licensing regulations, see the special issue on 'Music and Alcohol', *Popular Music* 35/2 (2016).

This provides a different set of problems for performers who are minors themselves. The OLCC have strict regulations on 'minor entertainers' in premises that serve alcohol:

A minor entertainer may perform on licensed premises. If the minor entertainer stays on the premises when not performing, he/she must stay in an area where minors are permitted, such as an area with a Number III posting. If there is no break room, dressing room or patron area where minors are permitted, the licensee may, with prior Commission approval, designate space for minor entertainers in an area of the licensed premises normally prohibited to them. At a minimum, this place must be within the bartender's sight but not at the bar, and there must be no alcoholic beverages in this place. If conditions become unsuitable, the Commission may revoke its approval. If a minor entertainer is not performing and is not in a Commission-approved designated area on the licensed premises, then the minor entertainer must leave the licensed premises.... The parents or legal guardians of the minor have consented to the child's participation in such activity (Division 6, OLCC, 2014a).

This regulation in itself presents a myriad of difficulties for venues – providing a designated space for minor entertainers to wait when not performing, having the bartender keep an eye on them even if it is a night of busy custom – and could discourage many performance spaces from booking minor entertainers. I encountered these rules first hand when I saw Moorea Masa, then of The Ruby Pines, perform at the Mt Tabor Theatre, now known as the Alhambra. At that time, she was 20, and had to remain in the dressing room or outside the bar area until she performed, then return to this area straight after her performance.

With such stringent regulations on the sale of alcohol it is difficult for performance spaces to accommodate minors either in the audience or on stage. Whilst there have been several attempts at creating a stable all-ages space, the revenue lost from alcohol sales has led to their closure as these ventures are ultimately not profitable. In this chapter I will examine the ways that musicians respond to these regulations, and consider the efforts of PDX Pop Now!, to

provide access to music for an all-ages audience and to lobby for changes in existing OLCC regulation.

### **Music Making and The OLCC**

During my field research I attempted to interview members of OLCC about their relationship with the music scene but received no response. Although I am unable to offer an equally balanced argument here, it is still useful to examine how the music-makers and facilitators in Portland view the regulations placed upon them. This will lead in part to an assessment of how effective such restrictions are in fostering creativity, in particular popular music.

Many of my interviewees felt the OLCC's regulation of venues serving alcohol is a problem for all-ages access to music. They also felt that the regulations were perhaps draconian: some expressed their feelings off the record that the regulations were stuck in a prohibitionist temperance mindset and needed sensible modernisation. As well-known local musician Pete Krebs, formerly of the band Hazel, told me:

With regards to city authorities the only way they are not helpful is with regard to the OLCC and the alcohol line. I think that it's really important for kids to grow up seeing live music and seeing people play an instrument, as a way to counteract the instant music of the day (Pete Krebs, Personal Interview, June 2013).

It is interesting that of the many regulations the city places on entertainment this is the one that Pete disagrees with. As a teacher Pete has seen what he believes to be a useful tool for education all but taken away from his students due to such regulations. He is also suggesting that an opportunity to see musicians work for their trade is an antidote to the unrealistic expectations of careers in music as presented on TV talent shows, and by the industry's narrative of social media-

driven successes. Not only are minors being denied a cultural capacity to see live music, they are also being denied a form of education.

Many scene members also felt the OLCC was to blame for the lack of dedicated all-ages space. Gina Altamura, a local talent buyer for the venue Holocene, told me that ‘there’s not really a space for all ages in this town. [...] That’s the OLCC’s fault’ (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013). Local radio DJ Jeremy Peterson also said that ‘the OLCC is pretty well known for cracking down on all-age venues’ (Jeremy Peterson, Personal Interview, August 2014). There is clearly a disconnect between the scene and the authorities on this issue. In an attempt to bridge the gap, many non-profits have intervened in the conversation. Evan Neuhauser, President of Music in the Schools – an organisation founded by high school students to provide performing opportunities for their peers – explained his experiences with the OLCC:

I’m 18, I could play a show at Holocene [but] I wouldn’t be able to go anywhere except on the stage. I’d have to be outside, go in and play, and then leave. The OLCC is a very antiquated, archaic organisation run by old people who don’t really have any idea what’s going on. The mixed-use thing is a pretty recent development – as far as I know Backspace is the only mixed-use venue as defined by the OLCC. I’ve kind of been hesitant to steer the organisation [Music in the Schools] into political fights. I don’t really know the latest on the OLCC or what the process would be to get them to change the rules (Evan Neuhauser, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Backspace, the venue Evan mentions, closed down in 2013, raising speculation that the venue could not sustain its rental payments due to lack of income that in other situations could be boosted through the sale of alcohol. As Evan remarked, ‘Backspace can only serve beer and wine, which really cuts into money they could make if they did have a full bar’ (Evan Neuhauser, Personal Interview, May 2013). It is clear that the OLCC has not reached out to Music in the Schools for their perspective.

Whilst many non-profits act to provide the missing opportunities for minors, they can only achieve so much. It is clear there needs to be a more open dialogue with the OLCC to make positive steps toward enabling the younger members of the scene to access performances. One significant voice here is PDX Pop Now!, who have not only provided minors with access to performances and education but have become an advocate for them and campaigned for changes in OLCC regulation.

### **PDX Pop Now!: Lobbying and Facilitation for All Ages Access to Music**

PDX Pop Now! is a remarkable organisation on many levels. As a non-profit, they are run entirely by passionate volunteers who work through a network of local contacts to arrange their annual festival and distribute their compilation CDs. They also run a dedicated outreach programme, running workshops in local schools, and giving many kids their first gig experiences featuring popular local bands. Due to a reliance on patronage and goodwill, however, these important programmes can only be extended so far.

As part of this project I was invited to volunteer at one of the organisation's school outreach events. A team was assembled of skilled volunteers from other non-profits, such as Ethos music, and general volunteers who had worked with the organisation before in various other capacities. These volunteers facilitated a variety of workshops not just on songwriting but also other music-related skills such as screen-printing posters and film making. I was invited to assist with the latter and it was clear that the children, of elementary school age, were all excited to engage with creative processes and gain practical

experience. In a brief conversation with teaching staff they mentioned how they did not have a regularly contracted music teacher, and how they were thankful to PDX Pop Now! for providing an opportunity for their students to engage with music making and all the other industrial elements it entails.

At the end of the day the children heard live performances by De La Warr and Minden, two popular local bands.<sup>2</sup> As the bands played the kids formed a circle and a few of them plucked up the courage to start a break-dance-off. The bands really enjoyed the kids' reaction to their music and encouraged them to dance more, whilst calling on their teachers to join in, which some did. After the performances finished, the children mobbed the bands, asking for autographs. The musicians were taken aback; although they enjoy a level of popularity in the scene, this was not the usual audience reaction. I realised that for most of the children this was the first gig they'd ever seen, and perhaps their autographs would remain in their collections as 'first gig' ephemera. Perhaps this was the first time they could enact a musician-to-fan ritual on the encouragement of their teachers. It was certainly a unique experience for these kids, and a remarkable one to witness.

A few weeks later I reflected on this experience with PDX Pop Now! outreach coordinator Lydia Mazer, who explained to me how the school programmes are organised:

I have been responsible for leading a team of volunteers to put on one-day music and arts programming in underserved schools – we call them 'arts impoverished'. They're Title I, which means a high certain percentage is under the poverty level. We bring in other arts non-profits and they do workshops in the morning, then in the afternoon two local bands will play on site in school. It's often the first and only live music experience those kids have had, or will have, for a couple of years. The arts programming is sometimes the only hands-on arts programming they have all year. We get amazing

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<sup>2</sup> De La Warr no longer reside in Portland.

feedback generally. We have no disciplinary issues; that in itself is a sign these kids are super excited and so engaged in the programming. They often tell us they don't have any access to this outside of school, that they didn't know they were capable of doing the things they were doing. Now they know. [The kids might say] I sat down in a songwriting class and now I can go use this skill outside of this class and work on it on my own (Lydia Mazer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

It is interesting that PDX Pop Now! determines their programmes in accordance with those schools that are lacking in arts education. There is no curriculum requirement for music to be taught in US public schools, and despite the city's support of the creative economy, even in Portland there is often no music provision. As Lydia told me, these activities never met with bad behaviour from the students. These workshops are key to helping the students understand their own creative capacity and assist them in discovering their own talents. But after these talents are recognised the chance to expand them is limited in practice. There are other non-profits to assist with tuition, and the PDX Pop Now! festival, but the regular performance opportunities necessary to hone craft are not available. Lydia also talked about PDX Pop Now!'s role within the scene in regard to the battle for all-ages opportunities:

If no one was saying you need to let people who are under 21 watch music, then the OLCC would be controlling entirely who watched music. In that way we're a bit of a watchdog. We used to do more advocacy [work], that has turned more into the outreach programme. We talk to the Mayor's Office, we talk to the OLCC, we talk to these people [about] why this is important and how this affects people (Lydia Mazer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Lydia described the sense of duty PDX Pop Now! feels to create successful space for all-ages musical engagement, suggesting that without their initiative it would be left to authorities to act. Lydia also talks of the advocacy role played by the organisation in seeking changes within the OLCC. Cary Clarke, a co-founder of the organisation, who was at the forefront of this advocacy, explained the role the organisation played in legislative review:

In 2008, spurred on by how meaningful an experience many of us had had at the school show and seeing young people at the festival, [they] had this opportunity to connect with bands or musicians in a way that they didn't on a day to day basis. Throughout the year they got involved in advocating for state liquor law changes. The OLCC is a weird vestige of post-prohibition legislation, trying to prevent a monopoly that allowed distributors and sellers of alcohol to be the same company. It has had all sorts of unintended consequences, one of which was making it very, very difficult for young people to see live music in Portland. There was an opportunity to talk about alcohol and the role of that in a live performance context. I think there's an unintended consequence, where we've made it impossible or very, very difficult for venues to admit minors, in a way that's not necessarily consistent with our state's values or our community's values (Cary Clarke, Personal Interview, April 2013).

After participating in the facilitation of all-ages music the organisation saw first-hand the effects of OLCC legislation and wanted to be involved in change when the opportunity arose. Cary feels that the impact on minors caused by the laws is an unintentional consequence, although this has yet to be sufficiently remedied.

In 2007 PDX Pop Now's campaign to change OLCC regulation seized the initiative, when the OLCC undertook a review of their legislation, to rally the community to support landmark changes in OLCC regulation. The PDX Pop Now! website remains a document of events reporting firstly the changes proposed by the OLCC:

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) is considering changing its rules regarding admitting people under 21 to establishments that serve alcohol, but primarily serve another function, like music venues, theatres and other art spaces. In short, the proposed amendment to the Minor Postings rules would acknowledge that there is a difference between a bar and a live music venue' (PDX Pop Now!, 2007).

These changes were important, as making that distinction would open up more spaces for all-ages access. Sadly, this first attempt was to fail at a vote but, not deterred by the first hurdle, PDX Pop Now! revitalised the campaign in 2008 and made the following call:

In December of 2007 the OLCC voted against changes to allow more music venues to put on all-ages shows. Thanks largely to your emails, they are now considering a new, almost identical, draft of the rule changes. We have until March 7, 2008 to write in expressing our support for these responsible, carefully considered rule changes and the good they would do our community (PDX Pop Now!, 2008).

These emails of support culminated in a series of public testimonies on both occasions of the law review at the OLCC headquarters. Whilst Cary Clarke led the testimonies with passion he was not alone in giving support to the all-ages cause as the *Portland Mercury* reported in 2008:

In addition to an OLCC staff representative, three people went on record this morning in support of the amendment. They argued that it was beneficial for everyone – young people, local bands, bar and club owners – to allow minors greater access to the arts. Supporters claimed Portland was one of the only major cities in America that didn't allow for all-inclusive music shows (Portland Mercury, 2008).

Gaining this external support was crucial in putting pressure on the OLCC to make the necessary changes and showed that the community was united over this issue. A new minor posting was introduced that allowed venues to sell limited alcohol, excluding hard spirits. Former PDX Pop Now! board member Benna Gottfried explained the changes in more detail:

PDX Pop Now! was doing a lot of work to changing those rules with the OLCC. A venue can submit a plan to the OLCC, to say this is how we're going to have the underage people separated from where the alcohol is being served. It cuts down on the amount of space that they have at their venue, it separates the audience. It makes a weird experience for the performers to have their audience separated. It was a great step in the right direction but not the end goal. Most small venues find it not worthwhile to do that. Those are some of the things the city could be more supportive of, [as] generally speaking Portland is a culturally aware city (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

From Benna's description it appears these changes allowed venues voluntarily to create floor plans to show in detail the separation of minors and alcohol in a shared space. But this also limits space for smaller venues and creates an artificial segregation. Whilst this change was only minimal, in terms of impact on all-ages access to music, it was a necessary step in showing the potential for non-profits to be successful in their advocacy. PDX Pop Now! and other non-profit organisations are central to a dialogue for change and have proven effective spokespeople for the Portland music community.

## **Moving Forward for Change**

During my fieldwork it became clear that the OLCC's regulations are not as progressive as the UK's approach to similar issues. In Portland there is a clear inconsistency in venues' approaches to balancing all-ages access with regulation. Many venues will refuse to put on such performances or are unable under licensing conditions.<sup>3</sup> Some will host events and not be allowed to serve any alcohol; other venues will have a segregated crowd, such as the Wonder Ballroom, which segregates the audience, has bouncers check ID, and gives a hand stamp to patrons legally allowed to purchase alcohol.

Indeed, my own experiences with OLCC regulations were inconsistent and sometimes awkward, as the regulation does not stipulate what kind of non-US ID can be accepted: my attempts to use my driving license as a form of ID were accepted by some venues and disallowed aggressively by others, to a point where I had to carry my passport everywhere to ensure entrance. I found a profound cultural difference in approaches to minors and alcohol: the OLCC wish for no minor to be in an environment with alcohol consumption, and they enforce this strictly. I was 14 when I went to my first gig and found it strange to hear from various interviewees that they saw their first gigs at the age of 21, as they could not access venues legally before then. In the UK there are often allowances made, such as giving a hand stamp or wristband to those who have

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<sup>3</sup> Parallels can be drawn with licensing laws in the UK. In his exploration of the 2003 Licensing Act Dave Laing discussed how the Licensing Act was intended to standardise licensing for live music performance, but 'some councils had failed to comply with the spirit of the Act, by insisting that licensees conduct their businesses according to the preferences of the licensing authority, contravening the intention of the government' (Laing, 2016, p.267). This strong upholding of the law by zealous local authorities led to more prohibition of performances and it can be assumed that venues would be deterred from hosting live music events.

had ID checked. Bouncers are also present to prevent the passing of alcohol, and to eject patrons caught breaking the law. The boundaries are there and known, but it normally allows those aged 14 and above to attend, even if minors are to be accompanied by a responsible adult. It is this more sensible approach to all-ages access that the Portland Scene has been calling for over many years.

In an article for *Willamette Week*, then-music editor Casey Jarman discussed the progressions he felt the scene needed to introduce:

Because of Portland's rocky history with all-ages clubs, there has long been chatter among local youth-music advocates about replicating something like Seattle's Vera Project—a community show space with financial support from the city. [...] For a Vera Project-style all-ages venue to thrive in Portland would take involvement from the same audience such a venue would look to serve (Jarman, 2012).

This relates to the examination of infrastructure from chapter four, where the need for a medium-sized venue is also a need to accommodate an all-ages space; and as with medium-sized venues, a city-owned venue would be the best outcome. Alongside the advantages previously cited the one major advantage of a city-owned venue in the all-ages context is having a space connected with legislators and regulators, therefore making it easy to stay within legislative practice such as that of the OLCC.

Within the Portland city council system, it is clear the arts are best represented when the mayor holds the portfolio; the city's creative community has been best represented when at the heart of government. Although I do not wish to be critical of the hard work of the arts commissioner, it is clear that, as he does not set the agenda for the city council, he is restricted in potential achievement. Mayor Adams provided a clear model for keeping the arts core to

urban development in the city and it is clear this is no longer the priority of the administration presently in office.

It is reasonable to postulate that if a pro-arts mayor were elected and undertook the arts portfolio, they would be required to aid in the creation of a viable all-ages access to music, whether by calling for legislative change by the OLCC or by funding a venue with the young interest at heart. The mayor would also be in a position to mediate between regulatory authorities and the hip-hop community. This should be crucial to their agenda: it is not just a problem about music but about finding methods to break through Portland's diversity problem.

In an interview for *Artslandia* magazine Pink Martini frontman Thomas Lauderdale offered another interesting proposal:

I would say I feel like I could be that person, but there are a lot of things that would have to come before. [...] I think the mayor should be the stupidest person in his or her office. Mayor Adams was the oldest person in his office, and he was also the smartest. But there were no elders, so when the crisis erupted, they didn't know what to do [...] they had no clue. They made a bunch of mistakes. I think the Arts Tax (and Jennifer Yocom is going to kill me) [...] but the Arts Tax is a f—king disaster (Thomas M Lauderdale cited in *Artslandia*, 2015).

Lauderdale is yet to formally announce his own candidacy, but it would be fascinating to see what difference, if any, a musician could make in running the city.<sup>4</sup>

In Portland progressive legislation around music and the arts is crucial to keeping a political status quo. If this becomes unbalanced not only does it risk a degree of political apathy, but it could overlook the economic contribution made to the city by the creative industries. With the existence of organisations such as Oregon Arts PAC holding the city council to account over election pledges, and

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<sup>4</sup> In chapter 10 I profile the musicians who stood for the mayoral elections in 2016 and examine their campaign positions.

the wider community voicing opinions and offering testimonies to consultations, there is an expectation that artists' political engagement will grow. What is clear is that Portland's music scene is establishing connections between communities and facilitating this network for change could progress the scene further.

## 7. Portland Policing

During my fieldwork, one of the greatest political tensions between the Portland music scene and the authorities was the police involvement with the hip-hop community.<sup>1</sup> Not only is this tension antithetical to a cohesive and diverse cultural environment, it also casts a shadow over race relations in the city. Some even suggested that the Portland Police Bureau interventions at hip-hop shows reflected prejudices formed in part through Oregon's difficult discriminatory history. In this chapter I consider Portland's past and examine how it informs the present.

In chapter 1 I detailed Oregon's legislative discrimination, demonstrating how the exclusion of non-white Americans was written into the state constitution. Matt Novak has explored the prevalence of racial discrimination in the state, connecting local history to the wider project of the Ku Klux Klan:

The arrival of the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon was swift and terrifying. In 1922 the Klan in Oregon boasted membership of over 14,000 men, with 9,000 of them living in Portland. And they were setting the state aflame. There were frequent cross burnings on the hills outside Portland and around greater Oregon. The Klan held meetings, openly participated in parades, and held enormous gatherings for initiation ceremonies. One such gathering in 1923 at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem attracted over 1,500 hooded Klansmen. They reportedly burned an enormous cross, of course (Novak, 2015).

The fact that the Klan could hold such explicit activities of hatred in open daylight reflects the state's attitudes at the time. But this harrowing element of Portland's past was also met with an active resistance.

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'community' to describe musicians who operate with a genre, and create infrastructure around it, whilst still operating within the defined parameters of the Portland scene.

Matt Novak highlights the efforts of The Golden West Hotel to create a safe environment for African-Americans in Portland, in particular the life of activist Beatrice Morrow Cannady, a journalist and member of the NAACP, who 'spoke out against D.W. Griffith's feature length film *The Birth of a Nation*, a film widely criticised for glorifying the practices of the KKK' (Novak, 2015). Novak demonstrates how this dark historical context relates to present-day Oregon:

The racial composition of any American city is a product of its history. This may seem painfully obvious, but it's something that we need to say out loud and type in bold letters to fully appreciate. The racial composition of any American city is a product of its history. And it's a history that so many people in Oregon, in Minnesota, in any other 'whitopia' don't seem to be privy to (Novak, 2015).

If indeed today's predominantly white racial composition of Portland is 'a product of its history' then this knowledge can inform an exploration of current tensions, particularly those surrounding hip-hop music. It is by positioning Portland's past within the broader cultural history of hip-hop in the US that we can understand the impact of such history on music-making in Portland today.

### **Hip-hop and Moral Panic**

Scholars have responded to hip-hop in a variety of ways: how it came to be, how a culture was formed around it (Bennett, 2001), and how the music itself can communicate hip-hop's social conscience (Walser, 1995). One of the most pertinent examinations of hip-hop and mainstream culture's response to it is Tricia Rose's 2008 monograph *The Hip-Hop Wars*, which assesses the traditional conservative arguments against the genre, as well as the liberal defence of its practices. This book provides the basis for an exploration of how the mainstream exploits stereotypes of hip-hop to reinforce racial agendas:

Relying on an ever-narrowing range of images and themes, this commercial juggernaut has played a central role in the near-depletion of what was once was a vibrant, diverse, and complex popular genre, wringing it dry by pandering to America's racist and sexist lower denominator. [...] This is about the larger and more significant trend that has come to define commercial hip-hop as a whole: the trinity of commercial hip-hop – the black gangsta, pimp, and ho – has been promoted and accepted to the point where it now dominates the genre's storytelling worldview (Rose, 2008, p.2).

This commercial intervention, Rose argues, has created a problem in the reception of hip-hop, feeding both conservative criticism and liberal defence of the culture:<sup>2</sup>

On the one hand, the increased profitability of the gangsta-pimp-ho trinity has inflamed already riled critics who perceive hip-hop as the cause of many social ills; but, on the other, it has encouraged embattled defenders to tout hip-hop's organic connection to black youth and to venerate its market successes as examples of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps (Rose, 2008, p.5).

This in essence shows where the battleground for *The Hip-hop Wars* is positioned, but Rose feels this ground is not level:

The excessive blame levelled at hip-hop is astonishing in its refusal to consider the culpability of the larger social and political context. Too many hot-headed critics of hip-hop, structural forms of deep racism, corporate influences, and the long-term effects of economic, social, and political disempowerment are not meaningfully related to rappers' alienated, angry stories about life in the ghetto; rather, they are seen as 'proof' that black behaviour creates ghetto conditions (Rose, 2008, p.5).

Rose suggests here that the mainstream battleground on which hip-hop is contested is one similarly founded on structural racism. She argues that instead of accepting its responsibility for creating the societal conditions for African-American and Hispanic communities across the United States,<sup>3</sup> the mainstream places blame on these same communities for creating their own problems.

Rose's argument here can be linked back to Novak's suggestion that racial histories have informed current situations, thus sustaining the notion that it is

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<sup>2</sup> The mainstream appropriation of challenging subcultures is a running theme itself in the history of popular music, from the rock n roll era to today. For further info see Hebdige (1999), Brown (2003) and Clark (2003), Gormly (2009), Schilt (2010).

<sup>3</sup> It must of course also be noted that hip-hop transcends ethnic boundaries. For more on hip-hop in other cultures see Flores (2000), Huq (2003), Tamar Sharma (2010), Nooshin (2011).

not the behaviour of communities causing their social situation but rather structural racism.

### **Portland Hip-Hop's Culture Clashes**

My own experience of Portland hip-hop was limited, and time constraints prevented me from interviewing as many members of the community as I would have liked to do. I did however manage to talk to people representing a variety of positions in the scene: TxE, whose collaborations with indie musicians were mentioned in chapter two; Mac Smiff, a former rapper turned journalist; and DJ OG One, a hip-hop DJ for two major sports teams in the city. These three perspectives were diverse in a number of ways and allowed me to form a wider picture of the local political perspective of the genre. Epp and Calvin Valentine have seen their opportunities to participate in Portland's wider music scene become increasingly limited and feel that hip-hop is being systematically driven out of the city. As Calvin Valentine explained to me:

Our community is lacking because we don't have a hub in Portland. People kept getting in fights, the cops started shutting it down. We'd show up to a venue and they'd have all these rules about you can't wear a hat and you can't wear this colour or this colour, then it just kept moving, you can't go here let's move here. They kicked us out of town basically (Calvin Valentine, Personal Interview, January 2014).

Most genres of music create communities in cities, but in Portland hip-hop is different. These communities require hubs to network around; indeed, as Shuker has suggested, 'a community network of clubs or pub venues can help create a local club scene, at times based around a particular sound' (Shuker, 1998, p.53). So, without that hub, Calvin Valentine feels that hip-hop has been unable to gain a foothold in Portland. Calvin Valentine also mentions door policies and the

enforcing of dress codes. It would appear these policies are designed to target clothing seen as integral to the hip-hop identity, or representing sport allegiances, such as hats:

More so it's just racist stuff. Anyone who looked like us, they weren't allowed. There was a club called Couture. We went over there, they wouldn't let us in. I was wearing a beanie and they said no hats. There's a place called The Dirty. One of my friends, her cousin used to be a bouncer and he was told to turn away as many black folks as he could. The city of Portland doesn't want hip-hop at all anymore; they're just shutting hip-hop down' (Epp, Personal Communication, 2014).

Epp feels that the city is denying his form of musical expression. Journalist and former rapper Mac Smiff also felt that the city has turned against his community's form of expression, describing recent issues the hip-hop community has had with the Portland Police Bureau:

It was the Blue Monk incident that was a big piece; we did a few articles on that. It was a big deal. It wasn't really anything particularly new in the way of police just being around. It was really a new thing in that they really didn't find anything and made a grand scene of it as if they were going to make a bust of the century. That show of force was almost experimental in part, and was a failing in part, as it galvanized [the community opinion against the police]. Now we've started seeing what it can actually do, it's pushed a lot of rappers professionally to get their money. With the closure of shows like that folks did lose money (Mac Smiff Personal Interview, July 2014).

The Blue Monk Incident happened in early 2014, when an excessive number of police are said to have shown up to a hip-hop show at the Blue Monk, a small venue, for no clear reason. This incident is seen by many scene members as a catalyst for protesting against police treatment of the hip-hop community. The police presence only sparked more tensions, rather than provide protection to any citizens. One interesting response to these events came from DJ OG One, the official DJ for the Portland Trailblazers basketball team, amongst others, who expressed a will to use his status as known community figure to mediate:

It's a combination of things I think from a DJ standpoint. It's a combination of social consciousness on artists, because Portland is so small. When things happen it gets

magnified bigger, it's a lot easier for the powers that be to target, be it hip-hop, where I feel there's a lack of communication and understanding between the law enforcement and the hip-hop community. The law enforcement, they have a job to do. Often times I feel the line gets crossed from 'protect and serve' to stereotypes, unfounded negative expectations, 'oh there's a hip-hop show, something's gonna happen'. If you're looking for something to happen you can find something anywhere. Vice versa, there's a large portion of the hip-hop community who do the same thing with the police. There's no communication, there's no common place where people have come together. Let's drop all of our agendas. What's the real issue? What does the city expect from the hip-hop community in terms of responsibility? What does the hip-hop community expect from the city? There's two sides left with assumptions. I've been fortunate enough: I've dealt with city officials, I've had good relationships with them and the hip-hop community (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

From OG's perspective there is a great need for dialogue between the hip-hop community and law enforcement and overcoming the 'unfounded negative expectations' that appears to underline these troubles.

Portland is not the only place where such tensions exist, and in the period 2014-15 there was a series of high profile incidents in which various African-American communities across the US felt targeted by the police.<sup>4</sup> The stereotypes of hip-hop have led to subjective police responses against this form of expression. In the Blue Monk Incident police reports suggested there was a connection between those present, including some of the performers, and organised crime. This association of hip-hop with violence has become endemic in the conservative authoritative mind set:

Many critics of hip-hop tend to interpret lyrics literally and as a direct reflection of the artist who performs them. They equate rappers with thugs, see rappers as a threat to larger society, and then use this 'casual analysis' (that hip-hop causes violence) to justify a variety of agendas: more police in black communities, more prisons to accommodate larger numbers of black and brown young people, and more censorship of expression. For these critics, hip-hop is criminal propaganda. This literal approach, which extends beyond the individual to characterize an entire racial and class group, is rarely applied to violence-orientated mediums produced by whites (Rose, 2008, p.37).

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<sup>4</sup> Example of this include the shooting of Michael Brown by police in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and the strangling of Eric Garner in New York that same year.

From my contact with hip-hop community members in Portland it would seem that the Blue Monk incident supports this theory.

### **‘Supportland’: The Shared Moment?**

Because this problem has been widely discussed in the hip-hop community, it is interesting to explore how other musical communities have reacted to it. One of the greatest criticisms of Portland is its lack of scene-wide support for the hip-hop community; but the Blue Monk incident galvanized solidarity. Throughout many of the interviews for this project the concern of those in other musical communities was clear, along with a willingness to support the hip-hop community through these developments.

One defining moment in the wider community’s call to action was an open letter published on April 2, 2014 in the *Willamette Week* by the paper’s former music editor, Casey Jarman. In the letter Jarman directly addresses the Portland music community and outlines the problems faced by the hip-hop community: ‘This isn’t conspiracy theory or second-hand gossip: this is repeated and overt action, paid for by your tax dollars, on behalf of the city of Portland’ (Jarman, 2014). He encourages readers to participate in their own democratic systems to challenge the new status quo, making an impassioned case for the importance of hip-hop to the city:

But Portland, the truth is that your hip-hop has never been as vital, as urgent, and indeed as authentic as it is in this moment. Against a backdrop of rampant gentrification and an increasingly myopic, whitewashed civic self-image, a new generation of young artists are challenging notions of what this city looks like, sounds like, and what it believes in. This is art. And the city is beginning to listen. We suspect that this is precisely why these crackdowns are happening now (Jarman, 2014).

Jarman suggests that Portland hip-hop acts as a social commentary on the city's fast urban development; he states that the music is artistic and should be acknowledged as such. He reaches out to various groups – venues, bookers, press and fans – asking them to provide support for hip-hop whether by putting on a show or reporting on tensions so as to inform others.

Jarman received criticism, in part, for the letter's 'self-promotional' tone, as he mentions his own attempts to provide performance opportunities and advertises a forthcoming event. It is hard to see the extent of the wider impact Jarman's comments had, but it is significant that the former head of music at *Willamette Week*, a figure widely respected across the music community, has voiced opposition to the PPB's treatment of hip-hop and has attempted to mobilise a response. This is a mainstream voicing of a somewhat marginalized issue that has educated those unaware of the situation and encouraged them to act.

There is of course the political danger that mainstream intervention by members of dominant genres, such as indie rock, will result in the suppression of the marginalised voice in preference for the better-known performers. One pertinent example of such a situation is the intervention of celebrity musicians in the cause for debt relief in Africa culminated in the Live 8 concerts and campaign. John Street has noted:

For Live 8, it was stars who received the media's endorsement for their efforts, couched in explicit and implicit claims that they had the authority to speak. As Geldof and Bono came to represent the official voice of Live 8, other voices were silenced. It was reported that, when an NGO pitched an article on African debt relief to the *Daily Telegraph* they were told: 'We only want it if it's from Bono or Bob Geldof'. Or as Geldof himself acknowledged, 'the celebritization of politics means it's [a humanitarian crisis] not worth covering unless some c\*\*\* like me takes interest' (Street, p.77, 2012).

This involvement of more mainstream voices in the arguments surrounding debt relief in Africa creates a paradox: as celebrities lend their voice to boost the profile of an issue, the story shifts focus to the fact that a celebrity cares about the issue, and in almost cynical fashion, the campaign becomes a popular trend. Whilst it is easy to dismiss the involvement of celebrities as hijacking a cause for cultural capital and publicity, it could be argued that these campaigns would have nowhere near as much traction without them.

In our interview Mac Smiff suggested that solidarity on this issue was crucial to the whole music scene:

[It's] not just the hip-hop community; [...] it's really galvanized the activist base here in Portland. Portland is a little Beirut. There's always a lot of excitement around bucking the system. That whole incident really brought the city together. 'Hey, hip-hop is music too.' Let's not allow the police, the city, the OLCC (Oregon Liquor Control Commission), [...] these common dictators, tell us what we can and can't do, [because] if it's hip-hop first, it will be us next. I got an email or Facebook message from a guy that promotes LGBT [events]. He was saying the police have been showing up at their events. The OLCC has pushed to shut down nightlife, the entire nightlife community and arts community is on edge. If they'll do that to rappers! [...] We kind of have to pay attention to all this stuff that's going on, be more alert. It's a global struggle and not a hip-hop struggle (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).<sup>5</sup>

Mac believes that the Portland Police Bureau's action against the hip-hop community could be part of a wider effort to control nightlife in the city, perhaps a result of gentrification. He believes that the involvement of the wider community is crucial because for other communities 'it will be us next' – something he has already witnessed in his contact with other groups. Other music communities are similarly questioning Portland's wider cultural problems. For example, Portland is also facing crackdowns on its venues and alternative

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<sup>5</sup> Whilst the comments may seem an exaggeration, participants often relayed similar stories off the record.

performance spaces, and although police aren't involved, there is a fear amongst members of the punk scene that they may be the next target.

Punk musician Samantha Gladhu articulated her concerns about the motivations officials may have for shutting down punk performance spaces:

I think they want money, they're money hungry. The infrastructure of the city has been terribly managed; they're talking about having a street fee for bars that open at night to help repair the streets in Portland. I kind of think that maybe the Fire Marshall is making money, to cover their expenses by busting people. I think it's a revenue issue rather than stereotype. They're targeting the hip-hop community too. There's been a strong history of racial profiling. That doesn't seem really fair either; the hip-hop community is having more trouble with stereotypes than the punk scene (Samantha Gladhu, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Samantha feels that the city authorities are trying to recuperate money they lost in poor infrastructural management and that music spaces in her community have been easy targets to help close the funding gap. She feels this is a more likely motivation than stereotyping the punk community, but she does still raise concerns over the city's treatment of hip-hop and racial profiling more generally. Although the hip-hop community is targeted as a way for the authorities to raise infrastructural revenue, Portland's history of tense race relations makes it difficult to believe that there is not also a degree of simply responding to stereotypes.



Figure 24 The Resistance (L-R Glenn Waco, Rasheed Jamal, Mic Capes) Performing at PDX Pop Now! July 2014.

The Portland scene has certainly made gestures toward inclusivity. At the PDX Pop Now! Festival in 2014 acts such as Myke Bogan, The Resistance and Stewart Villain performed to a positive response. I observed that the police appeared only during the hip-hop performances, although this of course could be coincidental. Matt Singer, music editor of *Willamette Weekly* commented that 'PDX Pop Now! [...] used to reserve two slots of these forty bands for hip-hop artists; this year they expanded to five and hip-hop started to really define the festival this year' (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014). PDX Pop Now! provides an opportunity for a well-regulated space without any trouble or police intervention, as the festival organisers have built a relationship with the police over their ten-year history. It would be fascinating therefore to see whether this trend continues into further festivals.

Despite the appearances of hip-hop artists at places like PDX Pop Now! some in the scene feel venue bookers have yet to provide more widespread

opportunities for performers, something that Matt Singer mentioned in our interview:

When that happened, you saw all these Portland scenesters justifiably voicing their displeasure on social media. The Portland hip-hop community has not flourished, because Portland's a live music city by and large; bands are made on their live shows. If a venue is not going to book you for whatever reason and you can't perform live, you're never going to develop your scene. That certainly has something to do with the police harassment. A lot of these people that were voicing their discontent with the cops, they're not putting these guys on their own shows (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

These dissenting voices in Matt's opinion are not facilitating performances for hip-hop artists, perhaps for fear of police intervention on their own club nights. If this is the case it raises the concern that venues are inadvertently being censored.

### **An Auditor's Review**

One outcome from the attempts to reduce tensions between the Portland music community and the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) has been the *Policy Review: Portland Police Bureau Policies and Practices Related to Hip-Hop Events* (Griffin-Valade et al, 2015). The report itself is independent of the police bureau, to enable a more balanced view and to gather a range of opinions. The report makes reference to the aforementioned 'Blue Monk Incident': 'Illmaculate's action that night exposed a long simmering perception among those in the hip-hop community that they faced a level of scrutiny not encountered by other music genres in Portland' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.2). The review was a necessary intervention to aid and facilitate an open dialogue between the hip-hop community and the PPB. As the report clearly states: 'This review is not a performance audit or an administrative investigation into individual officer

misconduct [...] it is a look at policy issues' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.2). This was surely an attempt at balance, but it could be seen as appeasement that makes no change:

The police bureau is the agency which looms largest in the public's perception in this piecemeal regulatory framework. [...] It is only one of the city and state agencies involved in the regulation of late night entertainment. [...] Many of the community members the IPR spoke to did not understand PPB's cooperation or working relationship with fire inspectors and OLCC (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.3).

This shows that there are issues within the infrastructure of communication to the public, and implies the police are receiving the most criticism for taking positions against the hip-hop community. There is also an implication that the responsibility for all actions is widespread, and the lack of intergovernmental coherence on matters could lead to problems. The first important assertion made about the community is the acceptance by authors of the positive impact of hip-hop: 'Several of the hip-hop artists IPR talked with discuss hip-hop as a medium that allows them to escape the negativity of their formative years and to hopefully make a living out of creating music' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.4). If anything, this assertion suggests that hip-hop is moving young people away from negative influence, and channelling creativity through an entrepreneurial spirit. This sense of business acumen and striving towards a career is something that was confirmed to me from prominent hip-hop community members. Mac Smiff explained the future aspirations of the scene from his perspective:

Now we have a voice, we have culture that's worth exporting. [The question is] can you sell this sound outside of your locale? The hip-hop culture here is very unique; [...] this intelligent hip-hop thing can work. I think we'll also see a few Portland artists on the national scale in a year or two. We're already seeing producers like Trox doing beats for Danny Brown and 50 Cent. That's a big thing, seeing our beats getting out (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

There is clearly a potential here to export a unique good and drive another area of the creative economy forward.

Another of Griffin-Valade's assertions concerns the make-up of those involved in the scene: 'One thing that makes many of the hip-hop performers stand out in this city of transplants is that a large number of them are native-born Oregonians [...] They have had a front row seat to the rapid changes in this city and are well versed in local history' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.4).

Although the report does not expand on this assertion it is clear that within the hip-hop community there is a strong voice that keeps the history of the city alive. It is perfectly reasonable to suggest that in the future the work of hip-hop artists in the city will be recognised as documenting the social situation of the age. Rap can be seen as social commentary, and these first-hand accounts should be preserved. It is significant that this community has a large majority of native Oregonians: as the hip-hop community in Portland is inextricably (though not entirely) linked to its African-American community it challenges Portland's racial history and the suggestion that the scene is made of transplants.

The report gives voice to both sides of the argument, particularly with regard to police presence at public events. As Glenn Waco notes:

I don't hate all police. I have nothing against police officers. [...] I believe some of the cops that are on the line of duty are just doing their job. [...] People come to see us perform these new songs. And they don't come to be rowdy or come to be against police. [...] The police have always come to the venue in an intimidating fashion. [...] They're the ones with the guns. [...] No one in the crowd has a gun. [...] They come in with the fire marshal and it just brings in a negative energy. [...] There's nothing illegal going on. Nobody called them. They just show up and it's like, why are you here? (Glenn Waco cited in Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p.8).

Glenn expresses confusion and concern at the police presence when he feels neither the performers nor the audience is partaking in illegal activities. It is clear

the police's perspective is needed for balance, and Sergeant Pete Simpson was invited to contribute on behalf of the PPB:

There's been time where clubs have had incidents and then somehow it gets turned around that the police don't want this club here or don't like black people or don't like hip-hop music. [...] I would say there's no truth to that, but it's hard to address the perception piece that people believe that the incidents that have happened have been tragic. [...] That's not what we want. If people were doing their job running the business right, that wouldn't happen (Sergeant Pete Simpson cited in Griffin-Valade, 2014, p.8).

Here the Sergeant feels that the police are just doing a necessary job due to the failings of venue management. He also seems to suggest the police have been stereotyped by a handful of incidents that have had tragic consequences. Once again it seems perceptions and misunderstandings are at the centre of these disputes.

The city auditing office functions with the ability to review policy and explore how to progress it in the interest of citizens and authorities alike. This is the core of what makes this particular report crucial to the dialogue between the PPB and the hip-hop community. After reviewing in detail several specific incidents of tension between the two parties the report concludes with a number of recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The City should make available to late night venues and promoters a comprehensive checklist of its expectations. [...] The absence of an overarching regulatory structure PR guidance for late night entertainment has led to a concern from some community members that implementation is arbitrary, lacking in consistency. [...] Establishments can be subject to multiple visits from different regulatory agencies in one night. [...] It is well within The City's capabilities to provide a checklist of what it believes are best current practices in this area [...] available at City offices and on the City's website (Griffin – Valade et al, 2014, p. 22).

This first recommendation identifies a lack of inter-governmental communication; multiple visits by different groups create confusion and misrepresentation. Having a clear accessible definition of legal expectations would expedite a need for visits.

The second and third recommendations address the PPB directly in actions it believes they should take for mutual protection:

Recommendation 2: PPB should develop Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) that provide guidance to PPB members on how they will conduct bar checks/walk-throughs of late night entertainment venues.

Recommendation 3: PPB should track walk-throughs of late night entertainment venues in a format that would allow it to regularly report such information to the public. [...] In our conversations with PPB officers, they were able to articulate their rationale for conducting walk-throughs. [...] We found no written policies or procedure that provided guidance to officers of what PPB's official policy was on the matter. [...] Sometimes officers did not notify dispatch if they were at an event and a lack of documentation of what led police presence at events where they did appear. [...] Members of the public do not have much access to a wider context of where, why, and how often PPB units conduct walk-throughs of bars, nightclubs and event spaces (Griffin-Valade et al, 2014, p. 23).

These recommendations are formed by the flaws found in PPB policies regarding their presence at hip-hop events. Without records of why visits were carried out, without officers reporting to dispatch, and without a cohesive written policy, it is perhaps no wonder the hip-hop community is suspicious of PPB activity. Whilst officers can recount their reasons for taking such actions, the process seems hardly transparent, and perhaps this is the root of the community's negative perceptions of their activities. It could be argued this is the most important recommendation in the report for both community and PPB interest.

The fourth recommendation concerns reaching out to the hip-hop community:

Recommendation 4: The City should engage in a long-term dialogue with members of the hip-hop community. Dialogue should include all City agencies that have a role in regulating late night activities. [...] The ability of hip-hop artists, promoters, and club owners putting on events in a safe environment depends on their ability to trust that the police are there to genuinely help them. [...] Sgt Pete Simpson discussed his belief that better dialogue could resolve some of the issues between police and the hip-hop community (Griffin-Valade, 2014, p.25).

This recommendation echoes DJ OG One's desire, quoted above, to mediate such a dialogue. With a positive response to this idea from the police it will be

interesting to see how the dialogue develops and in what form. The report ends with a fifth and final recommendation addressing the fire bureau:

Recommendation 5: The Fire Bureau should provide to the public on a regular basis a report that lists all businesses inspected during its night inspection program. [...] There is very little information publicly available about the venues that the fire inspector visits' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2015, p.26).

This final recommendation would allow the community to see how regularly non-hip-hop spaces are visited. This report succinctly outlines the flaws that lead to misconceptions about the authorities and is right to suggest changes and to call for an open dialogue. As of May 2015, no official response has been documented by the involved parties, but this report could potentially be a catalyst for active resolution. Subsequently there is hope for official recognition of hip-hop's contribution to Portland's culture.

### **Walking Out of the Shadows**

The story of hip-hop in Portland is not simply a narrative of the oppression of a musical community; the community has managed to thrive beyond the institutional adversity they have faced. Their resilience and creativity have enabled them to grow a DIY community of independent musical infrastructure, operating specifically to progress hip-hop music in the city. The most important part of this story is the successes the community has had. It is important for me, from my position of middle class white privilege, to articulate these thoughts and experiences through the voices of those who live in the community. During my fieldwork I only had enough time to meet and interview one group, a former rapper turned blog editor, and the official DJ for Portland's NBA basketball team. Through these three interviews it became more than apparent that hip-hop in

Portland has a unique story to tell, which could easily fill another thesis. To close, I will discuss two key relationships the Portland hip-hop community in Portland have cultivated to progress the success of their music – sport and infrastructure.

### **Hip-hop & Sport**

It has a lot to do with the Blazers going so good, our teams doing good, Portland pride's back. There's some hip-hop we believe in. People can back something (Epp from TxE, Personal Interview, January 2014).

Portland has a passion for sport. The city hosts two major league teams: the Portland Trailblazers (NBA Basketball) and Portland Timbers (MLS Soccer). The city's passion for music is also reflected in its sporting arenas: major sport stars are often seen at gigs, and famous musicians are often seen at sports games. In January 2014 I attended a game between the Portland Trailblazers and Orlando Magic, after hearing from the members of TxE about the importance of the team's success to them. What struck me was the use of local music: the DJ mixed local music during play; during breaks local famous musicians in the crowd were shown on the jumbotron screen and applauded for their contribution to Portland culture; and local music was used in advertising. Music was integral to local cultural representation.

On my final fieldwork trip, I managed to interview the Trailblazers' DJ, DJ OG One. He invited me to watch him in action at a game of the city's American Football team, which gave me a chance to watch him respond to the action and to the crowd. DJ OG One is known primarily as a hip-hop DJ – in venues across the city and often as a support to visiting rappers – and he is respected in the

hip-hop community for his support of local music making. During our interview

he explained how he uses local music at games:

I try to incorporate local music as much as possible: we have a wide range of incredible talented people from hip-hop to RnB and jazz. In terms of hip-hop Cool Nutz is a well-respected artist. I consider him the pioneer of hip-hop in this region. [Then] there are artists like Luck One, Fliboi Moe, at least about ten others. Liv Warfield, who's RnB, she's touring with Prince, Mike Phillips, a jazz musician, Farnell Newton, he's jazz. You hear me playing jazz in an arena, yeah I try to fit those things in particular when the fans are coming into the arena. With the hip-hop I can get away with playing during the game. I play a lot of beat instrumentals throughout the game, I always send blasts out on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter for local producers to send me beats I can play during the game. You get producers like Trox, I get a lot of instrumentals from Jumbo the Garbage man, [and] a number of producers in the town (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Sporting games in Portland have become one of the only platforms for hip-hop music after the club closures, but this stage brings a lot of potential especially when national television networks cover crucial NBA games such as the playoffs. This supports Epp's idea that when the Blazers do well hip-hop in Portland does well. DJ OG One expanded on this: 'It's good for music. It's good for business, period, to have the Blazers and Thunder. It brings attention to the city. The more attention you have brought on your city, the more the chances the industry you want to connect to comes' (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014). If television broadcasts can become shop windows for Portland hip-hop music, it might attract outside investment into the city's musical infrastructure. There would naturally be challenges to Portland's independent ethos if this happened, but there is a possibility mainstream intervention could validate Portland's hip-hop community and urge the city authorities into protecting and preserving it.

The presence of National League sports teams, and the added television and media coverage they bring, is not the only way sport has contributed to hip-hop. The players themselves have managed to inject lift into the hip-hop

community through more personal interventions. The most prominent player to do this is point guard Damian Lillard, famous for his weekly freestyle rap challenge, 'Four Bar Fridays', where Instagram users are challenged to give Lillard their best four bars of the week, and the winners are given exposure on Lillard's Instagram. The challenge went viral on social media through the NBA fanbase with many famous basketball players rising to the challenge, including Le Bron James, then point guard for the Cleveland Cavaliers. This competition has been widely welcomed by the city's hip-hop community, and DJ OG One offered his opinion on it: 'I think of Damian Lillard when he started the Four Bar Friday, straight hip-hop, which engaged not only the Portland scene, people all around the world are participating. He's our guy' (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Rapper Calvin Valentine shares similar sentiments and goes further to explain how he feels team members can go further with person interventions:

DJ OG one, he's heavy in the hip-hop community. Damian Lillard does this Four Bar Friday thing on Instagram [where he] has people send him rap bars. I've never seen a Blazer co-sign any musicians from the town. If the Blazers are doing well people are hyped, that's Portland Pride. If you're on stage talking about the Blazers or repping Portland now I feel people are more about it; because the team's doing good they have something to champion behind. It's all about energies and where the city's energy is out (Calvin Valentine, Personal Interview, January 2014).

In our interview Calvin Valentine had a clear vision of the interventions he'd like sports stars like Damien Lillard to make. After my fieldwork finished Damien Lillard began to release his own hip-hop records under the name Dame D.O.L.L.A; he also began to make appearances at hip-hop shows in venues such as Holocene and across the city. It could be that Lillard decides to create his own record label and, as Calvin Valentine suggests, sign local rappers and producers

to it. Such an intervention could provide an important recognition of the scene and create a stronger tie between the sport and the music-makers that could be profitable both financially and in terms of social capital.

### **Hip-hop Infrastructure**

I'm still finding little pockets of hip-hop culture in the city. [...] A lot of people have realised what's going on in different pockets, and people started working together. You still have guys that are capable of putting out an entire album with no one else's help. [They do] their own artwork, do their own press releases and publicity work, call their own contacts and get it on blogs, (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

The hip-hop community is based in the affordable neighbourhood of St John's, described by Mac Smiff, editor of We Out Here Magazine, as 'the last hood in Portland. It's grimier here' (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014). Many members of the community in St John's feel they have been driven there by increasing property prices in the northeast of the city, which for many years had been the home to the African-American community, particularly the area which is now known as the Rose Quarter. Within the neighbourhood the hip-hop community have started to forge a strong infrastructure as Mac describes above.

There is a strong entrepreneurial spirit amongst the hip-hop community, with many artists making their own opportunities and finding ways to monetize their music making, although that is not to say this is not a challenging experience. In our interview DJ OG One told me how he came to be a prominent sports DJ in the city:

It really came from just a lot of relationship building when I first started as a DJ in Portland. I actually started DJing monthly celebration parties with youth. I used to use music as a way to motivate kids to get a good grade. I would throw big dances for middle school kids, and how you got in was you'd get a good report from your teacher, and you'd get good grades for that quarter. [...] I started doing events for Brand Jordan. The president for Brand Jordan, Larry Miller, he became the president here at Portland

Trailblazers. I just approached him, and I said the Lakers got a DJ, the Hawks got a DJ, we need a DJ, and he just made it happen (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

DJ OG One managed to use his position as a DJ at corporate events to build a relationship with his clients that then led to his being granted the position of Trailblazers DJ. It is unlikely that a DJ without such rapport with the team's ownership could have achieved such a position.

The infrastructure has grown out of a need to adapt to the social, political and physical situation the community is in. Mac Smiff described in great detail his thoughts on the city infrastructure and how it has progressed in Portland:

We didn't really have any infrastructure for a long time; we had no hip-hop infrastructure. You had guys like Sapien down in Salem, [where] you had a lot of groups. [In Portland] you had Cool Nutz and his squad; they split a little bit and went into different things, the old skool and hood rap got together. It was all about having teams for infrastructure; me, Luck, Sunny and Scrips and a bunch of us were like the seven science guys. Scrips, his team, they built a studio. They had camera work and some guys that went to school for camera work, [...] all these little teams and factions growing to build their own infrastructure. There was almost like an arms race to catch up with Cool Nutz. Everyone was kind of doing their own thing. There were a few collaborations here and there, and it was almost like we didn't even know the others existed. [...] A lot of people in the hip-hop community don't have enough money. [It's like] how can I do this the cheapest and not spend a lot of money because I'm not gonna make it back. You put out a project; you can put it out for free. Most people are on the same page, it's become a matter of who does what best. It started with Terminal at Flat Line studios; he's a very good engineer, his music's crispier than anyone else. V1 creative, that's a video and photography community, they popped up, they started filming videos and everyone was like, where did these videos come from? [...] Other people started saying we can do videos and we don't have to charge rappers all too much money, let's just do them. Terminal said, 'I'm gonna do my own things', people started going to him for all the mixing needs. A couple of engineers said, 'I better step up my game', so you have a couple of different sounds, you have options all of a sudden, artists have an option. (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Through the tenacity provided by the collaborative team model members of the hip-hop community have encouraged each other to excel through competition and also encourage originality to skill set and production technique. Mac then went on to explain about how the DIY spirit and growth of local infrastructure

has enabled members of the community to grow out of the traditional role of rapper into providing other needed services:

The DIY thing for Portland, it will never go away. It's a cultural thing here. Artists can say 'hey I'm rapping'. If people enjoy them they can say, 'you should work with him', and make teams, and a rapper can just be a rapper. A lot of rappers weren't rappers; a publicist who likes rap, his beats aren't that good, his raps aren't that good, but he's got great publicity. A lot of these folk have stopped and let that go and say hey I can be a publicist and be in the hip-hop community. I can just be a rapper and not do something else, so the rappers can just get on. There are actually rap managers now. Teams like TNO, Trust No One Records, that's an example of a team that has people in place that do different things. They've got a guy who throws shows, they've got a guy who does beats, they've got a guy that shoots videos, they've got guys who rap, [and who] just rap. (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

This collective creativity process allows for curation into a house style, so that a team becomes trusted for presenting a certain sound, a bit like record labels such as Tender Loving Empire do in Portland. With most teams using digital distribution platforms like Bandcamp and Soundcloud it is possible to suggest that the Team will overtake the record label as a means of creation, distribution, and release.

Communities in the Portland music scene are often forced to adapt to the difficulties they face economically, socially and politically. Portland responds to such situations with an entrepreneurial spirit, creating infrastructure to support the needs of its musical communities and producing innovative musical texts that provide social commentary. This DIY approach has seen hip-hop make valuable contributions to the local economy, with more artists wanting to work with local producers such as Trox, and the spotlight falling on the community with the success of rapper Aminé's cult song 'Caroline' in 2016. With such developing success it would seem that local hip-hop is finally gaining recognition and taking its rightful place in Portland's musical narrative.

## 8. Portland Society

In this chapter I utilise two key terms, 'curator' and 'taste-maker' which, though seemingly interchangeable, nonetheless define distinct roles. A curator is somebody who selects a programme with an artistic intent, whether through a particular theme or combination of artistic works that they feel can communicate an interesting or stimulating message. Taste-making is an ability to direct audiences to what is 'good art', and to provide an authority on what 'good art' is. Tastemakers are often well connected within their communities, enabling them to access knowledge about a variety of artists. This knowledge, as interpreted via Bourdieu's notions of cultural capital, can be applied to the Portland curation process. This chapter will show how Portlanders are connected within the scene and how this gives authority to tastemakers. This connectivity, or social dynamism – what I define as a momentum created by social connections that enables music making or music facilitation – is crucial to the inner workings and collective success of the Portland music scene.

Music scenes are built on hierarchical networks, where performers' success is validated by others' authority. Gatekeepers define local music (Gallan, 2012) and mediate local cultural practice at performances such as open mic nights (Behr, 2012), providing infrastructure and curation. Popular music is often reliant on music critics, bookers, record label owners and music bloggers to determine what is 'good', but as Simon Frith has shown, these kinds of value judgments are problematic:

One could define popular culture as that cultural sector in which all participants claim the authority to pass judgment; no one needs to be licensed by study or qualification to speak 'authoritatively.' In practice, though, there clearly are people-loosely defined as 'fans' – who do claim precisely that their superior knowledge, experience, and commitment give their judgments a particular weight: this is how both rock critics and season ticket holders to football games claim a special attention. There is such a thing, in other words, as popular cultural capital, which is one reason why fans are so annoyed by critics, not just for having different opinions but for having public sanction to state them. (Frith, 1998, p.9).

Popular music's ability to transcend personal and social influence is considered impossible, as Frith has argued:

People's individual tastes – the ways they experience and describe music for themselves – are a necessary part of academic analysis. [...] For the last fifty years at least, pop music has been an important way in which we have learned to understand ourselves as historical, ethnic, class bound, gendered subjects. [...] It may be that, in the end, we want to value most highly that music, popular and serious, which has some sort of collective, disruptive cultural effect. My point is that music only does so through its impact on individuals. That impact is what we first need to understand (Frith, 2007, p.257).

It is this impact on individuals that makes it difficult for tastemakers to predict success and demonstrates the complexities of finding a system of merit within popular music. It is often difficult to establish a culture of criticism within scenes as the fostering of positive relationships between artists and critics can be mutually beneficial. Portland scene members generally focus on constructive criticism of performances or records in the hope that it will improve the standard of quality throughout the city. These critics, bookers, record label owners and music bloggers see their role as curation, selecting their favourite music for others to enjoy, and as I will show, the influence of music media, promoters and record labels in Portland is both crucial to the scene's interconnectivity and vital to its climate of mutual influence.



Figure 25 Gig listings in Willamette Week newspaper courtesy of Yousef Hatlani.<sup>1</sup>

Portland audiences face a fundamental problem: with such a wide selection of performances (see figure 8.1), how do they decide which to attend? Many factors will be crucial to an audience's decision: cost of performance, audience proximity to performance, genre of performer; yet even with such filters there still remains a relatively large pool to choose from. This is where a need for curation enters. A curator can choose gigs that will be career-defining for the bands that perform and a unique experience for the audiences attending. Popular music audiences often seek out gigs which can earn them what Bourdieu terms 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1973; Shuker, 1998):<sup>2</sup> the performance that 'breaks' a band, a performance where something unique happened, and to

<sup>1</sup> All the columns in this picture represent gigs.

<sup>2</sup> There are however limits to Bourdieu's explorations of cultural capital in the context of fan studies. Matt Hills argues that 'Bourdieu supposes that cultural life can be modelled by taking an "economistic" approach' (Hills, 2002, p.47). I explore cultural capital in greater detail in the second half of this chapter.

document them in some form.<sup>3</sup> Academics can then observe the ways in which these performances impact on cultural production (Toynbee, 2000: Hesmondhalgh, 2006) and subcultural narratives (Thornton, 1995). Curators not only direct audiences to performances which can earn them this cultural capital, but which they can intentionally create. Bookers have an obvious role here: if they can provide regular performances that allow an audience to attain cultural capital, this can solidify their authority. Music press and bloggers ensure attendance at these events to earn cultural capital to grant them authority in future, and a system of interdependence is strengthened.

### **Mapping Portland Networks**

To understand how members of the Portland scene relate to each other, I made a list of everyone I interviewed for this thesis (see Appendix 1), then drew the connections I had noted between names. I was aware that the result would only provide a limited picture, as the relationships on this and subsequent maps were only the ones I had encountered during fieldwork; other connections between interviewees, unknown to me now, are likely to develop. My goal was simply to determine the agents with the largest number of connections, and then explore the bearing this had on their role in the music scene.

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<sup>3</sup> There is some debate around the use of mobile phone technology in capturing gigs and creating a Baudrillardian postmodern hyperreality of performances. The role of audience documentation in Portland performance is something I wish to explore in further research.



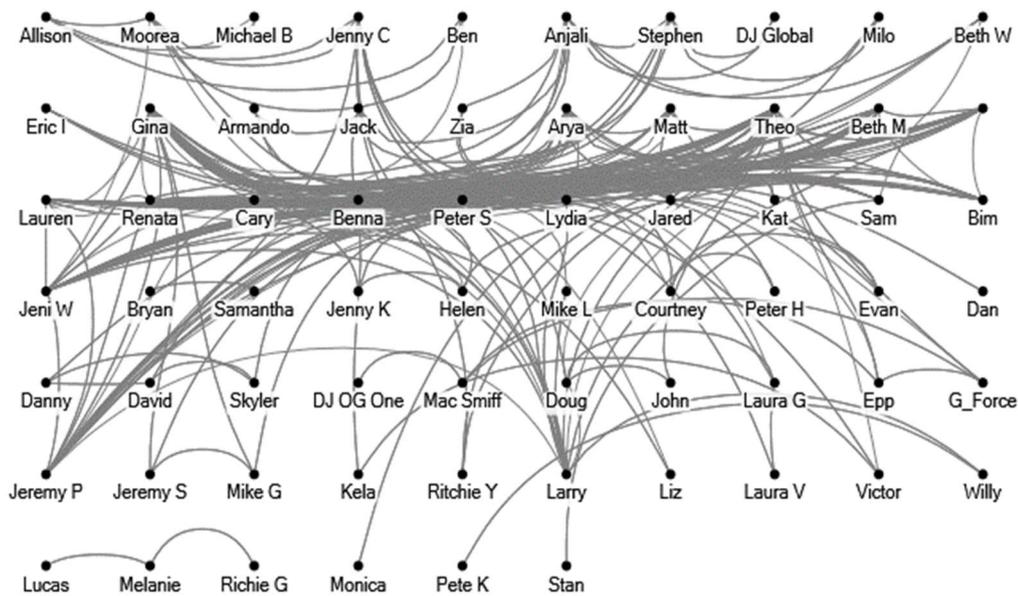


Figure 27 NodeXL Excel grid graph of interviewee connections.

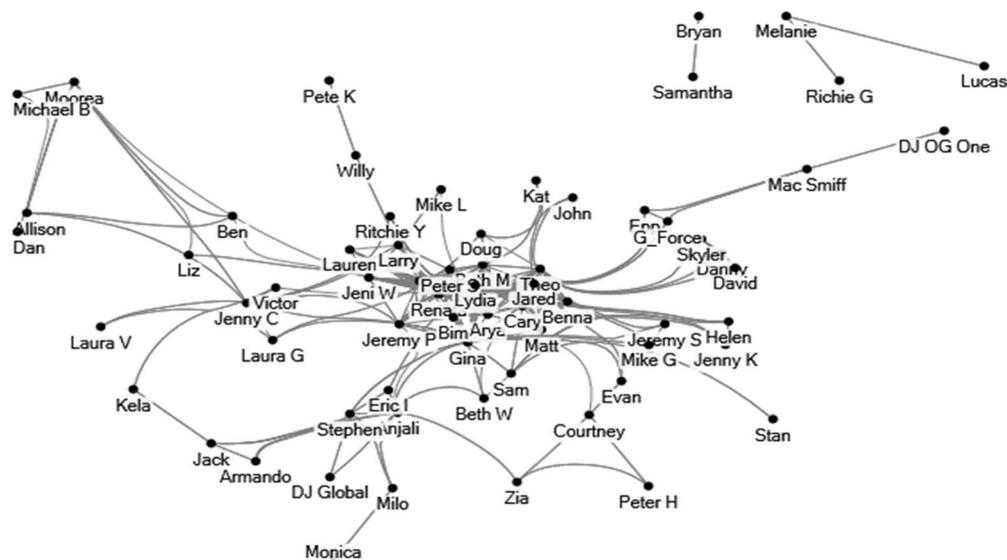


Figure 28 NodeXL Excel network graph of interviewee connections.

These particular maps omit those without a connection to the rest of the group, as the software did not enable unconnected values to be included, but they do tidy up the results with a systematic programmed approach. Figure 27 automatically positions names on a grid within the space according to its connections; named interviewees nearer the edges of the grid have fewer or

unique connections. This again demonstrates high connective traffic around PDX Pop Now! board members. Figure 28 is a more formulated network map, placing the cluster of the PDX Pop Now! board members in the centre with connections branching out from it. This shows the unique connections outside of the group more clearly.

Two examples of a unique connection are punk photographer Bryan Phippen and punk musician Samantha Gladhu. Whilst Bryan attends PDX Pop Now! as a photographer, I was not made aware of any connection he had with the board. Both Bryan and Samantha alluded to Punk in Portland being a rather insular community: 'It's really insular, the specific scene. There are really great bands coming out of it, but it is really insular' (Samantha Gladhu, Personal Interview, July 2014). One such isolated limb in figure 8.4 shows connections between Lucas Warford of the group Three for Silver, Melanie Von Trapp, who Lucas supported at Mississippi Studios, and Richie Greene, the arranger for Melanie's group. Melanie can also be connected into the wider scene through the group Pink Martini, with whom she and her siblings have recorded albums. Richie has also worked with other scene members not listed here, including Y La Bamba and Tiburones lead singer Luz Elena Mendoza, whose connection would bring this limb into the main web of connections. Introducing all the figures who connect the scene (but aren't interviewed in this study) would take a considerably long time, hence the decision not to include these extra links here, but rather to focus on establishing a snapshot of the connections between my interviewees in the period 2013 – 2014.

## **Professional/Amateur Divide**

Ruth Finnegan's *The Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town* (1989) offers one of the first examples of ethnographic insights into not only music making, but also the extent of amateur practice in a specific location. Exploring amateur practice is an important route toward understanding professional practice and the facilitation needed to connect these two worlds. But it is also important to note the social function of amateur practice. In the UK context, brass bands and choirs have been crucial to working class communities, particularly in cities with rich industrial histories such as the pit towns of South Yorkshire. These groups provided a form of expression for these communities and would often compete against other towns, thus creating a sense of civic pride.

In terms of the amateur/professional divide Finnegan discerns that 'In local music [...] the interrelationship and overlap between these two [professional/amateur] is both highly significant for local practice and also of central interest for the wider functioning of music as it is in fact practised today' (Finnegan, p.13, 1989). In Portland the importance of defining the professional/amateur divide can also lead to exploring who determines it. Tastemakers in Portland can not only gain a wider following for a group or performer but can in fact assist in the professionalisation process by helping define who fulfils the professional role. The most prominent examples of this are the bookers who engage artists and pay them for performances. Often within music scenes professionalisation is defined by whether or not an income is

earned; but earning a living from performance is not as clear an indicator of professionalism:

Taking music as 'the main source of livelihood' does not always provide as clear a dividing line as might be supposed. [...] A number of band members regarded their playing as their only employment (perhaps also drawing unemployment or other benefits), but how far they actually made money from it was a moot point: [...] even if they earned quite substantial fees and spent most of their time on activities related to their music, they could still end up out of pocket and perhaps engaged in musical performance as much for the enjoyment and the status of 'musician' it gave them as for money. [...] Neither payment nor amount of time provides an unambiguous basis for differentiating 'professionals' from 'amateurs'; the difference is at best a relative one (Finnegan, 1989, p.13).

Often musicians will need an additional income to support their music making activities, until they reach a level of professionalisation where they are selling enough records and gig tickets to provide an income. To achieve such a level, bookers play a certain role, but it is often a record label that provides this upgrade in professional standing. In his book *The Music Industries: From Conception to Consumption* (2012) Michael Jones explores what signing a contract with a record label initiates for an artist: 'When musicians sign contracts with companies, it means acknowledging that the expertise they seek is embodied by the individuals with whom they come to work' (Jones, 2012, p.159). Musicians see record label representatives as skilled professionals; thus, signing a contract unlocks access to a new level of professionalism. Alongside the access to expertise Jones also asserts that: 'When an act is "signed", when they achieve their "deal", it is impossible for this not to be recognised as "special, as "talented", as already "somebody"' (Jones, 2012, p.156). Having a contract adds value to the artist; and again, it can be assumed that this added value is one of professionalism. Having the contract itself allows an artist to be set apart from

those without contracts. The power to offer a contract also cements a taste-making role for record labels.

Whilst there is a challenge in differentiating between amateur and professional musicians, it is increasingly clear that a city's music scene needs tastemakers to provide the defining lines and crossing points where amateur musicians turn professional. Some tastemakers have the power to provide a crossing point with ease, as in the example of the record label and the contract they offer. It is increasingly challenging, particularly for live musicians, to find routes to professionalism if they choose not to have a formally recorded and released catalogue of music. The Portland scene has found interesting ways to address this. In 2014 *Willamette Week* awarded best new band to Ural Thomas & The Pain, a group that, at the time the award was given, had no recorded catalogue.<sup>5</sup> In the same poll the group Tiburones came third; at that point Tiburones were yet to release a record. This poll, devised by local tastemakers, managed to accredit a level of professionalism to two live-only acts. Because the poll's criteria were not revealed, it is difficult to ascertain what specifically garnered these particular groups their respective accolades; but it is safe to assume they received votes for their ability to perform live and to command an audience. In Portland it is clear that tastemakers have the power to decide and manage the amateur/professional divide.

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<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that Ural Thomas as a solo artist had a recorded back catalogue at the time

## Pathways

With tastemakers having the power to establish the amateur/professional divide in Portland, the routes taken by musicians to reach professional levels can reveal established routines and practice within the city. In *Hidden Musicians* Ruth Finnegan describes the routes taken by musicians in Milton Keynes as 'pathways': 'established routines of musical practice which people could choose to follow' (Finnegan, 1989, p.306). In the case of Portland, however, established routines are often diverted by serendipity and random occurrences. Finnegan further suggests that: 'The many different forms of musical activity described in this study were not random or created from nothing each time by individual practitioners, but a series of familiar and – by their followers – taken-for-granted routes' (Finnegan, 1989, p.306).<sup>6</sup>

The musical community in Portland is so open to collaboration that serendipity plays an important role in connecting performers. During my fieldwork I witnessed many occasions where musicians would introduce colleagues to each other: they would talk about their work, find commonality, swap contact details and agree to try something innovative together. In some instances, I found myself introducing interviewees to each other when one would walk into a coffee shop where I was conducting an interview, potentially resulting in some form of collaboration. Despite the fact that this kind of

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<sup>6</sup> Finnegan also explores forms of music with organised routes and structures, in particular Western art music ensembles, which often require auditions and grade examinations to progress within their infrastructure. Although I approached art music institutions in Portland for interviews, I was unsuccessful, so this study focuses exclusively on popular music. Classical Revolution PDX was the only classical-based group with whom I established communication for this study, but their aim is to break through traditionalist paradigms, and by proxy the established routes and pathways Finnegan discusses.

serendipity makes it more difficult to trace precise pathways, there is still a need for musicians to interact with certain tastemakers to achieve success. As

Finnegan notes:

Given the significance of these musical pathways for many people's lives and experience, it would be interesting for our understanding of modern urban life to know how people entered into them. [...] This is all a bit of a mystery, as, perhaps, basic life choices usually are. (Finnegan, 1989, p.307).

To contextualise Finnegan's assertions in a Portland context, it is difficult to make generalisations about how people enter such a route. The serendipitous occurrences can be part of the entry process for such routes although they are not well trodden enough to suggest any kind of standard practice in achieving success.

Alongside the assertion that musical routines and practices define pathways, Finnegan also considers how pathways operate within an urban space such as Milton Keynes:

The music pathways (like others) can be envisaged as stretching out and criss-crossing through the town. Physical distance was not itself a barrier to local music making (though social access could be), and people regularly moved out of their immediate localities by foot, cycle, car, bus or taxi to one or more regular meeting places. (Finnegan, 1989, p.137).

This finding however is not replicated in Portland. As a city Portland is considerably larger than Milton Keynes,<sup>7</sup> with a strong transport infrastructure and a mass-transit system operating throughout the tri-county area. Music-makers in Portland tend to live in neighbourhoods with a collective musical identity, either through immediate choice or due to a commonality in needing affordable spaces to rent. They then often construct the music meeting spaces

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<sup>7</sup> According to the recent US Census Bureau population estimates (2015), Portland had a population of approximately 632,309. The last UK census estimated the population of Milton Keynes as 248,800 people (2017).

around them in adaption to their social situation and affordability. It is also common for music-makers to live together, renting rooms in shared houses as opposed to entire individual properties, again due to affordability. It is likely that a town such as Milton Keynes would have constant spaces for music. Portland's music venues, rehearsal rooms and other music-related spaces are in a state of constant evolution and replacement. Music-makers adapt to this by providing the infrastructure for their own needs, thus creating the space where they work, often concentrated around their local neighbourhood.

Within music scenes such as Portland another important consideration is the intersectionality presented by large-scale musical events in the city. The music festival has a role to play in providing shared ground for connectivity and innovation. One likely reason that the contributors to PDX Pop Now! are well connected in the NodeXL diagrams above is due to the collectivity offered by the group's festival. Whilst the merits of the festival have been previously outlined in relation to its supportive role in helping provide performance and audience opportunities for minors, it also offers social dynamism. Music communities need social dynamism to ensure growth and sustainability. The PDX Pop Now! Festival answers this need by creating a goal for performers to reach, providing a platform for musicians of various genres to perform in the same space and by introducing the next generation of musicians to goals that are achievable.

Festivals such as Pickathon are more difficult performance spaces to access, due to an expectation of prior musical attainment; but when a local artist is booked they can benefit from sharing bills with more nationally known names and the opportunities such an occurrence can afford. Pickathon is attended by a

national press corps, increasing the likelihood that performers will reach new audiences. A positive review in the press would generate enough publicity to warrant performances in new places for new audiences and draw record label interest. Local festivals often curate on the advice of scene tastemakers, helping forge a sense of hierarchy, although festivals such as PDX Pop Now! use an equitable selection process to ensure diversity in performance: they have established credibility within the scene, which is crucial in giving less 'popular' genres a presence on a respected stage.

This kind of social dynamism can create pathways and 'fast tracks' for artists' careers and ultimately professionalisation. Whilst there are many milestones performers need to reach to become professional, the routines and practices that establish pathways in Portland are sporadic and less well trodden than those of a city such as Milton Keynes. In Portland serendipity changes the direction of pathways in an instant to create almost a spaghetti junction of routes across the city, or in most cases, around a specific neighbourhood that contains all the elements needed for recording and live performance.

### **Cultural & Social Capital**

In negotiating pathways in career and physical terms, the acquisition of social and cultural capital is crucial to success. Knowing certain bookers, journalists or more established bands, is one way for an artist to find doors unlocked and to validate their abilities. The notion of social and cultural capital has been defined in detail by Pierre Bourdieu: 'Capital is accumulated labour [...] which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or a group of agents,

enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labour' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). The appropriation Bourdieu refers to is the transfer of social dynamism into economic capital, and it is this process which is finessed in the Portland music scene as a result of the demands of the capitalist state. In a society that desires constant economic growth there is a need for the monetisation of culture to enable its survival, as well as a need for citizens to earn a living to survive in the US, due to the limited welfare system. Tastemakers and curators live off the cultural knowledge of the musicians they support.

To achieve the monetisation of knowledge, or in Bourdieu's terms, economic appropriation, tastemakers and curators have to assess their cultural and social assets by economic capability:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is pressured to guarantee (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242).

Whilst there are academic institutions in Portland that offer musical training and educational qualifications, there is no institutionalized route into the position of taste-maker or curator in the Portland music scene, thus the *institutionalized* state Bourdieu speaks of is not relevant in this context. Whilst the Portland Music Scene creates musical objects that can be utilised as cultural capital, the focus of this chapter is on taste-making and curation as opposed to artistic creation, thus the exclusion of an exploration of the *objectified* state. We can consider the *embodied* state relevant to this context in assessing the practical applications of cultural capital.

Bourdieu defines the *embodied* state as follows:

The accumulation of cultural capital in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of embodiment, incorporation, which, insofar as it implies a labor of incalculable and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243).

Curators and tastemakers in the Portland Music Scene tend to have their own unique experiences, which inform their position: some have come through college radio stations and event managing for college venues; others have been musical practitioners who (through social interaction) were asked to manage friends or began by managing their own personal practice. In his exploration of the *embodied* state Bourdieu further argues that 'Because the social condition of [*cultural capital's*] transmission and acquisition are more disguised than that of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Thus, the acquisition by Portland tastemakers and curators of knowledge through their own personal musical experiences grants them the authority to cement their positions. This authority will also lead to their earning personal economic capital and securing their position within a capitalist framework. Emma Webster has defined the role of promoter as 'someone who has the financial and cultural resources [...] to choose and promote artists that represent what will turn out to be major trends in music and therefore profitable' (Webster, 2011, p.37). The combination of cultural capital as a cultural resource to reaffirm a promoter's standing, and personal financial investment can in Webster's view lead to social and financial return.

Alongside cultural capital, there is also utilisation of social capital in the Portland scene. In Bourdieu's work social capital is:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu, 1986, p.246).

Here Bourdieu sees an acquisition of capital or authority from the personal connections within a network. To explore this in a Portland context we can return to our network map of connections.

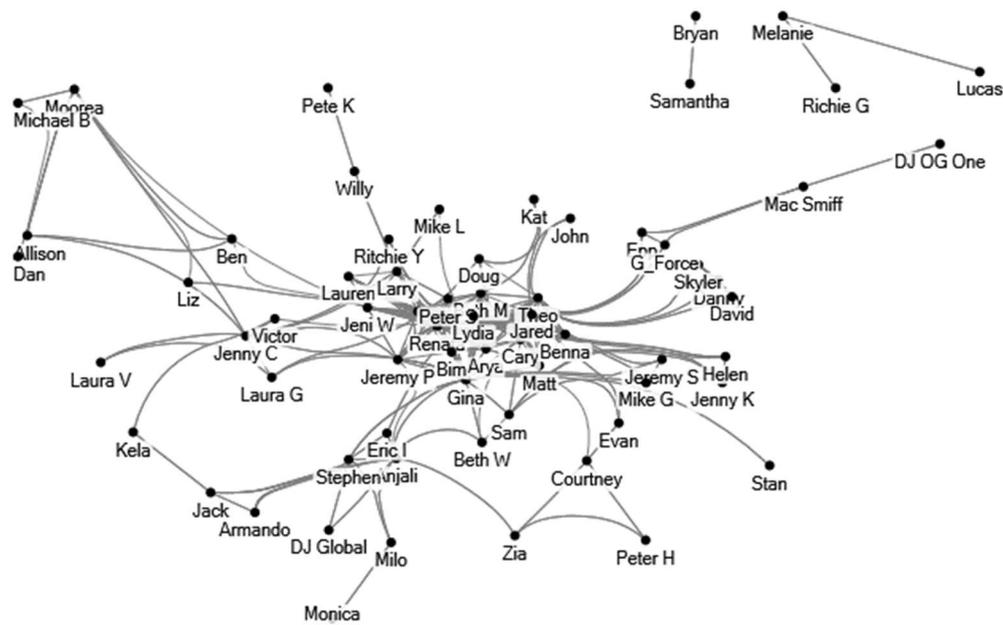


Figure 29 NodeXL Excel network graph of interviewee connections.

There is a clear concentration of connections in the centre of this map that expands outwards. Those in the centre connect out to interviewees from a wider variety of genres than those on the outside. The outliers (though they will have social capital within their own genres) may not be connected in the central dialogue, which may make it harder for them to advance their genre in the context of the wider scene. As previously mentioned, PDX Pop Now! occupies the centre of the network map. This reflects a goal by the organisation to be representative of the whole scene, to connect with all musical genres, an act which almost by accident allows them to accrue mass social capital via their

enhanced social connectivity. As Bourdieu further argues, 'The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right to whom he is connected' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.246). Thus, the connections made between people are increased in value by the cultural, economic and symbolic capital held by individuals, demonstrating social capital as an act of knowing the right people. Any notion of social capital unlocking economic capital is challenged in the Portland scene by the central dominance of PDX Pop Now!, a non-profit organisation. It could be argued that the connections create economic stability for overhead costs and allow the group's continued existence. And their non-profit status could also be seen as symbolic capital: because the group does not pursue profit it may be seen as a pure and positive organisation with which to be connected.

With both social and economic capital present in the creation of tastemakers and curators in the Portland scene, the pathways taken can be examined in terms of what capital they can offer individuals. The accruing of such capital has become somewhat democratised by the internet's ability to offer instant communication and network building. The creation of virtual Portland has increased the potential for scene members, in particular bloggers, who share their views on music in order to accrue enough capital to become a taste-maker or curator themselves.

## The Virtual City

The development of online social media has had an enormous impact on the ways in which pathways interact. In the Portland music scene members exist both in the physical and virtual present; in fact, both are very much required for success in the twenty-first century. The virtual environment not only creates more opportunities for almost instantaneous social connections to be made, but also provides a free promotional platform that can reach into the audience's pockets.

The virtual city sees what Baudrillard might conceive of as a *simulacrum* (1994), a simulation of reality, the replication of a music scene, but in virtual territory. In Portland the social networking platform Facebook provides a crucial form of contact and allows members to organise themselves into specific territories known as groups. These groups can be based around music-makers and facilitators, but the virtual city also enables fan communities. Marjorie D Kibby has explored the concept of a virtual music community based around the online John Prine fan community: 'a meeting place that could not exist within real-world boundaries. [...] Prine fans are still a minority in most geographic communities. [...] It could be said that the one and only place where Prine fans could regularly gather was online through the chat page provided by the record company' (Kibby, 2000, p.91). The virtual fan community is transnational and collectively gathers fans of John Prine in one place for them to interact and to share collective experiences. Kibby further argues that:

The ritual exchange of information online allows fans a feeling of community between themselves and between them and the performer, facilitating a belief in a commonality, although they are dispersed geographically and disparate in needs and experiences. [...] An online community is subject to the interpersonal dynamics of any face-to-face

community, as well as the communicative and social effects of possible anonymity (Kibby,2000, p.91).

The commonality the Prine community has found around the subject of fandom has allowed the building of global social relationships through one website.

There is of course the curious ability for fans to assert an element of anonymity around their presence, which can destabilise communities if those who remain anonymous choose to act in a purposefully malicious manner.

We can quantify Kibby's exploration of the Prine fandom community in a Portland context by exploring what the virtual presence of the city can offer music scene members. Musicians in Portland can themselves foster and nurture an online fan community, and indeed many have through Facebook. Often fan requests for bands to play in far-flung places, from Paris to Buenos Aires, are posted on artists' Facebook pages and many bands will explore these contacts to see if it is possible to find gigs. The punk community in particular have explored the internet as a tool for touring. Punk musician Samantha Gladhu explained how her community had grown:

I know that we all read *Maximum Rock N Roll*. That's of course not created here. Because of the huge sense of community with everyone touring the west coast constantly, it does come to reflect the priorities with punk. Interstate 5 along the West Coast has a pretty strong infrastructure of people who are willing to set up punk shows and be successful with it and who you know you can trust (Samantha Gladhu, Personal Interview, July 2014).

The San Francisco zine *Maximum Rock n Roll* exists in both physical and virtual form; the internet site is useful in connecting musicians and fans and has benefitted Portland punk by allowing the musicians to find touring routes.

Through a duality of online and physical networks the punk community have forged a touring pathway around the central highway (Interstate 5, or I5) as an easy means of transportation, although distances between major cities on the

West Coast can be vast. The zine in itself also offers curation at a distance for the Portland punk scene, as its coverage is viewed as authoritative in defining what good punk music is.

Alongside the fostering of virtual communities is the ability for bookers and artists to use virtual space to promote their music in easy to access forms. David Grazian has argued that ‘promoters regularly rely on locally-based online networks to publicize and generate audience support for their shows’ (Grazian, 2013, p.139). This is common in Portland, where promoters will turn to Facebook. As booker Gina Altamura told me:

Facebook, I understand and really enjoy. I enjoy promoting on Facebook, and I find it very natural. We have an intern too who helps us out with our Facebook. We tweet if we have a special announcement; we sometimes do a giveaway on Twitter. Facebook tends to be this constant: here are these songs we like. We do run print ads in the weeklies. We’re migrating ever more [towards] digital promotion (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).

This migration to digital has been mainly due to the free nature of advertising, although this freedom has been challenged by Facebook, by reducing audience reach of posts, or demanding money to reach more people. The migration to digital is also prevalent in the music press, which supplement their print editions with digital copies supported by advertising. The innovation of music blogs has also allowed the fast publication of reviews, which has in turn quickly established certain bloggers in Portland as key tastemakers, a revolution unforeseen ten years ago.

### **Portland’s Music Media**

Music is so important to Portland that the main city newspapers often dedicate large sections to it. The free weekly papers, *Willamette Week* and *Portland*

*Mercury*, have hired dedicated music editors, as has state-wide paper *The Oregonian*. *Willamette Week* has extended its commitment beyond music and is now a key player in the annual MusicfestNW festival, which brings nationally popular acts to the city to perform alongside local bands. Alongside the traditional music press are music blogs, operating as online-only review sites aiming to discover and review 'undiscovered' music. Primary examples of music blogs in Portland include *We Out Here Magazine*, a blog dedicated to Portland & Pacific Northwest hip-hop, and Bim Ditson's 'Bimstagram' blog, written for *Willamette Week's* website. If an editor from one of these publications attends a gig and gives it a good review, this can be crucial to that musician's route to professionalisation.

Some members of the city press still do not feel they are taste-making, but merely highlighting tastes made by others in the scene. One music editor who has expressed this opinion was *Willamette Week* music editor Matt Singer:

It's certainly not anybody, I don't think, in the media around here. The people who really have the ability to sort of influence who a big band is, or a sort of scent around here, is like the people who book PDX Pop Now! and Theo Craig who does the Sunday sessions. He has this built in audience every single week. They put a band on and enough people see them. I follow enough people on social media in the scene who are going to way more shows than I am. If I see a certain band's name popping up a lot after a while I will check them out. If they have momentum about them or if I just think they are just awesome I will try to figure out a time when they have a big show to feature them. I'm picking up on what the vibe is in the music scene at large (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Matt suggests that his role is merely to amplify what has already been identified as good music; but there is still an element of curation involved in deciding which bands should appear in the paper and when. This curation process is crucial to an artist's development. In our interview Matt described his personal processes for curating which groups or artists to cover:

It's always been a big thing for me to try to make the sections diverse as possible. I hear complaints from so many sub sections of music that we're not covering them enough. As an editor I can't suspend my own taste to a certain degree. I get more emails than anyone in my office. I literally have 30,000 unread emails. If a band puts a description of its genre in the subject line that catches my eye I will be more likely to listen to them. I certainly have my biases. Generally, if I see folk or indie pop I am less likely to read it than if I see something that's really bizarre (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Receiving emails from bands is a big part of a music editor's job, as bands attempt to convince people like Matt to attend their shows and give them a review. Matt is open about his personal biases, which are unavoidable given the subjective nature of musical taste; these particular biases are most likely reactionary against the music stereotypes of the city, however, and as editor perhaps Matt feels it his duty to ensure that other genres get fair coverage. When a particular genre is successful and other bands are drawn to perform in that style it can also stifle innovation, which makes it more difficult for groups and artists in less commonly heard genres to receive press coverage.

Whilst members of the traditional press such as Matt perhaps feel they do not have a taste-making role, those working on blogs expressed a different understanding of their influence. Mac Smiff, former rapper and editor of hip-hop blog *We Out Here Magazine*, can be seen in a taste-making role through the output of his blog. Mac explained to me how he perceives the influence the blog has:

Especially out of Portland we've become the authority. Our influence in Seattle is growing – we've got a writer up there, we've got a photographer up there. *We Out Here's* given Portland hip-hop especially a place for artists to exist without having to be on their own personal blog. The BuzzFeed article [on Portland hip-hop],<sup>8</sup> she called me before she got out here, said hey we're looking up northwest hip-hop and we're finding *We Out Here* magazine and we want to do it with you. They're allowing us to tell our story, it's for and by artists here. When they call us up, I can call the artists up and bring them in with me. We're able to export our own story as opposed to someone telling us

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<sup>8</sup> In June 2014 BuzzFeed journalist Arianna Rebolini wrote an article entitled 'Fighting for Hip-Hop in the Whitest City in America', which explored how the community produces music in faces of adversity (Rebolini, 2014).

what our story is. In Portland we've never had a voice from inside the community say, hey what's going on (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

The fact We Out Here Magazine is being sourced by national media to present the best in local hip-hop allows the blog to have authority in its decision-making processes. Mac also implies the blog is setting a narrative about local hip-hop, and a crucial part of this is determining who is successful and who is best to promote in order to progress this narrative. The blog creates a taste-making infrastructure specifically for hip-hop in the city, which can control its own narrative and can react to problems already explored in this thesis. As in my interview with Matt, Mac Smiff also explained his processes of curation:

I actually have ten folks working with me so they make decisions and suggestions too. The model I've gone with over time is: I do what I want, I post what I want, if I like it I'll post it, if I don't I won't. If I don't like it but I think other people might, I might post it. If I do like it but I think it's not as good as it could be, or should go back into the lab I might not post it. This is a blog: it's got to represent a personality and the team chose me to be the one who decides that and I kind of just trust my gut. The mission has always been to be a tool for the local artist and local fans (Mac Smiff, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Here Mac has outlined the culture of constructive criticism in his blog to ensure that the music genre community he works with can improve. Rather than offering a published public criticism, Mac opts to have conversations with artists in private about how he feels they can improve to receive coverage in his blog. This also makes We Out Here Magazine a point of aspiration where artists work to appear in it, and then can be transmitted to an audience who trust the blog as a source of quality hip-hop.

The culture of criticism has been a point of debate within the Portland scene, with some members feeling there is not enough critique of performances or records, but instead only positive comments that don't challenge artists to improve. As Beth Wooten, director of the Rock n Roll Camp for Girls,

summarised: 'My concerns are what that means for the scene. There's not that much critique. I see a lot of bands that are celebrated, and there's kind of that, like, I'm gonna go to their show because they went to mine. I don't really see a lot of music criticism coming out of Portland' (Beth Wooten, Personal Interview, May 2013). Whilst Portland fosters a friendly community where everyone is encouraged to participate, this can help create an oversaturation of the market and make it harder for groups or artists to be differentiated and to establish their professional credentials. It would be fair to say that Matt and Mac both feel they instil a critical culture in their writing, although this is not apparent across the board with the rest of the city's music media. Due to the close community of musicians in Portland it can be somewhat difficult to criticise an artist, as this could damage social relationships. Matt explained how he enables a distance between himself and his subjects: 'As a so-called critic I need to have an aesthetic distance. I don't have a lot of friends who are musicians. That helps a little bit' (Matt Singer, Personal Interview, August 2014). Although this may seem unusual, by not socialising primarily with musicians there is a decreased chance that Matt will be accused of engaging in what some might perceive as nepotism, and this allows him to operate with some reasonable level of objectivity.

With some writers avoiding the taste-making role and others engaging with it for the sustainability of their respective musical communities, it becomes difficult to see Portland's music media as a whole operating within a taste-making remit. Critics in the city are often reliant on other voices to help guide which performances and records they review. They require a level of curation of the chaotic mass of music being produced in the city to enable a focus for their

publications. With music bookers in particular focussing on specifically curated programmes on set days, it makes the job of the city's music criticism easier and allows them to identify successful live music-makers. In other words, if a band plays a certain curated night, they must have been chosen for their ability and are thus worthy of press attention.

### **Portland's Music Bookers**

With Portland's music journalists often making decisions on who to write about based on live performances, bookers have the ability to influence not only audiences but the press as well. To gain such a position a booker has to go on their own journey, building up trust in their curation. As with performers, there are no distinct pathways through which such a position can be attained. Despite this, the city is developing ways to develop skills around music booking and stage-managing gigs. Bookers are involved on the board and organizing committee of PDX Pop Now!. Opportunities such as this allow practical experience and training in such skills.

And as with performers, the routes into booking can be serendipitous.

This was the case for Theo Craig, who relayed to me the story of how he ended up becoming a music booker:

One of my roommates was an artist that was involved in a group show; she asked on behalf of the show if I could coordinate a concert. From that came other opportunities to book music related to art openings and art events. I had a friend, Matt Sheehy, he needed help with his tour at the time, and he was left to book a tour himself. I never booked a concert tour in my life, but he talked me into it. He started introducing me to people in the Portland music scene as his booker. I had to field a lot of enquiries; I certainly wasn't an expert, until a group came along called Y La Bamba. One of the bands I booked was a band called Y La Bamba. I'd heard good things about them. I needed to fill out a twelve-spot festival. Y La Bamba was brilliant in what they did. New, excited, fresh, ready to do great things, and I realised that I wanted to be a part of that. After that show I offered my services, whatever they could be. They said, yeah we need a

manager, someone to get us shows. That's how I started being a booking agent. [...] I was invited to participate in a collective of concert promoters, it was called Potlatch Presents. Our focus was bringing the basement scene onto big stages. We had some really big ideas of what we could do to expose new listeners to what was the Portland underground, but we lost steam and our leadership ended up getting involved in other things. Following that I got an offer to book Rontoms Sunday sessions. Matt King had been one of the booking people at Rontoms, he understood that I was a hard worker, knew the music scene, and I could fill the role of the people who were leaving as they'd just lost half of their booking team. I had the connections and tastes that would fill that gap. Little by little I picked up more responsibility, writing the newsletter, promoting the shows, and eventually booking the show. They asked me to take over as the principal booker (Theo Craig, Personal Communication, April 2013).

Theo's journey saw him build a professional reputation through practical experience and utilising a network as the core to his personal development. By creating contacts across the scene Theo had accrued the necessary knowledge – or cultural capital – to be accepted into higher positions within the booking infrastructure of the city. By the time of my last fieldwork trip, Theo had been approached to book for the PDX Pop Now! festival as a trusted local voice who could pass on experiences to the next generation of bookers. It is feasible that people such as Theo can create pathways and routes into booking positions.

Another booker, Gina Altamura (Holocene), had a more straightforward route into her position:

I started when I was in college. I was up here for college at Lewis and Clark. I got involved booking all of the shows at Lewis and Clark College. We had a really fun sort of basement venue and ended actually being able to bring a lot of wonderful touring acts through just with the university's budget. That was great. I just totally fell in love with curating. I got this internship with a promotion company in town called Blackbird Presents. It was just writing press releases and things like that for them; it led to an internship here [Holocene], which eventually led to a full-time job here (Gina Altamura, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Gina benefitted from the opportunities offered to students to run their own social events, as well as internships that companies and venues in Portland were offering. As with Theo, a practical apprenticeship in the booking business proved useful to her progression. Another crucial aspect for both Theo's and Gina's successes appears to have been their willingness to be involved in their musical

community and a sense of generosity they gave their communities as an act of preservation.<sup>9</sup>

Many of my interviewees who are performers would offer names such as Gina's and Theo's in association with their own perceived success, citing contact with these figures as a milestone in their development. One example is Jeremy Scott, from the Vaporwave group Magic Fades:

Gina, who was the booker at Holocene, saw us and thought we were really cool and when someone like Gina gets behind you, you can actually play shows at a cool place. She's taste making in Portland. She deserves to be in that position. All the people who book music in Portland, most of them like Gina or Theo, they are excited about the artists, they're excited about the show, they're excited to be doing what they're doing (Jeremy Scott, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Jeremy felt validation by being booked by a figure he sees as influential in the scene and sees value in the genuine love of the work and music that bookers have. As he said:

It's all respect to the bookers. They put together bills that complement each other, sort of that cross-pollination thing. There have been some bills that are really interesting simply because they pair a hip-hop act with a dance electronic act. It's not samey. I think a diverse bill is fun (Jeremy Scott, Personal Interview, May 2013).

Jeremy points to the curation skills that have earned his respect for their work, showing how their approaches to their job can demonstrate their influence.

### **Portland's Record Labels**

In Portland the traditional notion of the record label has been challenged. With the development of self-releasing technologies, from home recording studios to the availability of cost-effective CD printing, there has been less need for a

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<sup>9</sup> As previously described in chapter 4 on venues

record label to control all aspects of an artist's work. With major labels trapping artists in so-called 360 deals,<sup>10</sup> which carve up rights to creativity in unequal measure, artists in Portland have rebelled and remained fiercely independent. Anderton, Dubber and James have noted that 'Multiple rights deals are clearly to the benefit of the record companies. Yet artists should be careful of multiple rights deals since they cut into revenue stream that were previous retained by the artists rather than shared with a record company' (Anderton, Dubber & James, 2013, p.196). The record labels that operate in the city have realised they cannot pursue such a model and now have a new role to play: tastemaker.

One way to describe how record labels are positioned in the city is to borrow the term *Haus* from the fashion world: a term that refers to a brand that defines its own ethos, then produces and curates collections around that vision.<sup>11</sup> One of the more nationally-known labels in Portland is Tender Loving Empire, run by Jared and Brianne Mees, and home to acts such as Y La Bamba, Radiation City and Typhoon. In our interview Jared described how Tender Loving Empire has adapted to the digital release age:

Record labels are going away. Everybody used to understand what they are, but it's an indie record labels' world now. Record labels like ours are going to be the rule in ten years. You're going to gradually see less of a need for the services, but you're always going to see a need for the curation and organisation and experience a label brings to a table. As long as you have musicians who are making music, you are going to have someone who's organising that music to get it out to people (Jared Mees, Personal Interview, May 2013).

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<sup>10</sup> 360 deals have been explored in the academic literature as a 'reaction to the devaluation of music' (Karubian, 2008), a law advancement for the digital age (Curien & Moreau, 2009), and for their impact on the operation of the music industries (Jones, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> In further research I will seek to expand on the link between fashion *hauses* and record labels in their approaches to curation.

As with fashion labels and houses directing tastes and trends, Tender Loving Empire has become a label associated with quality Portland-based music with many of the acts appearing on national late-night television and touring nationwide. These successes help cement the label's position. Alongside this taste-making development, Jared explained the other roles the label has taken on:

More labels are becoming interested in management. You'll see a lot of labels bring on in-house management and in-house synch licensing departments and start to be one-stop shops for artists rather than only doing the distribution. It's gonna get a lot more artist-friendly. Labels have to find more ways to make money: you have to make money off licensing, streaming, merchandise, rather than only record sales (Jared Mees, Personal Interview, May 2013).

For Jared, Tender Loving Empire prides itself on its working relationships with its artists, and provides an all-inclusive service where artists can receive help in releasing and promoting a record in a way they feel is good for them:

Our relationship with our artists is pretty all-encompassing. We generally don't get involved in the recording of records. Bands a lot of times involve us and get our feedback on mixes and directions of different things in the process. Bands are so particular around here. They take a year to record a record, and they do it half in their basement and half in four different studios over Washington and Oregon. We let artists bring us things and say yes or no to things we like and don't like. We do a lot of A&R [Artists and Repertoire]. We offer a lot of proxy management services, we've done everything from helping them organise their publishing companies, getting them hooked up with book agencies, getting them hooked up with licensing opportunities, getting them radio and publicity people that will help push the record, setting them up for music videos. Sometimes we pay for music videos, we design a lot of the art, we design a lot of the packaging, and we're able to sell our bands' music out of our store. We sold something like \$40,000 of our bands' music, out of our store. These were bands on our label. Bands can count on the fact they have a record store in which they're front and centre with a listening station 365 days a year, whereas those are things that you have to pay hundreds of dollars for just to have for a week in another record store (Jared Mees, Personal Interview, May 2013).<sup>12</sup>

The label manages to cover all the needs of the artist, taking on the roles traditional labels do not typically handle. This adaption has incorporated a

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<sup>12</sup> Other record labels have adopted similar strategies, such as providing management and tour booking, and running a record shop or a publishing wing. Notable among these are Virgin Records (Southern, 1995), and Rough Trade (Hesmondhalgh, 1997) although the independent records movement in general revolutionised the recording industry (King, 2012).

relative autonomy for artists, whereby they can make their own choices on image and creativity under the guidance of label owners who are passionate about the music they release.

### **Developing Pathways**

The inner workings of taste making and curation in the Portland Music scene, combined with the random occurrences that influence the direction music-makers in the city take, present an interesting challenge to Finnegan's notion of pathways. Pathways can still be seen as relevant to Portland's situation, with similar required routes for success as in other cities, but the lines between these recognised touchstones are far from straight. Static locality is another challenge to the pathways that Finnegan draws, as her lines cross a metropolitan area between various neighbourhoods, unlike in Portland, where music-makers build their needs around their living space to foster specific neighbourhoods.

These musicians are placemaking and developing their infrastructure around them, unlike the musicians of Finnegan's study, who journey through a pre-existing infrastructure. The construction of virtual space for curation and taste-making such as blogs and promotional Facebook groups has also created non-static expanses for the city's music scene to exist in, making defining pathways somewhat challenging. These virtual pathways can be prescribed in the capacities of certain platforms, such as Facebook; but it is difficult to assert whether virtual connections are of genuine use, or if they can provide social capital to scene members. It is possible for tastemakers to be connected with

others online, even without any face-to-face contact, and without really fostering any kind of relationship.

Finnegan's idea of pathways can be developed by exploring the concept through the exchange points in social and cultural capital and its accrual. By applying Bourdieu's theories in practice, there emerges a series of touchstones: a person can gain enough cultural or social capital to progress through a scene hierarchy to a position of influence. By harnessing the social energy of the Portland music scene and recognising the points within it that connect with pre-existing tastemakers, even new members can find routes to such positions.

## 8. Portland Tourism

Portland is not a traditional American tourist destination. The town has no internationally recognised landmarks, it has not been a seat of power, no president has been born there and it is not seen as a place of historical importance to US history. Those living in Portland will certainly disagree and argue that the city, founded by the great American explorers Lewis & Clark during their journey to the Pacific, has made a key contribution to industry. Moreover, in recent years it has been a hub for progressive politics. Earlier in this thesis I explored the state of Oregon's troubled past: it is perhaps this dark history that has seen Portland left off the tourist destination map until recent years.

The social and political development of Portland into a liberal countercultural haven situated between the natural beauty of Mt Hood and the vast Tillamook Forest has started to change Portland's fortunes as a tourist destination. Portland's cottage industries have been a major part of this. In their video guides to the city, video blog *The Expeditioner* (2014) and television show *Next Stop* (2014) remind viewers of the city's unofficial moniker, 'Beervana', and Portland's reputation for boasting the most breweries per capita of any city in the world, primarily craft breweries operating as small cottage industries. They also point to the Willamette Valley as a centre of production of Pinot Noir, considered some of the finest grapes in the country. In *Next Stop Travel's Portland, Oregon Vacation Guide*, music is mentioned as an important contributor to the city's charm. Host Jon Olson filmed seated next to an

‘authentic Portland rock band’ proclaims that ‘Portland’s live music scene is on fire. The live music scene is incredible, and Dante’s is one of the coolest venues in Portland’ (Next Stop, 2014). But the live music offered on the show is classic American rock, not the indie-folk music often sold as the ‘Portland sound’.<sup>1</sup> What we do not learn from this travel show is anything about famous Portland acts, or how Portland has contributed to the canon of American music – facts that the Portland tourist board would like the public to know.

In this chapter I will explore how Portland’s music has driven the city’s development as a tourist destination. I will examine how music is used by the local tourist board to sell the city, including the ‘Welcome to Portland’ television commercial campaign (2013) starring local performer Luz Elena Mendoza and her band Tiburones, and festivals such as Pickathon and the Portland Blues Festival. I will also consider the wider debates around cultural tourism and the ways in which it can exploit everyday life and essentialise communities for profit, using Portland’s northly neighbour, Seattle, as a point of contrast. Finally, in this chapter I will discuss controversial television show *Portlandia*, the ‘Keep Portland Weird’ campaign, and the intersections of all these different visions of the city.

### **Tourist vs Ethnographer**

As Simone Krüger and Ruxandra Trandafoiu have suggested, as a topic of research, ‘music tourism has only gained momentum in ethnomusicology since the late 1980s, while music tourism is still often seen as an “other” of

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<sup>1</sup> Jon Olson also makes an embarrassing reference to the Portland band sitting next to him as sounding like Rush. This was maybe an attempt at gaining their approval; the drummer is wearing a Next Stop t-shirt, happy to play along, as though he’s been paid a reasonable sum.

ethnographic fieldwork' (Krüger and Trandafoiu, 2014, p.2). Krüger and Trandafoiu describe a 'reflexive attempt to grasp the impact of [scholars'] "roleplay" between tourist and ethnographer' (Krüger and Trandafoiu, 2014, p.2), and it is this balance which has come to define more recent approaches to examining music tourism:

Interestingly a shared underlying desire to be 'the' ethnographer, not a music tourist, in [the] tourist context [...] may be born out of some of the negative assumptions surrounding tourism: colonialism, commodification, cultural loss, staged authenticity, capitalism and so forth. To focus on tourist events and their perceived hypo-reality somehow implies to miss the 'real thing' that in-depth ethnographic fieldwork promises instead. Moreover, tourism is often regarded as a form of neo-colonialism that postmodern approaches to ethnography sought to challenge (Krüger and Trandafoiu, 2014, p.2).

As one example of how this ethnographer/tourism balance is achieved, in his exploration of child performers in Bali, Jonathan McIntosh considers his position as a white western male in Indonesia:

Some of the children started to arrive prior to the commencement of their own rehearsals in order to observe the conclusion of my dance lessons. Consequently, I – as the 'gazing' tourist-ethnographer, struggling to execute the nuanced Balinese dance movement – was subject to what Stokes (1999, p.142) terms the 'ethnographic/touristic gaze gaze back'. Despite this mutual gaze the children [...] tended to regard me as a tourist and kept their distance from me (McIntosh, 2014, p.66).

Despite trying to immerse himself in the culture he was exploring as an ethnographer, McIntosh was merely viewed as a tourist.<sup>2</sup> After realising his position McIntosh described his transformation from tourist to ethnographer through directly engaging in the everyday lives of the community around him, allowing the community to see his work and participating in lessons with the children:

My participation in the children's lessons [...] gradually paid off. Although the children were unaware of my complex but fluid evolution from tourist to ethnographer, the boys and girls at the *Sanggar* gradually perceived my transition from mere tourist to touristic

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<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Marta Amico, in her study of the Festival au Désert, described her immediate placement as a tourist by participants in the field (2014).

'other', someone who looked like but did not necessarily behave like a tourist or other adults (McIntosh, 2014, p.67).

Although it can be a long process, the transition from tourist to ethnographer is an important one for the researcher to attempt. Yet even though one may wish to be identified as an ethnographer, free from colonialist implications and not a bearer of the tourist gaze, it would be wrong to assume there is no gaze at all. The ethnographer's gaze can still be problematic as it places everyday life under observance, creating a difficult ethical path to navigate.

I arrived in Portland as an ethnographer, not a tourist, and while I did not often engage with tourist activities, on the occasions that I did, those interventions provided me with a different perspective on the city. It was important for me to understand how Portland uses music for tourism, despite my natural desire only to see the city through a resident's eyes; experiencing the tourist gaze allowed me to see strategies in action. During this study I allowed myself to play the tourist role to experience how the city and the wider state sell themselves: visiting Mt Hood, the Tillamook cheese factory on the Oregon coast, and further afield to Seattle. Aside from the catharsis and respite it brought from the intensity of fieldwork, I learned about different elements of the region that are used to attract tourists.

Portland is also capable of being a tourist destination for its own citizens, inviting locals to come and learn about aspects of the city they may not know about. One group enabling this is the non-profit Know Your City. In building the public engagement element of my research I found myself in the unusual position of informing Portlanders about their own music scene, by leading a guided tour of West Burnside Street. During this experience I had members of

the tour tell me they had learned new things about their own city from me, and that the tour had allowed them to reflect on their own positions as residents of city with a rich musical heritage.

### **Cultural Tourism**

The idea of 'cultural tourism' is often seen as an extension of the Grand Tours of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, where aristocrats would visit the cultural hubs of the day, to become versed in the literature and poetry of Europe. Over the centuries this has developed into a simple desire to visit a country and become involved in their cultural existence. As Greg Richards has described it, cultural tourism is:

Not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the 'way of life' of a people or region. Cultural tourism can therefore be seen as covering both 'heritage tourism' (related to artefacts of the past) and 'arts tourism' (related to contemporary cultural production) (Richards, 2001, p.7).

Through this adoption of everyday life cultural tourism becomes a form of escapism for individuals, allowing them to immerse themselves in a culture not familiar to them or, as Melanie K Smith suggests, 'personal displacement' (Smith, 2003, p.35). Smith further defines the behavioural traits of the cultural tourist as follows:

- Actively seeking difference
- Seeking objective authenticity in cultural experiences
- Concerned with existential authenticity and enhancement of self
- Earnest interaction with destinations and inhabitants
- May have idealised expectations of place and people
- Interested in 'real' experiences
- Disdain for representation and simulacra (Ibid).

Smith suggests cultural tourists are drawn in particular to notions of authenticity and often reject as artificial purpose-built simulacra aimed specifically at tourists.

But this demand for authenticity can be somewhat problematic, as it demands

tourists have access to the everyday life experience of citizens who live and work in the destination. Cultural tourists intrude upon the working lives of citizens for entertainment. As Nicola MacLeod argues:

The very act of being a tourist is to consume inauthentic and commodified products and events, and to consider contemporary tourism as being deleterious to the concept of authenticity is perhaps to romanticise the notion of tourism itself and to hark back to a 'golden age of travel' (MacLeod, 2006, p.178).

By self-defining as a tourist and entering another culture for a limited period of time one cannot possibly achieve authenticity. If a tourist goes to a destination for only a week they will not have a full understanding of how the culture they visit operates and will be offered a constructed 'authentic' experience simulating the indigenous lived culture. This simulation often takes a digested form so that rarely-occurring rituals and practices can be experienced in the tourists' presence. Many texts in tourism studies tend to critique cultural tourism as a 'new form of imperialism' (Smith, 2003, p.172), causing subordination of indigenous populations, reinforced by the fact that 'tourism flows predominantly from Western developed countries to less developed countries' (Smith, 2003, p.172). This is slightly different in the western context: although the USA has an indigenous population decimated by colonialism, the community in my Portland study can be considered part of western culture.

In the academic field of culture tourism studies there is also the sub-field of music tourism. As Chris Gibson and John Connell have suggested:

The rise of music tourism took music from being simply an expected, or occasionally quite unexpected, adjunct of a holiday to a central role. As tourism has become organised around different music genres, the diversity of relationships between place and music have become evident (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.12).

Music tourism makes clear the association between genre and place. This creates a problematic narrative discourse wherein a central genre is seen in a given

locale as the purest authentic form, and other musics as merely a by-product. For cities like Portland, where indie music is sold to tourists, this can impact on various communities in the city.

The reinforcement of the indie music narrative for Portland has excluded the musics being made by the city's minority communities. Gibson and Connell also assert that 'Music tourism can be short-lived. Cultural goods are rapidly consumed, and smaller cultural centres rarely attract visitors for long. Even festivals last for no more than a few days' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.13). Music scenes are often created by ephemeral parameters: concerts are temporary experiences subject to their existence in the context of the time and date of performance.

The live performances marketed as music tourism experiences are similarly temporary, and tourists do not necessarily stay in the location beyond the event. Although this may be the case, as Gibson and Connell note, 'Music tourism may constitute one component of strategies within local economies to generate new kinds of economic growth' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.14). Indeed, Portland views music and the wider cultural and creative industries as an attraction. Portland is a developing tourist destination opened up to the world by the expansion of routes from the Portland International Airport. Tourists are invited to the wide variety of festivals the city has to offer and to experience the city's nightlife by going to a gig at one of the city's famous venues.

Portland has no music-based heritage sites or museums, so cultural tourism to the city is sold through the residents' way of life. The city uses music

to sell itself, but the tourist board has barely tapped the potential that music tourism has to offer the city.

### **The State of Portland Tourism**

As flight technology developed, and through the principle of supply and demand, the opportunity to take a holiday abroad became cheaper: the cheaper the price of flights, the more adventurous tourists become in choosing their destinations. America has become an increasingly popular destination for Western Europeans, due to similarities in culture and the widespread consumption of American cultural products, and for tourists from East Asia who travel due to relative proximity.

In January 2015 the National Travel and Tourism Office of the United States published its latest figures of the Top 20 countries for non-resident arrivals. The following table shows results for the month of June 2015, and year-to-date 2015, the year of my last fieldwork visit:

TOP TWENTY TOURIST-GENERATING COUNTRIES (Preliminary*)						
Jun-15				YEAR-TO-DATE 2015		
	NUMBER OF	%	RANK		NUMBER OF	%
COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	ARRIVALS	CHANGE		COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	ARRIVALS	CHANGE
CANADA	1,487,953	-13.8	1	CANADA	10,311,336	-6.1
MEXICO	1,406,436	13.3	2	MEXICO	8,412,012	8.3
UNITED KINGDOM	402,619	20.9	3	UNITED KINGDOM	2,100,826	13.8
JAPAN	292,158	1.7	4	JAPAN	1,729,352	2.2
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (EXCL HK)	211,861	14.7	5	PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA (EXCL HK)	1,155,590	18.2
GERMANY	172,433	11.1	6	BRAZIL	1,108,954	5.3
BRAZIL	168,211	21.6	7	GERMANY	1,024,557	13.5
SOUTH KOREA	146,530	10.3	8	SOUTH KOREA	814,596	19.5
AUSTRALIA	139,970	8.0	9	FRANCE	796,800	4.3
FRANCE	134,732	5.0	10	AUSTRALIA	657,800	10.6
INDIA	131,356	15.3	11	INDIA	585,448	18.7
COLOMBIA	105,761	5.6	12	ITALY	430,403	5.6
ITALY	97,585	11.2	13	COLOMBIA	396,462	1.6
SPAIN	74,543	7.2	14	ARGENTINA	357,452	-1.0
SWEDEN	61,977	7.2	15	SPAIN	325,761	7.5
NETHERLANDS	56,008	19.1	16	NETHERLANDS	320,236	12.8
ARGENTINA	54,951	18.8	17	SWEDEN	295,320	8.0
IRELAND	52,662	18.1	18	VENEZUELA	261,542	-14.0
TAIWAN	48,188	0.6	19	SWITZERLAND	228,682	3.8
NORWAY	42,295	2.7	20	IRELAND	209,470	12.6
TOTAL TOP 20 FOR MONTH	5,288,229	3.4		TOTAL TOP 20 FOR Y-T-D	31,522,599	3.4

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, ITA, National Travel and Tourism Office from the Summary of International Travel to the U.S. (I-94) report.  
\* Note: 2014 and 2015 arrivals data include a technical-processing change that increases the 1+ night visitor counts for overseas countries compared to previous years (prior to 2014). This processing change does not impact Canada or Mexico visitor counts. Also, the 2014 and 2015 arrivals data include a methodology change where the Country of Citizenship is used as a substitute for those I-94 records with missing Country of Residence data. I-94 arrivals monthly data will be released as Preliminary, with these data subject to revisions that may be possible with improved solutions and/or sources discovered during the reported calendar year. For more information about these changes to the monthly I-94 arrivals program, visit the NTTD website at: <http://travel.trade.gov/research/programs/i94/description.html>.

Release date: January 2016

Figure 30 US Government statistics on the top tourist-generating countries of those visiting the US, showing June 2015 and the period from January to June 2015.

I have chosen to use this data to display the state of tourism at the time of my fieldwork. The results are relatively unsurprising in the first instance, with bordering countries Canada and Mexico coming first and second respectively. It is interesting that the United Kingdom comes third, as it takes just over six hours to fly to the east coast of the US from London. This trend is possibly explained by the common cultural exchanges between the two countries and a shared national language. Because of the language many Britons have emigrated stateside, also drawing tourists to visit family and friends, stopping off for culture along the way.

Travel Portland provides an insight into what tourism is worth to the city.

Their *State of the Industry* 2016 report ranks the top five visitor countries of

origin: 'Canada, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia' (Travel Portland, 2016), largely in line with the national trend. Reasons for such a trend can only be speculated. German culture, for example, is renowned for its appreciation and brewing of beer, which could be one reason why statistically German tourists are attracted to the city; but in the absence of any more in-depth studies, it is difficult to prove such a link.

At the beginning of 2016 Travel Portland provided the latest statistics:

- The Portland metro area welcomed 8.9 million overnight person-trips.
  - All told, visitors to the Portland metro area generated \$4.9 billion in direct spending.
  - Easing the tax burden for local and state residents, area travellers generated \$223 million in tax revenues. Of that total, \$118 million was local tax revenue.
  - The travel industry supports 34,900 jobs in the Portland area, generating more than \$1 billion in employment earnings.
- For the purpose of this study, the Portland metropolitan area is defined as Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties (Travel Portland, 2016).

With tourism generating a large percentage of the city's economy, as demonstrated in the above statistics, the tourism board has explored various ways of exploiting the city's unique selling points: they have recognised the strength of cultural tourism and have begun to advertise the city through it.

### **Welcome to Portland**

Music is a crucial part of Portland's cultural identity, so it is no surprise that it is used to sell the city as a destination for tourists. One example of this is the 2013 'Portland is Happening Now' advertising campaign, by the company Travel Portland. The television advertisement for this campaign, 'Welcome to Portland' (2013), stars Luz Elena Mendoza, a highly respected local musician and lead singer of groups Y La Bamba and Tiburones. It opens with Mendoza boarding an Amtrak train to Portland, showing a route for domestic tourists; as she walks

through the carriage we see her in a clothes store carrying a sweater on a hanger, then walking through the aisles of Powell's City of Books, and finally strolling through one of Portland's fine dining establishments. These are the more conventional sides of the city, which show it to be a hip metropolitan place. Then the advert adds a sense of Portland's 'otherness' in the form of the cyclists in fancy dress riding past Luz Elena Mendoza as she laughs. This is a reference to Portland's strong cycling culture, but also the annual World Naked Bike Ride. Once again this may be considered essentialising Portland through its apparent quirks; but the advertisement aims to show the creative attributes of the city, to encourage visitors to engage with an unconventional metropolis that offers the expected amenities with an extra bit of quirk.

The music underscoring the advert, entitled 'Welcome to Portland', was written by Mendoza and her songwriting partner, Nick Delffs. The song is offered as a free download on the Travel Portland website, to give potential visitors their own musical slice of Portland. The lyrics are also published on the website, to encourage the visitor to engage with the text as a representation of Portland.

Whilst lyrical analysis is a problematic methodology,<sup>3</sup> the words can reveal simply how the city is sold:

We're all here now  
Found a way out  
In a different place  
Where my love will never fade  
It's all okay now  
Walking on solid ground  
In a different place  
Where my love will never fade

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<sup>3</sup> Lyrical analysis can be seen as problematic as it is often assumes meaning without consideration of the author's intent. As Roland Barthes suggests, everyone can draw their own meaning from a text, thus making a practice like lyrical analysis questionable in principle. (Barthes, 1977, translated by Richard Howard)

Come this way to the river bed and  
Feel the embrace of the wind  
Contemplate life  
Life is alright  
In a different place where my love will never fade  
Travelled so far  
Far away from everything  
What I thought I knew but  
Now I finally found you  
Come this way to the river bed and  
Feel the embrace of the wind  
Can't sleep at night  
Hold me down and try to sing about our home

The lyrics seem to evoke the cultural tourist travelling to Portland. The lines 'We're all here now/ found a way out/ in a different place' suggest that tourists may come to the city to escape their everyday lives. The song also offers an image of the kind of cultural tourist who might visit Portland – to 'contemplate life', get involved in the surrounding nature of the 'river beds' and to 'feel the embrace of the wind'. The music itself fits into the indie-folk genre often associated with the city, and as the band had not previously released any other recordings, this was a unique offering.

Travel Portland's downloadable *Portland Visitors Guide* devotes one page to local music, explaining that 'Portland's trademark eclecticism is on full display in its live music scene — from jazz at Jimmy Mak's to indie rock at the Doug Fir — which is embraced both by local fans and the many noted musicians who call Portland home' (Travel Portland, 2015, p.23). In this newer narrative Portland is not constricted to the indie-folk image often found in other promotional material. It is also notable that famous musicians who reside in the city are mentioned here, as if to imply that a tourist might run into them on the street. The page also lists the city's largest venues, such as the Crystal Ballroom, cult popular venues like the Doug Fir Lounge, and festivals such as Pickathon and the

Waterfront Blues festival. To expand on this narrative of diversity the Travel Portland website offers a page entitled 'Niche Music Venues in Portland' by Nathan Tucker, which purports to 'Up your indie cred with these under-the-radar music venues' (Tucker, 2016). The page lists venues from less popular genres such as bluegrass, jazz, punk, soul, metal and psych rock – but omits hip-hop, perhaps because hip-hop lacks a base venue in Portland after the recent closing of the Crown Rooms. It does nonetheless mention some prominent local black artists, such as trumpeter Farnell Newton and singer Ural Thomas.

The *Portland Visitors Guide* also lists the punk venue Blackwater Bar. The punk musicians I interviewed asked me to omit the Blackwater Bar from my thesis, as the venue was constantly being shut down by the fire marshal, though as it later transpired, a new version of the bar had opened that complied with official codes, as Portland punk musician Samantha Gladhu explained:

'Blackwater Bar is a new rendition of the [original Blackwater Records] venue. After fire marshal problems the people behind the phenomenal DIY punk compound leased a former restaurant and turned it into a legitimate and fully permitted all ages venue and vegan restaurant' (Samantha Gladhu, Facebook Communication, 2016). I then asked Samantha her views on the venue being listed on a tourist website:

Whilst much of the media is sorely misguided and sounds ridiculous discussing punk, it isn't a secret club. Everyone should be able to find it and enjoy it. I would love to see the new Blackwater thrive and stay open in the face of all of the expenses that come with being a legitimate business. If weird blurbs on Travel Portland help sell some vegan burgers and keep a venue open for all ages shows, then I can't be mad. (Samantha Gladhu, Facebook Communication, 2016)

I was initially surprised at Samantha's response, having assumed that she would see this as generating the wrong kind of attention for the punk scene. Rather,

she suggests that promotion such as this will bring much needed revenue to the venue, allowing it to continue at a time when other all-ages venues have struggled to remain open. Samantha's openness also suggests that such promotion could be an opportunity for a new audience to engage with the Portland punk community. In our online discussion Samantha also noted that 'Portland gets a decent number of people who visit just for the punk scene, which Travel Portland wouldn't know about,' (Samantha Gladhu, Facebook Communication, 2016) demonstrating that there is tourism outside of the official framework. There will be an unmeasured group of tourists who come to the city to experience musical communities they have heard about or been connected with in some way; and with Portland bands playing across the US and indeed the world, this will lead to a natural growth of interest in the musical waters of Portland.

Travel Portland has become more inclusive of music genres outside the traditional image of Portland, with the tourism narrative changing from indie-folk to something more eclectic. This opens the possibilities for more niche genres to receive tourist income, for more artists to be paid for performances, and for financial investment in scene-related infrastructure such as recording studios and labels. There is, however, a cautionary aspect of musical tourism: the impact on locals of having their everyday existence placed under a microscope.

### **Festivals as a Portland Attraction**

Portland's many music festivals cater for a variety of niche tastes, including soul, bluegrass, and blues, as well as the general audience attracted by a festival's

ethos and quirks. Whilst the festivals are celebrations of, and networking opportunities for, musical communities in Portland, they have also become tourist attractions. Two festivals in particular, the Waterfront Blues Festival and Pickathon, have garnered national attention for their musical offerings as well as for the environments they create. As part of my fieldwork I visited both of these festivals, to discover more about their unique offerings.

The Waterfront Blues Festival is held annually in the Tom McCall Waterfront Park in the heart of the city. The festival is held on the nearest weekend to the Fourth of July, American Independence Day, and incorporates a firework display to celebrate the occasion. The line-up draws on internationally known names – in 2014 the line-up included Los Lobos and Boz Scaggs, alongside local blues performers such as Curtis Saldago and trumpeter Thara Memory. In true Portland style, 100% of the festival's admission charges go directly to the local foodbank (Waterfront Blues Festival, 2016), making the purchase of a ticket a positive altruistic transaction rewarded by blues music. This was the largest festival I encountered in the city, and given Portland's penchant for indie rock, I found it interesting that blues was given such a prominent platform. Portland's indie festival, MusicfestNW, was a multi-venue Portland equivalent to South by Southwest, but in 2014 it was reduced to a two-day concert, a change rumoured to be due to promoter finances. Although MusicfestNW is locally popular, many scene members see the Waterfront Blues as a more nationally known event.

Portland music lawyer and scene fan Peter Vaughan Shaver described his thoughts on the festival in our interview: 'The festival we're known for, the blues festival, is the second biggest blues festival in the country. [It brings] a huge

draw. [Alongside] the venues, there's so many here, it adds to the economy' (Peter Vaughan Shaver, Personal Interview, July 2014). Many of my interviewees from across Portland's genre communities noted the importance of the blues festival and its national status.<sup>4</sup> Peter also shared with me his personal views on the festival: 'I love the blues festival. It's got a little tired – part of it is it's an ageing demographic. They always bring in some great stuff. It's a wonderfully curated thing (Peter Vaughan Shaver, Personal Interview, July 2014). In my experience the audience seemed to be primarily from an older generation, but they certainly got into the spirit of the event, witnessing a circle of dancing hippies. The festival seems to be attempting to keep traditions alive by programming younger acts. On the weekend I attended, the Friday night headliners, who performed just before the fireworks, were the American Music Project's youth music. The young performers all took turns in playing solos, displaying outstanding musicianship and showing that a future generation was ready to inherit the festival. New up-and-coming acts on the festival that weekend also included soul singer Liz Vice, all booked on the smaller stage to offer the chance to experience a nationally known festival.

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<sup>4</sup> It is also a key date for the blues dance community who 'blues bomb' the event by turning up and performing mass dances in an attempt to encourage the audience to follow suit.

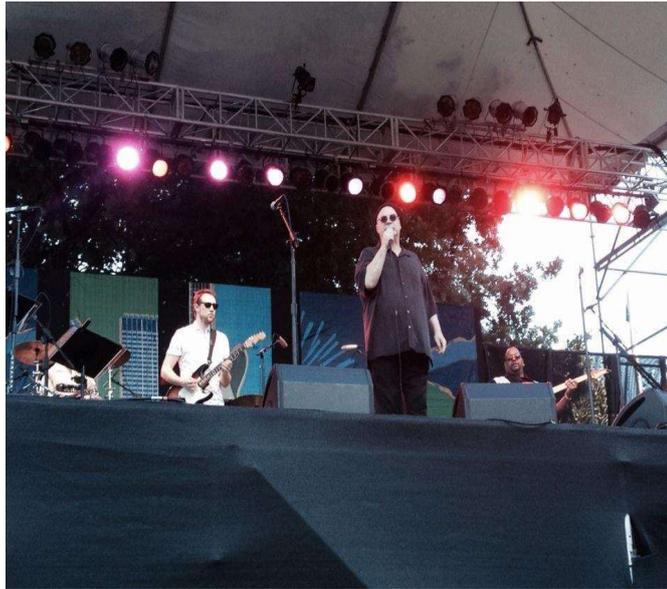


Figure 31 Curtis Saldago headlining Waterfront Blues Festival 2014.

The city authorities have taken notice of this festival as well. Jenny Kalez, assistant to city Commissioner Nick Fish, described the city's view of the festival: 'People know us for our music festivals. The blues festival is huge; every year it gets people from everywhere, [although] I don't know if they know us as a music destination year-round' (Jenny Kalez, Personal Interview, July 2014). People like Jenny, who work for the city government, recognise the importance of the festival culture but also recognise the challenges of keeping tourists interested beyond the event. Jenny seems to be suggesting that one challenge is the seasonal tourism based around summer festivals. Local climate certainly plays a role: there is a festival almost every weekend during July and August.

The Pickathon Festival is held on Pendarvis Farm in Happy Valley, just outside of Portland. It is a festival that encapsulates the Portland spirit, with a strong sustainable agenda and mixing local bands with nationally known acts. Pickathon is also unusual in its programming, with most bands invited to play more than one set at different times, on different days, on different stages. I

attended the 2014 festival and volunteered as a general helper to access the festival and see how it worked. After completing one shift checking wristbands at the entrance and another directing traffic, I had paid my way for my ticket. The sustainability element of Pickathon is also attractive to attendees, who can purchase reusable tin cups, plates and cutlery, a set to wash and retain all weekend then either take away as a memento or put in recycling. There are also stages designed to sustainable specifications by local architecture students, with designs changing yearly.



Figure 32 A Pickathon 2014 Stage designed by local Architecture students and made out of pallets.

During my interviews I found that many scene members were fans of the festival for this reason. Peter Vaughan Saver, the music lawyer, explained that:

I'm the biggest fan of Pickathon. It's as Portland an experience as you can get. The whole ethos both in terms of the ecological aspects and sustainability and the venue itself is very chill. It's really what this town and area is all about. It's one of the best curation jobs across genres: your favourite band two or three years from now is playing two times (Peter Vaughan Shaver, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Peter draws on the festival's commitment to giving a platform to new local acts, as well as the fact that they can benefit from the two-performance format: if one performance generates a buzz, a large crowd can be expected at the second. The system also favours new bands by avoiding clashes with larger bands. Local radio host and music journalist Jeremy Peterson described his perception of the impact press coverage has had on the event:

A lot of these festivals are getting more and more attention, so that allows bands who are up and coming from Portland to get exposure. The next day after Pickathon was finished photos appeared in the *New York Times*, which is just mind blowing. *Spin* was there to take photos of better known acts, but they also happened to catch Ural Thomas & The Pain or any number of local acts. It only helps (Jeremy Peterson, Personal Interview, August 2014).

Tourists to these festivals come from a variety of places. They are often connected to the music on offer by genre association or through their musical networks. Gibson and Connell argue that 'Festivals are often part of wider musical networks through which performers (and sometimes audiences) migrate, connected to particular music niches.' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.211) The Waterfront Blues Festival has a following of specifically Blues fans that are given a social venue to meet, swap knowledge and share stories, all whilst watching famous blues bands. At the Waterfront Blues festival I was given a publication entitled *12<sup>th</sup> Annual Blues Festival Guide 2014*, which lists every festival in the country. The publication did not include anything about the Waterfront Blues festival, but this is indicative of the large size of the blues festival movement: over eighty-four featured festivals were listed, but there are even more not included in the publication. Gibson and Connell further argue that 'Many smaller festivals are aimed at specific audiences from a limited, domestic tourist market or at enhancing the cultural awareness and experiences of local populations, and

less explicitly concerned with generating tourist income or catering for tourists' tastes and needs' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.211). Whilst the Waterfront Blues Festival and Pickathon have garnered national attention, they have also grown out of their respective musical communities and fandoms and offered Portlanders new musical experiences. With Waterfront Blues' altruistic element and Pickathon's sustainability it is clear that economic growth and profit are not essential to their development, but rather provide a way to sustain their existence.

These two festivals have developed from being musical community celebrations to tourist attractions with the help of the media. They are celebrated by Travel Portland in their guides to the city and acknowledged by City Hall for their contributions to the local economy. Despite the growth in their success, these festivals have yet to sacrifice their values or become homogenized, as their unique approaches are part of the attraction. Perhaps this ensures the longevity of events at a time when a saturated festivals market is inevitably resulting in established smaller festivals falling into debt or becoming bankrupt.

### **How the Neighbour Did It**

Whilst the festival scene is strong in Portland, the city has not expanded its music tourism attractions beyond live performance. The Oregon Historical Society has hosted a retrospective exhibition entitled *Oregon Rocks*, which tells the story of the music scene. Local sound engineer and musician Mike Lastra discussed the exhibition in our interview:

The Oregon historical society came out of the blue and finally recognised music. We need to recognise the history of music in Portland and Oregon. [The exhibition] was mainly Oregon. I had a lot of material to show them [for the archive]. The mayor was there and now things have shifted. In Portland we're proud of our music (Mike Lastra, Personal Interview, April 2013).

Mike clearly saw the exhibition as a turning point in the city's recognition of the importance of music to its heritage. Having contributed to the exhibition with his own collected resources and recordings, this was an opportunity for Mike's Portland to be shown and be given a voice to share the narrative of the city. The exhibition was deemed a success by those involved, but it was not permanent. Portland has no permanent musical exhibitions in any of its museums. This is surprising, given the amount of archiving taking place within the scene by people such as Mike, cataloguing all the work they have recorded for various Portland groups, and ensuring they conserve all manner of concert ephemera, from posters to ticket stubs. The potential is there, but there has been no motion to make a permanent musical heritage exhibit, city archive or museum. As Gibson and Connell have argued, museums 'may perform a vital role in the commemoration of musical heritage' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.122). This also places a social importance on museums in preserving the past for future generations. Portland should be preserving the musical history around it, and museums can lend archive-based skills such as the protection of cultural artefacts, whilst still allowing the public access to their own social history.

Portland's music scene is often seen as a younger sibling to the scene in Seattle, Portland's northern neighbour. The Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP), is Seattle's celebration of its musical heritage,<sup>5</sup> and has permanent collections of a

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<sup>5</sup> Known at the Experience Music Project (EMP) during fieldwork.

variety of instruments curators have deemed not only of local interest, but of musical historical significance. I visited Seattle to see how the largest city in the Pacific Northwest defines its regional music narrative.

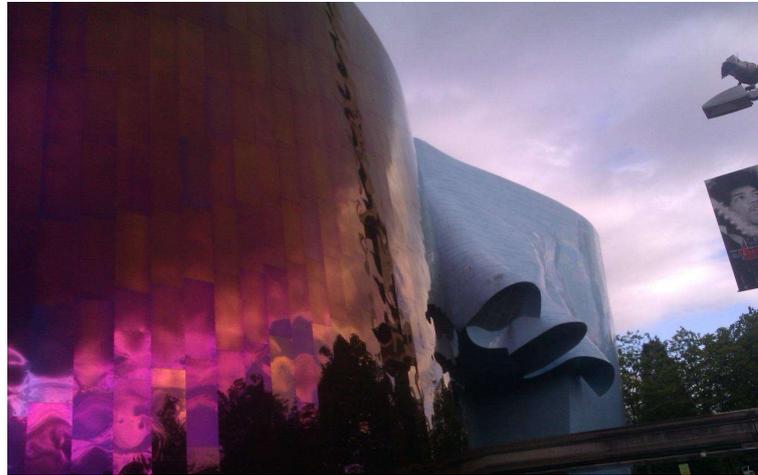


Figure 33 The exterior of the MoPOP, designed by Frank Gehry.

The MoPOP upholds a narrative of Seattle's music that is dominated by the most famous groups from the city, including Nirvana and Jimi Hendrix. These groups are almost deified, with their instruments encased on display to invite pilgrimage. The stories told through the exhibitions are popular narratives of the explosion of grunge and the story behind the city's Sub Pop label; the most contemporary artist given space is local rapper Macklemore and his production partner, Ryan Lewis. As Gibson and Connell describe the museum: 'In Seattle, Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen transformed his passion for Jimi Hendrix into a \$240 million museum. [...] A museum on this scale represents considerable corporate-driven investment in a city well known for its music' (Gibson & Connell, 2005, p.123). Whilst corporate investment is often criticised for placing profit before social progress, Gibson and Connell suggest that this particular investment shows a respect for cultural heritage. MoPOP could therefore be

seen as an act of altruism by Paul Allen, giving the city an archive for its cultural heritage, despite the high entrance fee.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 34 Dave Grohl's Drum Kit from his time in Nirvana.

An expected, though curious, subtext to the music exhibitions in MoPOP is the positioning of Seattle as the music capital of the Pacific Northwest. On display are maps showing it as the centre of the region, with Portland shown as an outpost of the Northwest sound on the frontier, and the entire Portland scene reduced to a list of six bands, as seen in the figure below. This is problematic, as the Portland scene has other historically significant groups, such as The Kingsmen and Nu Shooz, who are left out of the exhibition. It is also problematic to place Portland in the wider Pacific Northwest context: Portland and Seattle have a strong cultural dialogue, where musicians can easily play in both cities, and where social networks enable them to trade gigs.

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<sup>6</sup> When I visited EMP the entry fee was \$25; as of the time of writing that price has not changed.

Portland bands offer support slots to Seattle bands and vice versa; this helps each band promote the other to new audiences and forges a touring corridor around the interstate connecting the cities. Yet despite this connection the cities exist in unique social and political contexts. As the US system of government allows states to determine their own laws and regulations, it is difficult to place a city in Oregon in the same cultural dialogue as that of a city in Washington: Seattle has a larger population than Portland,<sup>7</sup> but Portland is the largest city in Oregon, and tends to shape the state's political and cultural status. It is, however, undeniable that both Portland and Seattle share distinct similarities in lifestyle and musical approaches; nonetheless, MOPOP's approach to Portland is reductive.



Figure 35 The only reference to Portland at the MoPOP.

The narrative construction of museums like MoPOP draws heavily on the demands of their surrounding geography. By demonstrating its regional capital

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<sup>7</sup> According to the recent US Census Bureau population estimates (2015), Portland had a population of approximately 632,309, compared to Seattle's 684,451, although the 2010 census showed Seattle with a smaller total land area (83.94 square miles, compared to Portland's 133.43).

status, Seattle can claim cultural influence and impact. This can serve to reinforce a tourism strategy for the city to become an essential cultural hub for the Pacific Northwest. A tool for reinforcing such a narrative is the map, which can manipulate geography and be selective in demonstrating the cultural value a city has.

Sara Cohen and Les Roberts have explored the cartographical representations of music scenes, examining in particular the use of maps in the British Music Experience exhibition hosted by the O2 Arena in London. They take issue with the 'Where is it at?' map and its approaches to a national cultural narrative:

The map illustrates cursory, almost arbitrary engagement with local music geographies and a performative emphasis on the national 'geo-body'. [...] It lacks more clearly defined 'local' geographical detail that would enable engagement with the specificities of place and locality at a smaller (more locally specific) geographical scale (Cohen & Roberts, 2014, p.42).

As with the MoPOP, Cohen and Roberts suggest that any notion of locality in the British Music Experience has been superseded by an attempt to create a holistic vision of a defined national cultural geography. Part of the problem could be the exhibition's placing within the UK capital, a city that often creates a narrative based on its cultural dominance due its capital status. Whilst it is understandable that London could have such a narrative, Seattle has drawn on its relative size to assume a status it does not have. Many in the Portland scene are sceptical of Seattle's self-created dominance and 'capital of the Pacific North West' status. As music lawyer Peter Vaughan Shaver explained:

The definitive sound of that time [late 1980s/early 1990s] was kind of a proto grunge. Even Nirvana was influenced by [Portland] bands like Poison Idea. Whilst Seattle is coy about this and won't admit it, they were listening to what was going on. There was a lot of travel back and forth and regionally bands knew each other. What we know as

grunge, a lot of it is a Portland sound too (Peter Vaughan- Shaver, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Grunge is seen by Portlanders as having a local narrative; this part of the Grunge story, however, is often left out of the Seattle narrative. The MoPOP does mention grunge-era Portland bands such as Hazel but does not recognise the I5 musical corridor or the musical exchanges clearly happening between Portland and Seattle.

The MoPOP is a crucial element of music tourism in Seattle, but there are other elements to Seattle's success as a music tourism destination. Seattle-Tacoma airport, for example, has a Sub Pop store selling merchandise to ingoing and outgoing passengers, who can then board a plane with a Nirvana T-Shirt, further exporting the Seattle brand. The city also has a vast infrastructure of large-scale and sports venues which can be used for concerts, allowing for simultaneous, multiple large-scale performances. Whilst it is unlikely that Portland will ever grow to the size of Seattle, Portland could follow suit by investing in the protection and promotion of its cultural and musical history. If Portland is to be successful in this regard it must learn lessons from Seattle and assert its local identity, whilst being careful not to claim musical providence over other cities. Portland has a unique identity that is currently being explored through its artistic output, but it must be preserved before it becomes an ephemeral memory.

### ***Portlandia* & Keeping Portland Weird**

The comedy sketch show *Portlandia* first aired in 2011. It was created by Portland resident Carrie Brownstein (known as the guitarist in Sleater-Kinney),

Fred Armisen (from *Saturday Night Live*) and Jonathan Krisel, who has written several shows for the Cartoon Network's Adult Swim slot. The show re-imagines Portland as a hipster paradise through a collection of recurring characters, such as the lesbian feminist bookstore owners Candace and Toni, food conscious Peter and Nance, and the group Cat Nap. Although these are fictional characters, the audience understand they are in Portland, not Portlandia, and this is where the complexities of the show's relationship with the city begin. Whilst *Portlandia* has drawn attention to, and contributed to, the economy of Portland, Oregon, it is often criticised for essentialising what Portland is and for facilitating a specific branding of the city to the Pacific northwest and around the world.

The use of popular music to create an essentialised vision of place has been explored in a variety of contexts. In her examination of the film *Heima*, Þorbjörg Daphne Hall presents a convincing argument that through the film, Icelandic band Sigur Rós have essentialised Iceland as a place where all culture is connected to nature:

It can be argued that the nation, which is presented in *Heima*, is created through the strong cultural power and ideology of Sigur Rós. In so doing they have moved out of their sub-cultural group into the mainstream and managed to influence society at large.' (Hall, forthcoming).

Hall then explains how, despite drawing attention to nature for conservation awareness, the band is still presenting a view of the country that matches government and tourism marketing:

The idea that the wilderness is the core of Icelandic national identity, as presented in the film, has been used to argue for environmental conservation. [...] The film plays on these expectations, only showing a narrow view of the country which is a proven marketing strategy for Iceland. It seems to be more profitable to showcase all the strange and eccentric habits rather than admitting that Iceland is part of the modern world (Hall, forthcoming).

While Sigur Rós have been promoting environmental causes, Hall suggests that the naturalist elements of the film only play to preconceptions of Iceland's 'otherness', ignoring other elements of Iceland's musical and cultural heritage. Hall also suggests the preservation being encouraged through images in the film is for the benefit of tourism and serves this industry above the needs of the native Icelanders. Hall's assertions show that the cultural products that have proven attractive to tourists are in fact impacting on the native population, and that 'the result is a nation building which is one-sided and limited to only a select few who accept this image as their own identity' (Hall, forthcoming).

It is this notion of essentialising cultural identity of place that many Portlanders sense with regard to *Portlandia*, which has come to define an outsider's opinion of what Portland and its culture are. But whilst essentialising the place, it has also shone a spotlight on the city, and drawn investment at a time of economic uncertainty. Whether or not *Portlandia* has a negative cultural impact on the city, it could be argued that the programme affirms music's place as a financial resource for Portland, and thus inspired subsequent tourism strategies to celebrate music's importance to the city.

The opening sequence of the first episode of *Portlandia* is a musical number entitled 'The Dream of the Nineties Is Alive in Portland', where character Jason tells his friend about his recent trip to the city. We can surmise from the lyrics that Portland is represented in this song as being associated with a variety of fashion statements and political mind-sets: 'tattoo ink never runs dry, [...] hot girls wear glasses, [...] [people] sleep til 11, [...] flannel shirts look fly, [...] you can go to like a record store and sell your CDs, [...] you can put a bird on something

and call it art', and that it's a place where 'it's like Gore won and the Bush Administration never happened' (*Portlandia*, 2011). All of these attributes are seen as common stereotypes of Portland shared by those from outside the city.

In an interview with *Salon* magazine, Carrie Brownstein explained that 'there is a permeating earnestness of the show in terms of characters, and a benevolence instead of mean-spiritedness' (Brownstein cited in Daley, 2014), and that the show's creators had no intention of offending Portland, but rather of paying homage to the city. Perhaps the show's creators felt this song was a tribute to what they love about the city; but whether intentional or not, these representations have become an international representation of the city, as the show is not only broadcast on IFC in the US but is available on international online platforms such as Netflix.

The use of music to articulate Portland stereotypes, or quirks, is a frequent device used by Brownstein, Armisen and Kriel. The first episode of the third season presents the audience with an ultimate criticism of modern apathy in the form of the song 'Change the World One Party at a Time'. The song begins with millennials moving back to their parents' homes after college due to unemployment. They express discontent and are greeted by a robot version of Bob Dylan who aims to articulate this in song. 'Bot Dylan', as he is called, starts with political lyrics such as 'our future has been traded on the NASDAQ', but this descends into an innocuous EDM pop song with the lead character then singing the line, 'change the world one party at a time / roll up in the club cos we're VIP' (*Portlandia*, 2013).

The lead characters then attempt to make a political song via a punk singer-songwriter at a piano, a ukulele player and a sixties folk trio, but are continually interrupted by EDM lyrics about being in a club and drinking. The song culminates with the millennials finding a dance tent, which turns out to be a camouflaged police van. The skit is a controversial portrayal of a city known to be highly politically active. For example, in 2011 Margaret Haberman reported in *The Oregonian* that 'The Occupy Wall Street movement hit Oregon's biggest city on Thursday with a cast of thousands who spent hours gathering, listening, chanting, marching and finally mostly leaving downtown unscathed' (Haberman, 2011). It is of course impossible to determine if the protestors were millennials, but the Occupy movement was an expression of the discontent expressed by that particular generation. This calls into question the accuracy of Brownstein, Armisen and Kresel's portrayal of Portland millennials, and may insinuate a larger context within which *Portlandia* operates. Portland merely serves as a context for discussion and debates about a certain type of person, namely the 'hipster', found in many places across the USA.

In January 2014 I facilitated a panel session with several members of the Portland scene to discuss the issues they face. We discussed the representation of the scene to the rest of the world, and almost inevitably the subject of *Portlandia* was broached. Local global bass DJ Stephen Strausbaugh, known as The Incredible Kid, offered his thoughts: '*Portlandia* is their [journalists] first question always...it's absolutely a marketing vehicle for this town' (Stephen Strausbaugh, Recorded Panel Session, January 2014). Regarding the impact of the show Stephen went on to say that 'it is absolutely reaching people [...] that's

their idea of Portland. In my experience people that visit here, their experiences confirm the show but they're going to heavily gentrified Mississippi' (Stephen Strausbaugh, Recorded Panel Session, January 2014). Stephen is suggesting that the show may in fact be supportive of a new vision for Portland, one aided by gentrification. As with *Heima, Portlandia* may be concurrent with the city authorities' visions for the future of the city as it is harnessed to encourage industry to move to the city and helps create the conditions which foster gentrification.

Another speaker at the panel session, Monica Metzler, better known as Moniker, described her view of this process of urban development, saying that

the gentrification process usually happens through the artist class where the artists will propagate and take over an area and gentrify it. [...] Portland's just another example of that. It is an artist's city and it also promotes this gentrification. [...] It's an interesting battle (Monica Metzler, Recorded Panel Session, January 2014).

This is reminiscent of Richard Florida's discussion of what he calls the 'creative class'. With musicians falling into this class, they could possibly be part of a post-industrial economy. Florida continues to suggest that this class inhabits 'creative centers' and Portland is quickly becoming one (Florida, 2003, p.8). He suggests that these 'creative centers tend to be the economic winners of our age. Not only do they have high concentrations of creative-class people, they have high concentrations of creative economic outcomes, in the form of innovations and high-tech industry growth' (Florida, 2003, p.8).

It is this suggestion by Florida, of the economic success of creative centres, which perhaps drives policy-makers in Portland to seek to achieve the city's development in such a manner. Florida also suggests that the creative class seeks certain requirements from these creative centres: 'what they look for in

communities are abundant high-quality experiences, openness to diversity of all kinds, and, above all else, the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people' (Florida, 2003, p.9). This concept of validating one's creative identity may be interpreted as having an active communal creative output for their work, for example performance spaces or galleries. It also perhaps expresses a desire to live with other creatives and have creativity as the binding identifier in their communities. Whilst *Portlandia* may be essentialising a vision of Portland, the show focuses on how characters express their identities, and through its many stereotypes shows a vision of Portland that is appealing to the wider creative class. With the city already home to a variety of innovative and creative mega-brands such as Nike, Adidas, and Intel, perhaps the economic impact of the show could grow an already evolving city. In any event, it shows that Portland has moved out of its historic origins in the timber trade, and now recognises the economic potential of the creative industries residing within it.

Because *Portlandia* creator Carrie Brownstein was already known as a member of the Riot Grrl group Sleater-Kinney, it is understandable that *Portlandia* shows many facets of music making in Portland. For example, there is an episode about a multi-venue festival called Blunderbuss, which is an apparent homage to the city's MusicfestNW festival which, until 2014, took a multi-venue format. The episode even includes guest appearances by members of Portland group The Decemberists, James Mercer of 'transplant' group The Shins, and Brownstein's Sleater-Kinney bandmate Corin Tucker. The inclusion of musicians who have international appeal can serve several purposes, perhaps authenticating the 'experience' of Portland.

Decemberist Jenny Conlee appeared as performer Sparkle Pony in the 'Blunderbuss' episode and described the show to me: '*Portlandia* is funny and it's a comedy show, and it does reflect Portland and it also doesn't. There's *Portlandias* everywhere, it's everywhere, it's just like a state of being really' (Jenny Conlee, Personal Interview, July 2014). It is interesting that Jenny suggests the climate presented in the show isn't something necessarily unique to Portland, and that the show is more a specific comment on 'hipster' culture, as manifest in Portland and other places. In this case Portland is just a convenient stage for the parody of a culture in general, as opposed to specifically Portlanders. During our interview Jenny also recognised the goal of making Portland a creative centre, explaining that:

Portland would benefit by attracting a more diverse population for art and music if you're going to become a creative hotspot. It is very young and white still. But it is hard to complain when people, creativity, and money are coming in your town, It's much better than the opposite. (Jenny Conlee, Personal Interview, July 2014).

Jenny recognises the economic goals of the city authorities and that *Portlandia* is part of the equation, although she points to a need for the city to take a more diverse approach to encouraging creativity.

The problem with *Portlandia's* representation of the music scene lies in what some scene members feel is a certain local ignorance. At the panel session Stephen Strausbaugh remarked: 'It's a very white show. It shows you a Portland that's entirely white and doesn't acknowledge anything beyond whiteness. I think that's highly problematic' (Stephen Strausbaugh, Recorded Panel Session, January 2014). The show ignores the music making activities of several communities in the city – for example, the Andaz Bollywood and bhangra dance party, hosted by Stephen and his partner DJ Anjali. This lack of diversity also feels

contextually pertinent at a time when the music scene is questioning the city police for their crackdown on hip-hop shows, which some feel is racially motivated and part of a motion to ensure city administration-led gentrification.

The report I cited earlier, on the relationship between the police bureau and hip-hop music-makers, explains that: 'One thing that makes many of the hip-hop performers stand out in this city of transplants is that a large number of them are native-born Oregonians. [...] They have had a front row seat to the rapid changes in this city and are well versed in local history' (Griffin-Valade et al, 2015 p.4). The fact that the hip-hop community has a significant number of native Oregonians further questions *Portlandia's* positioning of the Portland narrative. There is a fundamental flaw in the programme's failure to acknowledge the importance of hip-hop in Portland until its fourth season. Even then, it is presented as a joke about Fred Armisen's lack of knowledge about anything to do with hip-hop. In the skit Fred wakes up from a nightmare in which Jay-Z asks him to recall his favourite moment in hip-hop history. Fred then asks Carrie to teach him all he needs to know about hip-hop before he goes to a Jay-Z concert. Finally, the nightmare comes true, except he is now equipped with a fact. Throughout the entire re-telling we see a white perspective of hip-hop and no acknowledgement of any diversity in Portland.

Some members of the hip-hop community have responded to the programme and what it represents to them. In 2011 hip-hop label Rakz Entertainment released a mixtape entitled *Portlandia*, which provides a kind of antidote to the *Portlandia* white-wash:

Rakz Entertainment Presents... "Portlandia The Mixtape". Starring: Infnitrakz, L.C. Jetson and Aaron O'Bryan Smith who combined efforts to bring you a Hip-Hop N R&B explosion. [...] Representin' the city of Portland. Support the NW movement ya dig!!!!!! (Rakz Entertainment, 2011).

Rakz Entertainment see the mixtape as a celebration of Portland hip-hop, and therefore a truer representation of the city. Although the description does not mention *Portlandia*, the name and mission combined provide a provocative response to the television programme. *Portlandia* is also referenced in several hip-hop tracks, for example the song 'The P' by Sandpeople: 'a little weird and more but not those dudes on *Portlandia*' (Sandpeople, 2012). This is wrapped in a wider social commentary, demonstrating that the show is not part of their vision of the city. Curiously, the track ends with an audio clip from the show where two characters discuss the origins of a chicken they've ordered. It is difficult to know if the group had consent to use the sample or not, as its use appears to mock *Portlandia* and its reception.

Portland's music scene is difficult to define sonically, due to contradictions within its musical successes; it is hard to place The Decemberists and Pink Martini, for example, in the same genre. This apparent essentialisation of Portland music is clearly at odds with the rich musical diversity the city is producing. Though not connected by sound, this diversity is united within the music scene through a vast network of social dynamics. Another problem in *Portlandia* is the portrayal of musicians' personalities. As Christopher Corbell, director of Classical Revolution PDX, told me:

[There was] one [skit] where they had some sort of cat band or something playing at the Bagdad I think. They completely fail to capture how PDX musicians interact because their (caricature) characters are more like frenetic east-coast or bigger-city actors doing a self-obsessed bit than they are like laid back Portland musicians hanging out with friends in a scene doing weird shit because it's fun. There was this undercurrent of alienated desperation and narcissism to their characters which doesn't really fit most of

the laid-back people I know in the local scene, in all genres of music. (Christopher Corbell, Facebook Communication, November 2014)

Christopher clearly feels that the show invites a notion of egotism in its representation of the Portland scene. He mentioned the skit about the group Cat Nap, and the band's arrogance when they talk to a fan backstage; something Christopher sees as normally 'chilled out' and based around social relationships rather than a hungry desire for fame and success. A sense of community defines the social dynamism of the city, and many of my interviewees echoed Christopher's feelings about the scene, often pointing to a rejection of competitive attitudes in favour of a spirit of collaboration.

As far as music is concerned, *Portlandia* has arguably created an opportunity for music to promote tourism to the city. While it must be noted that Portland music was already increasingly drawing attention by its nationwide success in the Billboard charts and Grammy awards, it is only more recently that music has been recognised as a tourism tool. A recent article by Peter Weber in *The Week* online magazine was critical of the 'Welcome to Portland' (2013) television advert over its essentialising of Portland and contextualising it with *Portlandia*:

The fear with Portland isn't that in 30 years the city's civic leaders will be trying to reach people who've never heard of Fred Armisen, but that Portland will start to believe in the caricature of itself depicted through *Portlandia*'s prism. Think that's not a risk? Here's the latest promotional video from Travel Portland, the pre-eminent city-boosting organization. (Weber, 2014)

Weber seems to suggest that the acceptance of *Portlandia* by authorities such as the tourist board has in fact encouraged a transformation of Portland into something more like the vision directed in the show. He also seems to suggest that the show is directly impacting the urban development of the city.

*Portlandia* also has a more direct role in the plans for the city's tourism development, with Travel Portland listing on its website guides to all the show's filming locations. The Travel Portland website comments that 'the sketch comedy show *Portlandia* skewers (and fabricates) some hilarious Portland personalities and experiences. But how do too-funny-to-be-true sketches stack up against the real deal? Find out for yourself by visiting the sites where some favourite *Portlandia* Season 1 scenes were filmed' (John Patrick Pullen, 2014a).

So while *Portlandia's* involvement in the tourism strategy of the city may be divisive, Travel Portland are seeking to use the controversy to their advantage, inviting people to decide for themselves how true the characters and spaces seen in the *Portlandia* version of Portland actually are. As part of this initiative, they also mention music-related spaces in *Portlandia*. For example, the website shows how Jackpot Records was involved in the show, describing the actual record store: 'An epic treasure trove of vinyl, Jackpot has new and used records to round out any collection' (John Patrick Pullen, 2014b). It also mentions some more unusual sites associated with the music scenes: 'At the Ace [Hotel], you could conceivably run into Portland musicians like James Mercer or Colin Meloy, who had cameos in this skit' (John Patrick Pullen, 2014a). One is of course unlikely to run into Portland musicians at a hotel in their city, but the Ace Hotel is known for being the hotel of choice for artists playing venues such as the Crystal Ballroom, demonstrating how other areas of the economy benefit from music making in the city. Through these examples it is clear that within *Portlandia* these music-related spaces are deemed an attraction and thus a resource to exploit for economic value.

Whilst *Portlandia* has presented a palatable yet skewed vision of what Portland represents, it is not the first outlet to sell a vision of a quirky and weird Portland. In 2003 Terry Currier, the owner of the popular Music Millennium record store, founded the small business initiative, 'Keep Portland Weird!'. In the popular *Wilamette Week* column Dr Know, where residents ask questions about a range of topics, writer Marty Smith explained the roots of the slogan:

'Austin was first' suggested Terry Currier, owner of Music Millennium.<sup>8</sup> He's the man who brought weird-keeping to Portland in 2003, when the first K.P.W. stickers rolled off the press. But lest you decide Currier is a skanky rip-off artist, be aware that the original 'Keep Austin Weird' was never intended to be a unique, city-defining statement. Rather, it was part of a campaign by the Austin Independent Business Alliance that enjoined residents to spend their money at home grown establishments. Essentially, it was a catchier way to say, 'buy local' (Smith, 2010).

The initiative has allowed the city's small businesses to be recognised as contributing to the unique vision of Portland. The branding has been used to create merchandise sold out of affiliated stores, with shot glasses, car stickers and badges bearing the slogan. Although I did interview Terry Currier for this project, the recording has been lost due to a technical error with equipment. Anecdotally I can recall Terry talking about how the initiative has allowed businesses to remain independent; reinforcing an ethos in Portland that local is better than homogenised chain stores:

Terry not only owns Music Millennium but was the mastermind behind the famous Portland slogan 'Keep Portland Weird'. He explained that it was a move to help support local independent businesses based on the same phrase originally used by Austin. We also talked about record store day and the rise of vinyl. (Murray, Day 36, PDX Music Scene Project Blog, 2013)

As an independent business owner Terry has to devise unique ways to promote his business. As a record store owner, he has been helped by initiatives such as

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<sup>8</sup> It is contested as to who originated the 'keep weird' slogan, as many cities around the country also use it.

Record Store Day, which actively encourages music fans to buy vinyl releases on that day, generally rare or limited-edition vinyl records. Stores in Portland often use this occasion as an excuse to create a mini-festival across the city.



Figure 36 Music Millennium on Record Store Day.

*Portlandia* has become one of the most fiercely debated topics locally. Its representation of the city's cultural identity is often picked apart and accused of being essentialist, but at the same time it is acknowledged for bringing economic interest to the city. As Portland's music scene is promoted through outlets such as *Portlandia* it is recognised as not only a cultural resource attracting creative individuals to the city, but also as a resource for encouraging and cultivating economic investment. As *Portlandia's* success continues and the show is renewed for further series, it can be expected that music will remain a subject of parody and homage, dividing the opinions of those within the scene. How the scene responds to the show, and the problems some scene members find with it,

could impact Portland's visions for future urban planning and development in the city.

### **Developing Cultural Tourism in Portland**

Portland has the raw tools to develop its cultural tourism further: festivals, venues, a strong nightlife, musical heritage that could be archived, branding, a tourist board that is aware of the music scene, and a national profile built through representations such as *Portlandia*. If the dots were connected and the city produced a wider tourist strategy, it could create more opportunities for economic growth. The only problem with the pursuance of economic growth is the measured impact upon Portlanders themselves. Portlanders would receive some benefits of increased investment in the local economy, such as more custom and employment opportunities. But although this is possible, the music scene itself may not sense a direct impact unless the city government commits to investing in music infrastructure, such as a museum or mid-sized venue, and education programmes, such as a more expansive investment in music at Portland's public schools. There is also the problem of an increased in-migration driving up local rents and forcing out the local musicians who founded the very scene that attracted new residents there in the first place. Again, this falls on the city government to act. With an increased dialogue and sensible pro-active legislation, the government and scene could work together to devise and implement a tourism strategy that benefits all.

## 9. Conclusion

As I have shown in this thesis, music is used for social, political and economic reasons by music-makers, music-facilitators, and legislators in Portland. As the scene has grown, politicians have realised the capital they can gain by supporting its continued development and legislating for an ecosystem in which music-making can be sustained. Yet despite the contribution of the arts in general, and music in particular, to the life of Portland, the creative class are being continually driven to the outskirts of the city due to untenable rent costs. Because this impacts on the music scene and its exports, it framed the discussions and debate of the 2016 mayoral elections in Portland.

On May 17th, 2016 Oregon state treasurer Ted Wheeler was elected as the new mayor of Portland. His new term of office provides a useful point to forecast the challenges ahead for the city and to make recommendations for ways in which Mayor Wheeler can bring the music scene to the heart of the city council. In an interview for television news channel KGW8, Wheeler talked about the importance of affordable housing: 'We don't want to be San Francisco, we don't want to see that middle class, or artists, or entertainers, or service industry workers forced out of our communities because they're priced out' (May 18th, 2016, KGW8). But despite the fact that Portland's artistic communities have identified affordable housing as an important issue, during Wheeler's campaign there was no tangible sign of how he would be directly interacting with the arts community in the city. In this concluding chapter I will explore music's role as a city resource and suggest how this resource can be sustained. I will outline the

possibilities of policy making in the city, drawing upon other examples of legislation from around the world. Finally, I will look to Portland's future, and propose possible directions for further research.

### **Music as a Resource to Portland**

Resources are often defined in economic terms as products that are of value, that can be traded and sold at profit to benefit the owners of the resource.

Scholars have shown that music can be a resource for history (Arlt & Lichtenhahn, 2004; Cooper, 1979), act an aid to education (Schmidt, 1976; Dodds, 1983), and serve as a 'weapon against anxiety' in helping mental well-being (Morgan, 1975; Russell, 1953; DeNora, 1999). The idea of music as an economic resource has become quite prevalent in popular music studies, with discussion often centred around music's economic potential: the commodification of popular music through publishing, live performance and recordings.

In her work on the Liverpool music scene, Sara Cohen has explained that

[Rock] music is a potential economic resource. Live performance can occasionally be a means of earning extra income, but the recording industry is also one of the UK's most valuable export industries and its star performers amongst the richest men in Britain' (Cohen, 1997, p.31).

Music also forms part of the creative industries, categorised alongside Performing Arts by the UK government's Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS). The DCMS reports that the Music, Performing & Visual Arts sector contributed 6.5% of total Gross Value-Added product created by creative industries in 2014 (DCMS, 2016, P.11). Such figures are yet to be obtained for the US and specifically for Portland; but the evidence from interviews carried out for this thesis suggests that music does bring money into Portland. This money is not

only generated from record sales and studio rentals, but also from the use of local amenities within the service industry whilst music services are being used.

Members of the Portland music scene also see the music making they are involved in as a resource for the economic development of the city. As Larry Crane of Jackpot studios explained:

I think of us as a resource. Let's cut the bullshit: there are no hidden rates or hidden expenses. When someone books a bunch of time to make an album and flies someone up here then yeah that's a resource. That space is a resource for them to use and make their records, they can pick and choose who records there (Larry Crane, Personal Interview, May 2013).

A space like Jackpot studios attracts nationally- and internationally-recognised names in music to the city, who give their endorsement to its recording facilities, which leads the way for others to follow and use these services.<sup>1</sup> Whilst recording they will engage with the wider service industry, renting accommodation or hotel space, buying food and using other amenities in the Portland area. Cellist and founder of Portland Cello Project Douglas Jenkins gave a musician's perspective of music active as an economic resource:

I think I've seen [music] become more and more one [an economic resource]. I remember the Doug Fir Lounge, I moved here right when it opened. I remember the process it took to become the place to play for that size of the venue. Every weekend, Friday and Saturday the show was all local bands only. It was working – they were all selling out at the weekends. That was a pretty big eye opener of something economic happening here. February should be dead. The Doug Fir was always a venue that featured national acts, but what was really interesting was that Alicia Rose who was booking at the time thought for many years to take a month (February) that would have otherwise been really slow, and she made it really successful for the club by featuring only local bands. The community was hungry enough for music, and the local scene was interesting and had enough variety that she could move a lot of tickets and help grow the acts, in spite of it being a month where people don't normally like to go out and where there weren't money touring bands to fill the spots. It got the momentum and just kept going. Portland was such a logical place for out of town bands to stop, and Doug Fir made the money that they could pay them the normal amount of money to play there (Douglas Jenkins, Personal Interview, August 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Further research could be conducted on the role of recording studios in the Portland economy, there are currently economic studies in the process.

Like Jackpot, the Doug Fir is another example of attracting out-of-town groups to the city and injecting more money into the local economy.

Whilst music can be a social and wellbeing resource for the citizens of Portland, it is its economic potential that encourages the city authorities to engage with the music scene and ensure effective policy making around it. If music can make the city money it reflects well upon the local authorities, as within capitalist societies like America success is measured by exponential growth. It thus becomes the duty of the city council to sustain the music scene if they wish for this growth to continue.

### **Creative Policy making for a Sustainable Music Scene**

Music making in itself is a process of bio-cultural production, and to ensure its sustainability there needs to be a suitable eco-system. The musician needs to have an environment to live in, to work in, and to be inspired by. Recent developments in Portland have seen rent prices surge out of control. At the beginning of my fieldwork, participants were upbeat about the liveability of the city. And And And drummer Bim Ditson offered his thoughts on the rent situation at the time: 'It's been consistently an easy place for an artist to make enough money to pay bills and rent and to still have like 60 hours a week to go and dump into his art' (Bim Ditson, Personal Interview, April 2013). By the end of the fieldwork a different story quickly emerged. Former PDX Pop Now! board member Benna Gottfried explained that:

There's this whole affordable housing issue in Portland and the price of rental homes and price of purchasing homes in Portland is going up rapidly and it's not making it an affordable place for artists to live. We're building a lot of condos, people are selling the house they've been renting out because they can make so much more money. Portland

still is the most affordable city on the west coast to live. We're losing our creative community to Boise, it's kind of what's happened to San Francisco, there's a lot of concern in the creative community about that (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

This was further magnified by the constant moving of participants from rental to rental when I tried to get back in touch on subsequent research visits. Many of the participants in this study received eviction notices as landlords sought to make a quick sale on their properties whilst the value was high. This drove some participants into a wide area of the southeast corner of Portland, from around 12th avenue out past 100th avenue. Even as early as May 2013, just before I undertook my first fieldwork visit, Salon online magazine posed the question, 'Is Pittsburgh the new Portland?' (Russell, 2013), declaring the city as fashionably 'over'. Jim Russell answered:

As the economy recovers, I argue that Pittsburgh is the place to be. Portland is the darling of the pre-recession economy. Talent production Pittsburgh is where we are headed. Portland helped write the talent attraction playbook. The approach works as long as there are only a few winners, a short list of tech towns. Knowledge workers hail from somewhere, likely a Rust Belt birthplace. Why compete with Austin, San Francisco, and Los Angeles for software engineers when you can set up shop cheaply in Pittsburgh? (Russell, 2013).

With new more affordable centres of creativity popping up in competition with Portland, the city has had to rethink its offer. Unfortunately, instead of fostering and nurturing a strong creative community, property development became the priority under the Hales mayoralty. Jeff Todd Titon has explained how cultural policymaking has become important in protecting the future of music, as opposed to preserving it as a historical entity:

In the last half of the twentieth century, as cultural policymaking became a reality, a fundamental shift is beginning to occur, from heritage preservation to cultural revitalization, and with it the possibility of helping musical cultures to strengthen their traditional practices' (Todd Titon, 2009a, p.7).

While it is important to preserve musical traditions of certain groups of people, there must be an element of revitalising and of protecting a community's current creative output. In the Portland case, this is clearest in relation to the city's hip-hop community. There is a need to preserve the accounts of Portland life being made by rappers, one of the only home-grown musical communities with members who have seen great social changes in the city. The Oregon Historical Society, amongst others, must take notice of this and act to ensure they begin to archive recordings and ephemera for future generations.<sup>2</sup> But whilst it is important to archive history as it develops there is also a need to conserve and ensure the sustainability of what already exists.

The community itself has a number of ideas about sustaining and growing the music scene. Before I began this study in 2010, The PDX Friday Forum at Portland City Hall hosted Portland-based musicians Laura Veirs, Dave Allen, Rachel Blumberg and Jared Mees for a discussion on the sustainability of the independent music scene in Portland. Rachel Blumberg explained how the internet has been a resource for good: 'Because of the internet, lots of small communities in different towns have been able to connect together and become stronger. [...] We were able to get out of Portland and connect to all these

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<sup>2</sup> The purpose of preserving musical recordings and ephemera is to demonstrate, amongst other things, what production techniques and technology were available at a specific period of time, what kinds of performances were happening and where, what topics were being sung about, how music was consumed at this specific point in time. It is also important to ensure archived collections represent the diverse Portland community to protect music history from being whitewashed or ignoring any musical narratives of ethnic minorities such as African Americans and Asian Americans. There must be a sensitive approach in preserving local heritage by allowing all music communities to contribute to any such archiving and letting their voices shape a narrative. It is possible, for example, that the recordings from this project may in future, with the consent of participants, be given to a group like the Oregon Historical Society so they would have accurate personal accounts as to what occurred in scene members' lives at this period in time.

communities and bands would be able to come here' (PDX Friday Forum, 2010).

Laura Veirs contributed ideas about how to assist the younger generation:

Can we have a city van that young bands could rent to go out on tour? It would be subsidised. You know, some kind of subsidies would be so helpful because a lot of these youngsters are really out there just scraping the bottom. So many of them [musicians] don't have health care and we're putting on benefit concerts for each other to pay for someone's broken arm or worse (PDX Friday Forum, 2010).

Rachel Blumberg then went on to explain the subsidies available in other cities: 'I

have friends in Montréal who put out their records with the help of a

government grant' (PDX Friday Forum, 2010). At the time of writing, there is still

no subsidised tour van but there are increasingly more grant opportunities for

musicians, particularly through the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC).

RACC Grants Officer Helen Daltoso explained what kinds of projects are funded

by the organisation:

There are some recording projects that come in, there are festivals, and we have funded PDX Pop Now!. It's primarily original composition that we are seeing, and new and interesting collaborative endeavours. I would say that probably makes up the core. For RACC there always has to be a public component because these are public dollars. You have to expose to the community and you have to market to the community what it is you've created (Helen Daltoso, Personal Interview, April 2013).

With public investment there is an opportunity to educate and engage the wider

public about how the arts benefit the city and sustain creativity.

There are plenty of other ideas cultivated across the globe for successful music policy making. For example, in 2012 the UK government passed the Live Music Act. Music think tank UK Music saw the act as

removing the local authority licensing requirements for: amplified music between 8am and 11pm before audiences of no more than 200 people on premises authorised to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises. [...] Unamplified live music [...] in all venues. There will be no audience limit for performance of unamplified music (UK Music, 2012).

This removal of a need for licensing has enabled smaller venues to put on music

without paying the licensing fees involved. But in Portland it would be

challenging to pass such a bill, considering the historically draconian approach of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, who would have to have a complete change of culture for such a measure to be considered. However, with a new mayor there is a chance to start a new conversation about licensing legislation.

The Scandinavian countries are known for their strong emphasis on welfare, and they have also developed state support for the arts. This support was the topic of Marc Hogan's Pitchfork article, 'What's the matter with Sweden?', in which he explains how the various Scandinavian nations support music making:

Norway, as it happens, is one of the most active government sponsors of music. The Norwegian Arts Council has budgeted 126.3 million Norwegian kroner (NOK), or \$24.4 million, for music in 2010. Similarly, the Fund for Lyg Od Bilde (fund for audio and video) raised its budget for 2010 to 28.7 million NOK (\$4.9 million). Each organization has provided money for touring and recording (Hogan, 2010)

He also notes that Sweden has 'its own assortment of groups that sponsor the arts and culture. When it comes to music, the Swedish Arts Council is the body that awards money to music ensembles, orchestras, and other groups, while the Swedish Arts Grants Committee makes awards to individual artists' (Hogan, 2010). Hogan reports similar funding structures in Denmark as well. This is supported by the Scandinavian provision of universal healthcare available to all citizens, unlike in the US, where private insurance is required. Whilst all of these government funding bodies are innovative in providing creative and financial support for artists, to exist they require high citizen taxation, something that is unlikely to figure in US legislation. But Portland could be the exception to the rule. Considering the success it had in passing the Arts Tax as a public ballot

measure it is conceivable that this could increase to present new funding opportunities.

Those measures taken in other countries have ensured the sustainability of music making mainly through financial support. If Portland wishes to follow suit the government has to ask itself if it is willing to provide a music welfare model amongst its legislative considerations. It will naturally fall on the new mayor to decide if there is a priority to act in such a way. The state of affairs does look promising, with Mayor Wheeler vowing to tackle the housing crisis as a priority.

In Portland attempts are already being made to quantify the financial value of various aspects of the scene. The Music Portland Census has been devised by a group of local music industry practitioners and members of RACC to define the city's musical infrastructure. The group's mission statement outlines their aim to 'Assemble all the diverse Portland music businesses to exercise collective influence, create a sustainable & thriving community to respond to threats, create new opportunities and build a collective identity as an economic drive for the city' (Music Portland, 2016). Portland needs an ally like Music Portland to present collective challenges to local government and to work in solidarity to change legislation. In the UK, groups like the aforementioned UK Music have been able to utilise their position and collective membership to change laws, and with luck Music Portland can do the same. By collecting quantitative data, they can present to officials a stronger sense of how the music scene contributes to the economy, and through such recognition can inspire the support for infrastructural sustainability.

Whilst aiming to give a holistic overview of the music scene in Portland, the people in it and how it operates, there is considerable scope for future studies. The hip-hop community, for example, provides a perfect in-depth case study of local DIY music making, as indeed does the punk community. There is also the potential to focus on the relationships between the music scene, the city's successful sports teams, and its multinational corporations. There is also the opportunity to provide the city legislature with a significant audit of music's contribution to the city economy. While I have presented a collection of personal testimonies about the state of the Portland scene over the period of June 2013 – August 2014, there is considerable opportunity for continuing data collection in the future. What this thesis offers is a glimpse into Portland at an interesting point in the city's development, with the hope that it may stimulate discussion around some of the challenges the music scene faces.

### **What Next for Portland?**

At the end of my interviews I would ask participants that intriguing but difficult question: 'what next?' The variety of responses I got demonstrated to me the optimism or fear the participants felt about the future of the scene and their place within it:

Hopefully there is a long-lasting future. It's a safe bet that there is. Every summer it's the first show for some new band [and] the fact there is another new band that's great. I like how the scene is now, in that it's thriving locally, there is international attention. I would like to see more local recognition of it, at least recognising a lot of the accomplishments of bands in the scene. [I'd like to see] more post-punk death rock bands playing PDX Pop Now. I would like to see more bands releasing albums (Bryan Phippen, Personal Interview, June 2014).

I hope that it continues to be diverse as it has been in the past and I hope it continues to cross the different genres of music. We're getting more international music coming out

of Portland. Maybe we can get more of this cross-pollination and collaboration to have new music. We have a lot of work to do (Benna Gottfried, Personal Interview, July 2014).

I think Portland is right at the edge. We have a lot of great things going on with a lot of great artists and musicians who are making headway into the industry right now. The northwest can be the next music scene like the west coast was. It's gonna take more industry exposure. Maybe the Blazers can win a championship to bring it here. It's more artists in Portland getting their business in order. If you don't do things to make things happen, you'll miss the boat (DJ OG One, Personal Interview, July 2014).

The city does have to look forward. In the music community we need to figure out how to adapt with the city but not be trampled by it. The east side is this battlefield, even some of the DJ lounges – Lugano was a big loss, Blue Monk had problems for a long time. I think it's really gonna be ok. There's so much in this town (Jeni Wren Stottrup, Personal Interview, July 2014).

One thing is clear from all of these answers, and that is that there is a distinct hope within the music scene; that it has reached a point where great successes can be achieved. Most respondents clearly see a future to the scene but are wary of how they can sustain it. Instead of merely raising a concern and providing no answer, scene members are already actively working to find ways of achieving these goals.

Music-makers and music-facilitators are becoming more involved in the political processes of the city. Not only are they meeting and collectively organising to raise their common concerns, but some have taken a further step. In the 2016 mayoral primary race And And And drummer Bim Ditson stood for election. During his campaign Ditson fought for the rights of the creative class and during a primary debate organised by the ASPCC explained that:

The single biggest employer in Portland is our small business community. This is what drives our economy, fosters the liveability of our neighbourhoods, makes local culture possible, and embraces it as it evolves. The creative class are the Portlanders who go on and work for these small businesses. They are responsible for making Portland the unique, creative, and community-based place that it is. City hall should have their back (ASPCC, 2016).

Ditson stood on a platform for not only the music scene but, as a jewellery maker, for the wider creative industries as well. Although he did not win the primary he managed to raise important considerations within the debate, and by doing so created a public space for discussion about how the city works with its creative citizens. Other candidates also included the music community in their campaign. Community activist Jessie Sponberg stood on an anti-corruption platform, calling out the racism in city authorities; his supporters released a mixtape, *This City is on Fire*, named after Sponberg's campaign slogan, and including the track 'Sponberg for Mayor', performed by rappers Al-One, My-G, Prologic and Brown Caesar, with an accompanying music video. The song follows the anti-corruption messages of the campaign ('Get out and vote before the water gets bought up by Nestlé and Coke' (Al-One et al, 2016)). As with Bim, Sponberg was not elected, but gave voice to the concerns felt strongly by the city's hip-hop community in the mainstream political discussion. It now falls on Ted Wheeler to act on these issues in the interest of the citizens of Portland.

## **Outro**

On my last day of fieldwork, I sat down with singer Melanie Von Trapp, who at that time had recently moved to the city. It was providence that this was my last interview, as the microphone was soon turned on me. Melanie asked what I had found on my journey among the various members of the Portland music community. As we talked about a video Melanie was hoping to work on, former video producer-turned-singer Liz Vice walked by, and I had to make an introduction. While I do not know if anything came of that introduction, it felt

wonderful to be able to share the knowledge and stories I had gathered and to pass them onto a new scene member. This was just like the first day of my studies, where a chance encounter in a coffee shop opened up my study to the wider Portland music community. If this study has taught me one thing about Portland, it is that a Portland coffee shop is full of songs yet to be written, bands yet to form, and stars yet to be born.

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## Appendix 1 Communications Table

Name	Music Scene Role	Date of Contact (in ascending order)	Location	Type of Communication
Milo Walker-Hayden	Musician, DJ aka Mr Moo – Organiser in Blues Fusion Scene	22/03/13	Milo's House/Tao of Tea on SE Belmont	In Person – Informal Recorded Chat
Monica Metzler	Musician aka Moniker – Music Educator	22/03/13	Tao of Tea – SE Belmont	In Person – Informal Recorded Chat
Sam Adams	Former Portland Mayor, chair of Portland City Club	23/03/13	Blitz Sports Bar – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> & Couch	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Beth Martin	PDX Pop Now! Volunteer Coordinator	26/03/13	Aalto Lounge – SE Belmont	In Person – Informal unrecorded discussion
Lauren Joyner	PDX Pop Now! Logistics Coordinator	26/03/13	Bunk Bar – SE Water	In Person – Informal unrecorded discussion
Rochelle Hunter	PDX Pop Now! Compilation Co-ordinator/Booker	26/03/13	Bunk Bar – SE Water	In Person – Informal unrecorded discussion
Theo Craig	Booker	27/03/13	Site of X-Ray Café – W Burnside	Interviewed by Theo for 'Ain't Nothing Going on here' Podcast
Renata Tirta	PDX Pop Now! Sponsorship Coordinator	28/03/13	Doug Fir Lounge – E Burnside	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Dan Balmer	Jazz Musician/Resident at Jimmy Maks	01/04/13	Jimmy Mak's – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Courtney Taylor-Taylor	Lead Singer/Guitar, The Dandy Warhols	02/04/13	Undisclosed Location by Request	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Zia McCabe	Keyboards, The Dandy Warhols	02/04/13	Undisclosed Location by Request	In Person – Formal recorded interview

Peter Holmström	Guitar, The Dandy Warhols	02/04/13	Undisclosed Location by Request	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Helen Daltoso	RACC, Grants Coordinator	04/04/13	RACC Offices, NW Park	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Dan Balmer	Jazz Musician/Resident at Jimmy Maks	04/04/13	Jimmy Mak's – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Moses Barrett	Covers/Function Musician, The Junebugs	05/04/13	Host House, Dunthorpe	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Theo Craig	Booker	09/04/13	Theo's House, NE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Will Vlautin	Lead Singer, Richmond Fontaine/Author	10/04/13	Stepping Stone Café, NW Quimby	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Lauren Joyner	PDX Pop Now! Logistics Coordinator	11/04/13	The Pied Cow, NW Belmont	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Milo Walker-Haden	Musician, DJ aka Mr Moo – Organiser in Blues Fusion Scene	12/04/13	Milo's House, SE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Danny Delagado	Lead Vocals, The Hugs	14/04/13	Practice Space, NW Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
David Appaloosa	Guitar, The Hugs	14/04/13	Practice Space, NW Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Skyler Weaver	Drums, The Hugs	14/04/13	Practice Space, NW Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Erik Carlson	Director of So Hi Tek Records/ Lead Singer, Double Plus Good	15/04/13	Ford Food & Drink, SE Division	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Bim Ditson	Music Social Media Journalist/And And And (Band)	17/04/13	Tiny's Coffee, NE MLK	In Person – Formal

				recorded interview
Laura Gibson	Musician/Music Educator	26/04/13	Laurelhurst Park, SE Cesar Chavez Blvd.	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Cary Clarke	PDX Pop Now! Founder, Former Mayoral Advisor	28/04/13	Tiny's Coffee, NE MLK	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Mike Lastra	Filmmaker, Producer, Musician in Smegma	29/04/13	Mike's House, N Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jared Mees	Director Tender Loving Empire Record Label – Lead Singer, Jared Mees and The Grown Children	01/05/13	Stumptown Coffee, SW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Stark	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jeremy Scott	Member, Magic Fades	02/05/13	Laughing Planet Café, SE Hawthorne	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Mike Grabarek	Member, Magic Fades	02/05/13	Laughing Planet Café, SE Hawthorne	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Larry Crane	Producer, Jackpot Records – Editor Tape Op Magazine	03/05/13	Coffee Division, SE Division	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Stan Penkin	Oregon Arts PAC, Director	03/05/13	Starbucks, NW11th & Davis	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Gina Altamura	Holocene Booker, Shy Girls Manager	03/05/13	Holocene, SE Morrison	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Ritchie Young	Lead Member, Loch Lomond	06/05/13	Moloko, N Mississippi	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Armando Gonzales	Cinco De Mayo Festival Booker, Radio Host	09/05/13	Peet's Coffee, SW Broadway & Washington	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Beth Wooten	Rock n Roll Camp for Girls, Director	10/05/13	Rock n Roll Camp for Girls Office,	In Person – Formal

			Interstate Firehouse Cultural Centre, N Interstate	recorded interview
DJ Global Ruckus	Global Bass DJ	15/05/13	Global Ruckus' Office, SW Washington	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Moorea Masa	Singer, Ruby Pines	19/05/13	Tea Chai Té, SW 13 <sup>th</sup> , Sellwood	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Michael Backus	Guitarist Ruby Pines	19/05/13	Tea Chai Té, SW 13 <sup>th</sup> , Sellwood	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Anjali Hursh	DJ Anjali, Global Bass DJ	19/05/13	Aalto Lounge, SE Belmont	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Stephen Strausbaugh	The Incredible Kid, Global Bass DJ	19/05/13	Aalto Lounge, SE Belmont	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Evan Neuhausen	President, Music in the Schools	21/05/13	Backspace, NW 5 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Beth Martin	PDX Pop Now! Volunteer Coordinator	29/05/13	Hazel Room, SE Hawthorne	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Laura Veirs	Musician	31/05/13	Skype	Audio Recorded Skype Interview
Pete Krebs	Musician, Pete Krebs & His Portland Playboys, Hazel	06/06/13	Blend Coffee, N Greeley & Killingsworth	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Allison Hall	Singer, Goose & Fox	01/01/14	Al's Den, SW 12 <sup>th</sup> & Stark	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Allison Hall	Singer, Goose & Fox	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Moorea Masa	Singer, (Solo at the Time)	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Theo Craig	Booker, PDX Pop Now Artistic Director (New Title Since last meet)	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session

Arya Imig	Booker/Podcast Host	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Moses Barrett	Covers/Function Musician – The Junebugs	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Calvin Valentine	Hip-Hop Producer Beats for TxE	03/01/14	Calvin Valentine House, SE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Epp	Rapper, TxE	03/01/14	Calvin Valentine House, SE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Monica Metzler	Musician aka Moniker – Music Educator	04/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Milo Walker-Hayden	Musician, DJ aka Mr Moo – Organiser in Blues Fusion Scene	04/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Stephen Strausbaugh	The Incredible Kid, Global Bass DJ	04/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Recorded Panel Session
Jake Pegg	Fair Trade Music PDX	16/01/14	Skype	Skype
Bryan Phippen	Punk Scene Photographer, Social Studies Educator	21/06/14	Tiny's Coffee, NE MLK	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Kela Parker	Solo Musician, Music Educator	23/06/14	Jade Lounge, SE Ankeny and 26th	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Richie Greene	Composer and Arranger	24/06/14	Palio Espresso House, Ladd's Addition, SE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jeni Wren	Singer/MUSA Booking	02/07/14	Seven Virtues Café, 60 <sup>th</sup> & Glisan	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jack Falk	Clarinettist/Cantor/Ethnomusicologist	02/07/14	Peet's Coffee, SW Broadway & Washington	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Lucas Warford	Bassist, Three for Silver	03/07/14	Tiny's Coffee, NE MLK	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Victor Nash	Recording Engineer, Musician Point Juncture WA	10/07/14	Mt Tabor Park, Mt Tabor, Portland	In Person – Formal

	and Orquestra Pacifico Tropical			recorded interview
DJ OG One aka David Jackson	Portland Sport DJ – Portland Trail Blazers & Portland Thunder	12/07/14	Moda Centre, Rose Quarter, NE Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Mac Smiff	We Out Here Magazine Editor/Rapper	13/07/14	Mac’s House, St John’s, N Portland	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Benna Gottfried	PDX Pop Now! Former Board Member, Membership Director Business for Culture and the Arts	15/07/14	Business for Culture and the Arts Offices, SW 5 <sup>th</sup> and Alder	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Ben Darwish	Pianist, Songwriter and Producer, Morning Ritual/Ural Thomas	22/07/14	Peninsula Park, N Rosa Parks	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Kat Olsen	Music Supervisor, Marmoset Music	24/07/14	Marmoset Music Offices, SE 7th	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jenny Kalez	City Arts Liaison Officer	24/07/14	Office of Commissioner Fish, City Hall, SW 4th	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Peter Shaver	Music Attorney	25/07/14	Peter’s Office, NE Hancock	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jenny Conlee	Keyboards and Accordion, The Decemberists/Black Prairie	28/07/14	Nightlight Bar, SE 21 <sup>st</sup> & Clinton	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Eric Isaacson	Owner, Mississippi Records	29/07/14	Mississippi Records, N Albina	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Samantha Gladhu	Punk Musician, Piss Test and Dottie Attie	29/07/14	B.Side – E Burnside	In Person – Formal recorded interview
John Brophy	Baby Ketten Karaoke Manager	29/07/14	Mississippi Pizza, Mississippi Studios	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Liz Vice	Solo Singer	30/07/14	Albina Press, SE Hawthorne	In Person – Formal

				recorded interview
Jane Palmeira	Square Dance Caller	31/07/14	Pickathon Pendarvis Farm, Happy Valley, OR	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Douglas Jenkins	Leader Portland Cello Project	02/08/14	Pickathon Pendarvis Farm, Happy Valley, OR	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Lydia Mazer	PDX Pop Now! outreach Coordinator	05/08/14	Water Ave Coffee, SE Water	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Moses Barrett	Covers/Function Musician – The Junebugs	07/08/14	Host House, Dunthorpe	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Jeremy Peterson	Local Radio DJ/Morrissey Tribute Act	07/08/14	Rontoms, E Burnside	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Matt Singer	Willamette Week Music Editor	11/08/14	Location Not Recorded	In Person – Formal recorded interview
Melanie Von Trap	Singer, The Von Trapps	14/08/14	Albina Press, SE Hawthorne	In Person – Formal recorded interview

## Appendix 2 Participant Observations

Event	Date	Location	Level of Participation
Barefoot Blues	22/03/13	Tango Berretin, SE Foster	Took part in Dance Lesson/ General Dance
Ruby Pines/The Junes Bugs Live at Mt Tabor Theatre	25/03/13	Mt Tabor Theatre (Now Alhambra Theatre) - SE Hawthorne	Audience Member
PDX Pop Now! Board Meeting	26/03/13	Board Members House – North East Portland	Observer/Introduction about my Project
Sama Dams/Catherine Feeny at Bunk Bar	26/03/13	Bunk Bar – SE Water	Audience Member
Thirteen Tales Form Urban Bohemia – Pop Up Gig Tour	27/03/13 – 28/03/13	<p><b>Day One:</b> Site of X-Ray Café, W Burnside – Voodoo Donuts, SW 3<sup>rd</sup> – Dante’s, W Burnside – Magic Garden Strip Lounge NW 3<sup>rd</sup> – See See Motorcycles, NE Sandy</p> <p><b>Day Two:</b> Ray’s Ragtime, SW Morrison – Old Studio shop front SW 10<sup>th</sup> (Around SW 10<sup>th</sup> and Washington – Portland Institute of Contemporary Art Building) – Slabtown Bar NW 16<sup>th</sup> &amp; Marshall</p>	Audience Member
Pheasant Album Launch w/Sumer Cannibals, Fanno Creek	28/03/13	The Doug Fir Lounge – E Burnside	Audience Member
Pink Martini Sing-a-long in Pioneer Square w/ China Forbes, Storm Large, The Von Trapps and Norman Leyden	30/03/13	Pioneer Square – Downtown Portland	Part of Audience Choir - Singing
Dan Balmer Trio	01/04/13	Jimmy Mak’s – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	Audience Member

Mel Brown B3 Organ Group	04/04/13	Jimmy Mak's – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	Audience Member
Portland Farmer's Market and Saturday Market	06/04/13	PSU Campus SW and SW Waterfront	Shopper/Cultural Observation
Charts w/ Week of Wonder @ Rontoms Sunday Session	07/04/13	Rontoms, E Burnside	Audience Member
Houndstooth @ Doug Fir	07/04/13	Doug Fir Lounge, E Burnside	Audience Member
Jazz Open Jam	08/04/13	Camellia Lounge, NW 11 <sup>th</sup> and Glisan	Audience Member
Barefoot Blues	12/04/13	Tango Berretin, SE Foster	Took part in Dance Lesson/ General Dance
Nature Walk of Tryon Creek State Park	13/04/13	Tryon Creek State Park, SW Terwilliger	Walked Nature Trail, Environmental Observation
Clybourne Park Theatre Performance	13/04/13	Portland Centre Stage, NW 11 <sup>th</sup> and Davis	Audience Member
Luz Elena Mendoza w/Sam Cooper Live Gig	18/04/13	Hazel Room, SE Hawthorne	Audience Member
Bottle Cap Boy, Bitterroot, The Ruby Pines & Choir Live Gig	19/04/13	The Wonder Ballroom, NE Russell	Audience Member
Record Store Day including Laura Veirs DJ Set	20/04/13	Jackpot Records, W Burnside – Everyday Music, W Burnside – Music Millenium E Burnside	Shopper/Audience Member
Music and Books Evening w/ Leigh Newman (Author), Alexis Smith (Author) & Laura Gibson (Musician)	22/04/13	Holocene, SE Morrison	Audience Member
Baby Ketten Karaoke	23/04/13	Mississippi Pizza, N Mississippi	Sang Morrissey 'First of the Gang'
PDX Pop Now! School Outreach Programme	25/04/13	Lynch View Elementary, SE 169th	Volunteer
Barefoot Blues	26/04/13	Tango Berretin, SE Foster	General Dance/Guest Performer on Clarinet
Tuesday Blues	30/04/13	Lenora's Ballroom, SE Alder	General Dance

People's Republic of Portland by Lauren Weedman, Comedy One Person Show	04/05/13	Portland Centre Stage, NW 11 <sup>th</sup> and Davis	Audience Member
Cinco de Mayo Festival	05/05/13	Tom McCall Waterfront Park, SW Naito Pway	Audience Member
Bingo and Bourbon w/ Brian J Perez	06/05/13	Mississippi Pizza, N Mississippi	Bingo Player
Richmond Fontaine Al's Den Residency	08/05/13	Al's Den, SW 12 <sup>th</sup> & Stark	Audience Member
Make It Pop! PDX Pop Now Fundraiser	09/05/13	The Cleaners, Ace Hotel, SW 10 <sup>th</sup> & Stark	Volunteer
Krebsic Orkestra w/ DJ Global Ruckus	10/05/13	Mississippi Pizza, N Mississippi	Audience Member
Magic Fades @ RonToms Sunday Session	12/05/13	Rontoms, E Burnside	Audience Member
Friends Song Circle w/ Moses Barrett	13/05/13	Tillamook Forest	Performed on Guitar and Clarinet
Mel Brown Quartet	15/05/13	Jimmy Mak's – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	Audience Member
Tarran the Tailor w/ Luz Elena Mendoza House Show	17/05/13	The Purple Church House, Undisclosed Location, N Portland	Audience Member
Radiation City in-store Gig	18/05/13	Music Millennium, E Burnside	Audience Member
Radiation City Pop Up Gig	18/05/13	Dig a Pony, SE Grand	Audience Member
Sasqutch Festival – Rock Festival	23/05/13 – 28/05/13	The Gorge, George, WA	Audience Member
Foals Secret Gig	29/05/13	Mississippi Studios, N Mississippi	Audience Member
Somewhere in Time – Musical Theatre production	01/06/13	Portland Centre Stage, NW 11 <sup>th</sup> and Davis	Audience Member
Andaz: Bollywood and Bhangra Dance Party by DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid	01/06/13	Rotture, SE 3rd	Audience Member
Starlight Parade	01/06/13	Downtown, Portland	Audience Member
Morrissey and The Smith DJ Tribute Night – DJ Anjali & The Credible Kid	03/06/13	Dig a Pony, SE Grand	Audience Member

DJ Lesson w/ DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid	04/06/13	Anjali and Stephen's House, SE Portland	Student of DJing
Tuesday Blues	04/06/13	Lenora's Ballroom, SE Alder	General Dance
Holocene Birthday Party w/ Minden, Magic Mouth and Shy Girls	05/06/13	Holocene, SE Morrison	Audience Member
Mel Brown B3 Organ Group	06/06/13	Jimmy Mak's – NW 10 <sup>th</sup> and Everett	Audience Member
PDX Pop Now Festival 2013	19/07/13 - 21/07/13	Online Webcast	Audience Member
Pink Martini New Year's Eve Concert	31/12/13	Crystal Ballroom, W Burnside	Audience Member
DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid	31/12/13	Bossanova Ballroom	Volunteer Decorator/Audience Member
Anna Tivel Al's Den Residency w/Goose & Fox, Moorea Masa	01/01/14	Al's Den, SW 12 <sup>th</sup> & Stark	Audience Member
PDX Conversations Session 1 w/Allison Hall, Moorea Masa, Arya Imig, Moses Barrett, Theo Craig	02/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Panel Session Moderator
Soul Stew – Friday Night Funk w/ DJ Aquaman	03/01/14	The Goodfoot, SE Stark	Audience Member
PDX Conversation Session 2 w/The Incredible Kid, Milo Walker Hayden, Monica Metzler	04/01/14	The Waypost, N Williams	Panel Session Moderator
Visit to Mt Hood and Timberline Lodge	05/01/14	Mt Hood, OR	Walking around Mt Hood, Environmental Observation
Tuesday Blue	07/01/14	Bossanova Ballroom, E Burnside	General Dance
Portland Trail Blazers NBA Game vs Orlando Magic	08/01/14	Moda Centre, Rose Quarter, NE Portland	Audience Member
The Junebugs Live	20/06/14	Cadigan's Corner Bar, SE 72nd	Audience Member
Laura Veirs Live	21/06/14	The Doug Fir Lounge, E Burnside	Audience Member
Know Your City Walking Tour of Jewish and Italian	22/06/14	Various Locations in SW Portland	Volunteer Admin and Cultural Observation

Immigrant History in SW Portland w/ Polina Olsen			
Global Folk Club Solstice Celebration w/Kela Parker, Hora Tzigane Klezmer, Stormalong	23/06/14	Jade Lounge, SE Ankeny and 26th	Audience Member
Orquestra Pacifico Tropical w/1939 Ensemble	25/06/14	The Doug Fir Lounge, E Burnside	Audience Member
The Von Trapps	26/06/14	Mississippi Studios, N Portland	Audience Member
DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid supporting Quantic	27/06/14	Nectar Lounge, Seattle, WA	Roadie/Tour Manager
EMP Museum Seattle and Seattle Pride	28/06/14	Seattle, WA	Cultural Observer
Portland Waterfront Blues Festival	03/07/14 – 06/07/14	Tom McCall Waterfront Park, SW Naito Pway	Audience Member
Andaz: Bollywood and Bhangra Dance Party w/ DJ Anjali & The Incredible Kid	05/07/14	Lola's Room, Crystal Ballroom, W Burnside	Audience Member
Music on Main Street, Billie and The Holidays	09/07/14	Outside Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, SW Broadway	Audience Member
Sundown Concert Series: Portland Cello Project Dance Party	10/07/14	Ecotrust Building, NW 9th	Audience Member
Portland Thunder Arena American Football Game vs LA Kiss	12/07/14	Moda Centre, Rose Quarter, NE Portland	Audience Member
The Hold Steady - Kink FM Session	17/07/14	Bing Lounge, SW 6 <sup>th</sup> and Madison	Audience Member
Take it To The Bridge with Theo Craig on X-Ray FM	17/07/14	X-Ray Radio, Undisclosed Location, SE Portland	Interviewed Guest
Portland Timbers Major League Soccer vs Colorado Rapids	18/07/14	Providence Park, SW Portland	Audience Member
PDX Pop Now Festival	18/07/14 – 19/07/14	Audio Cinema, SE Water	Audience Member

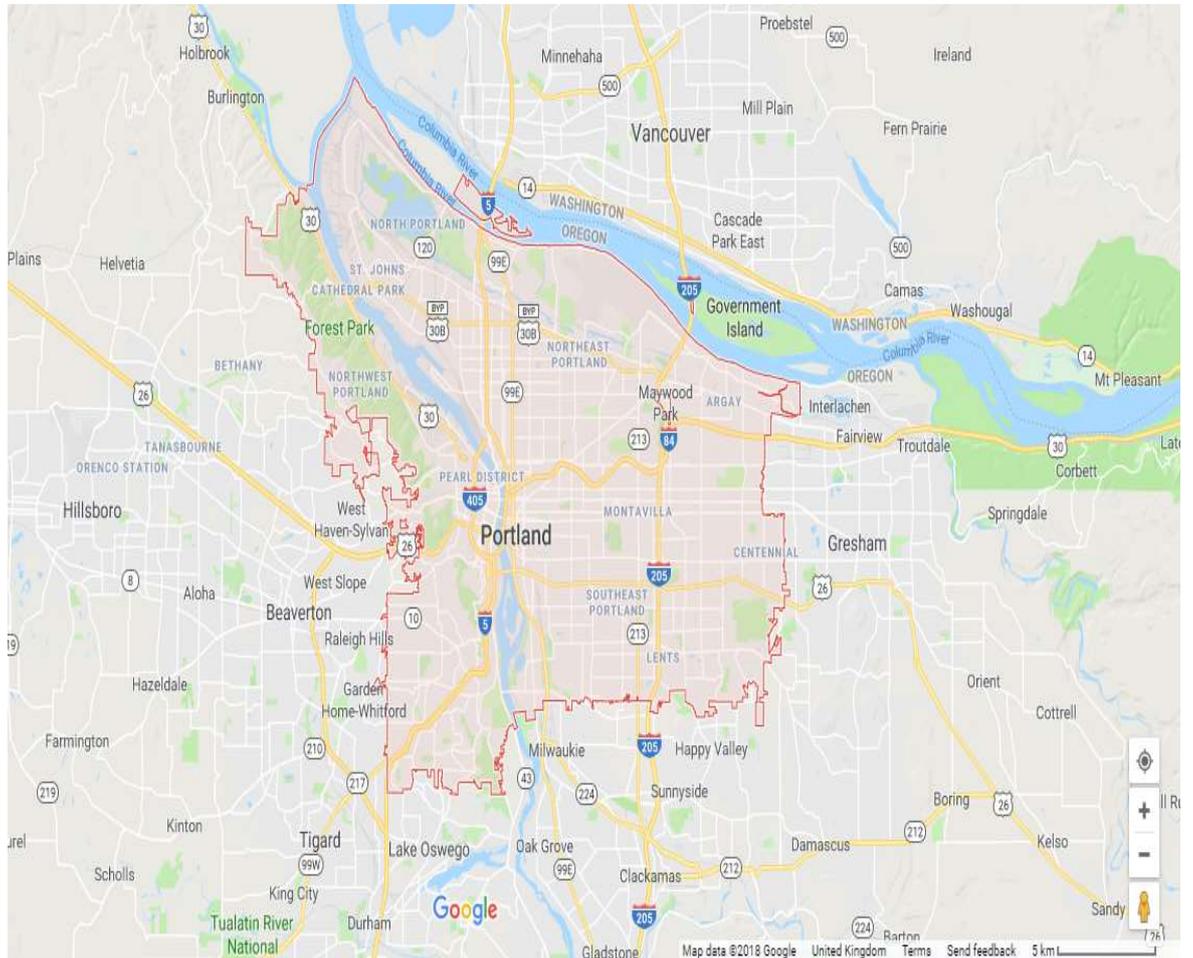
Sing a Song of Portland Walking Tour	20/07/14	W Burnside	Tour Guide
ARCO PDX – Classical Revolution PDX Club Concert	26/07/14	Mississippi Studios, N Mississippi	Audience Member
Faces on the Radio Podcast w/ Arya Imig, Hollister Dixon and Youssef Hatlani	27/07/14	Youssef's Flat, Downtown Portland	Interviewed Guest
Pickathon Festival	31/07/14 – 02/08/14	Pendarvis Farm, Happy Valley, OR	Volunteer – Pedestrian Gate and Traffic Control
MLS All Star Game Concert w/ Flaming Lips & Radiation City	03/07/14	Tom McCall Waterfront Park, SW Naito Pway	Audience Member
MLS All Star Home Grown Game	04/07/14	Providence Park, SW Portland	Audience Member
Portland Cello Project Summer Concert	05/07/14	Lan Su Chinese Gardens, NW Portland	Audience Member
Stelth Ulvang, Spirits of the Red City and Nick Jain aft. Arrangements by Richie Greene	13/07/14	The Old Church, SW 11th	Audience Member
Tillamook Cheese Factory & Manzanita Beach	13/07/14	Tillamook, OR – Manzanita, OR	Environmental and Cultural Observation

### Appendix 3 Portland Venues

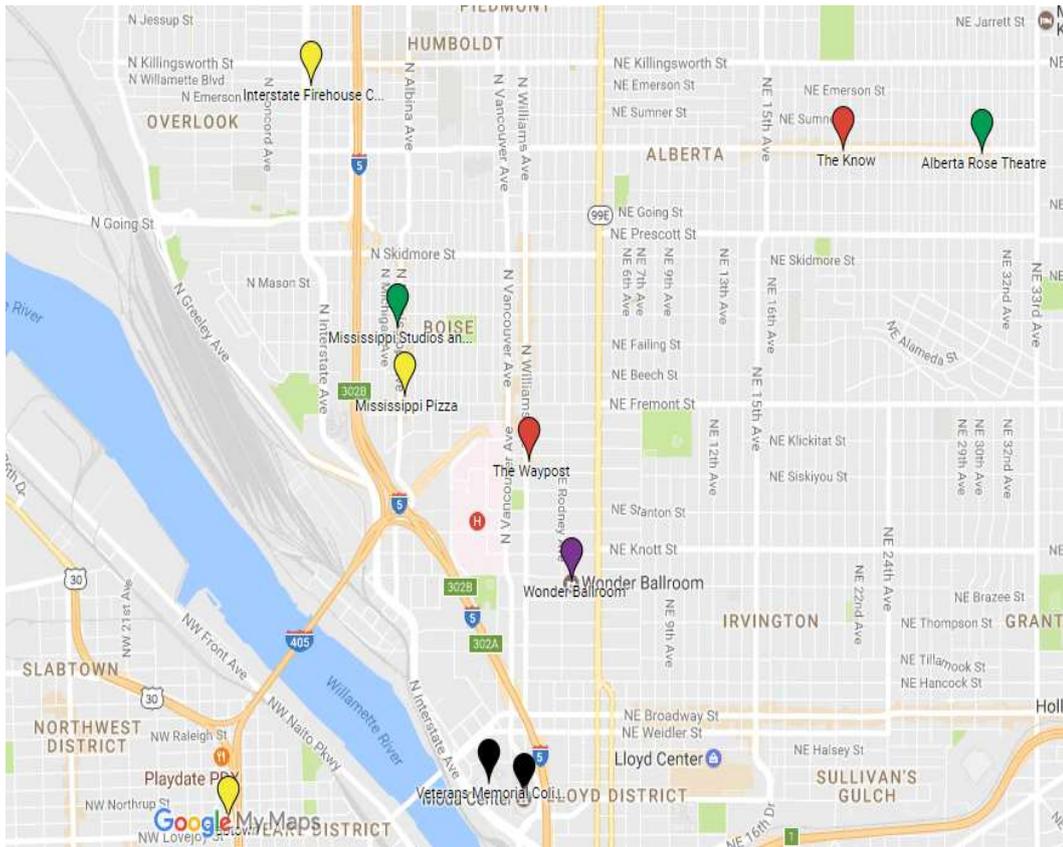
Venue	Capacity	Most Associated Genre
Moda Center	19,980	Pop/Rock
Memorial Coliseum	12,888	Pop/Rock
Pioneer Courthouse Square	12,000 (Approx)	Indie
Keller Auditorium	2,992	Classical
Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall	2,776	Classical/Indie
Crystal Ballroom	1,500	Indie
Roseland Theater	1,400	Indie/Hip-Hop
Newmark Theatre	880	Classical
Wonder Ballroom	700	Indie
Bossanova Ballroom	650	Jazz/Blues
Hawthorne Theater	600	Rock/Metal
Portland Center Stage	599	Musical Theatre
Mt Tabor Theater (Alhambra)	525	Indie/Rock
Dante's	500	Rock
Star Theater	500	Soul/World/Rock
Rotture	372	EDM
Holocene	326	EDM/Indie
Winningstad Theatre	304	Classical
Historic Old Church	300	Indie/Folk/Classical
Mississippi Studios	300	Indie/Folk
Alberta Rose Theatre	300	Singer/Songwriter
Doug Fir	299	Indie
Goodfoot Lounge	250	Soul/Funk
Backspace	249	Indie
Brunish Hall	200	Classical
Cadigans Corner	200	Indie
Jimmy Mak's	175	Jazz
Rontoms	172	Indie
Bing Lounge	164	Indie/Pop
Bunk Bar	150	Indie
Slabtown	150	Indie/Rock
The Cleaners (Ace Hotel)	140	Indie
Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center	110	Rock/Indie
Mississippi Pizza	100	Singer/Songwriter
Al's Den	100	Singer/Songwriter
The Know	98	Punk
Jade Lounge	55	Singer/Songwriter
Camellia Lounge	50	Singer/Songwriter
The Waypost	45	Classical

## Appendix 4 Venues Maps

Map 1 – Map of Portland, Oregon

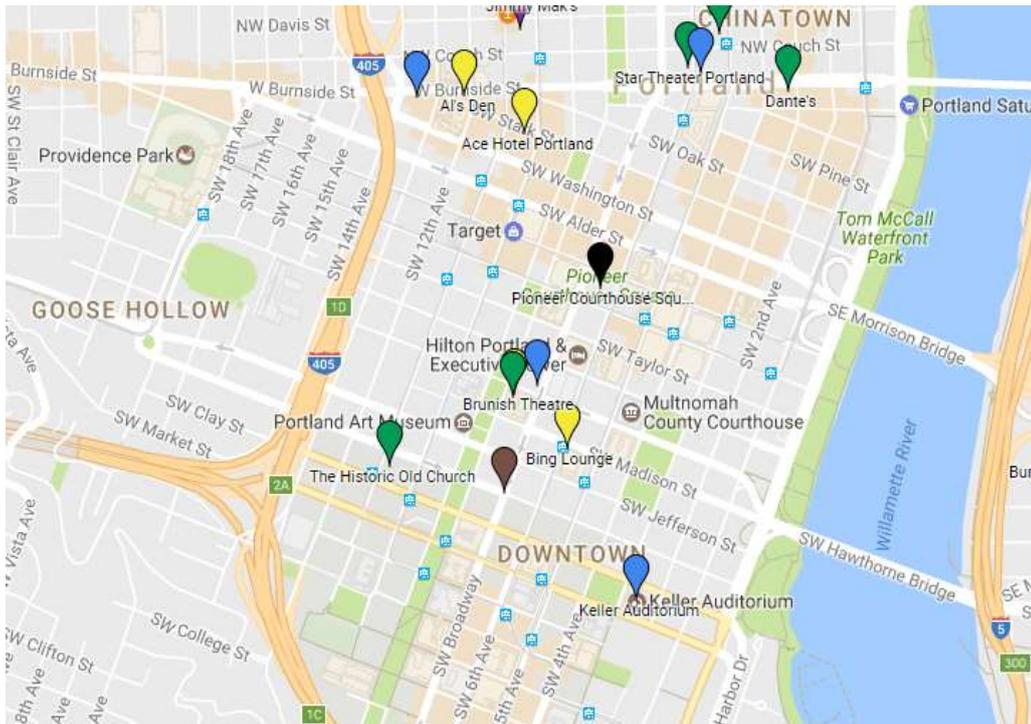


Map 2: Venues in North East Portland

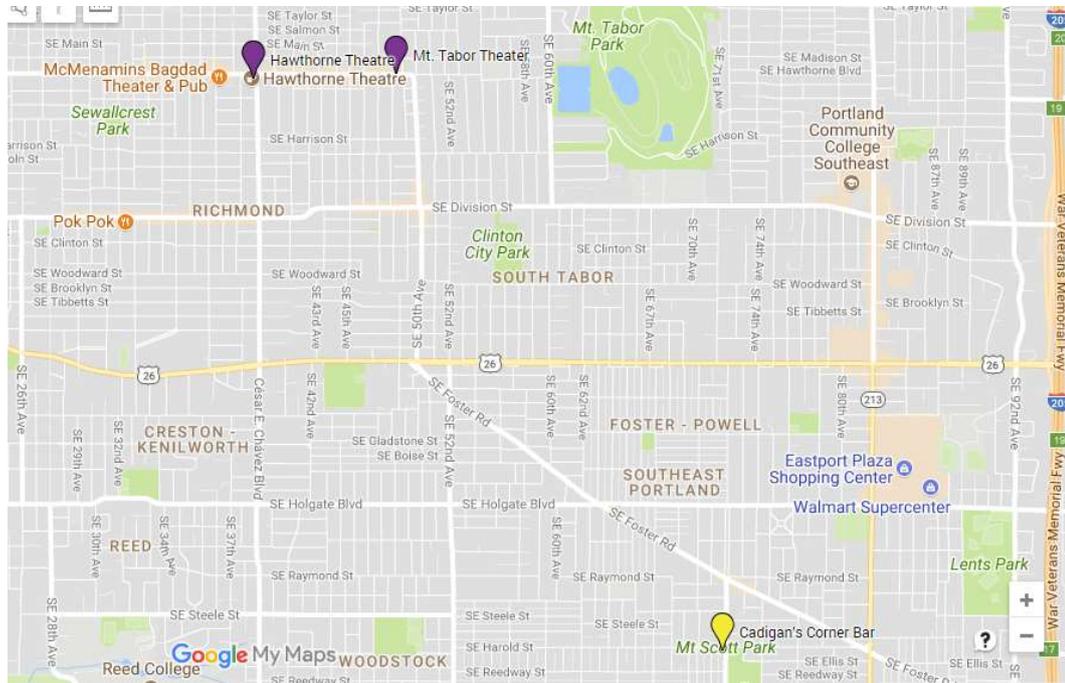
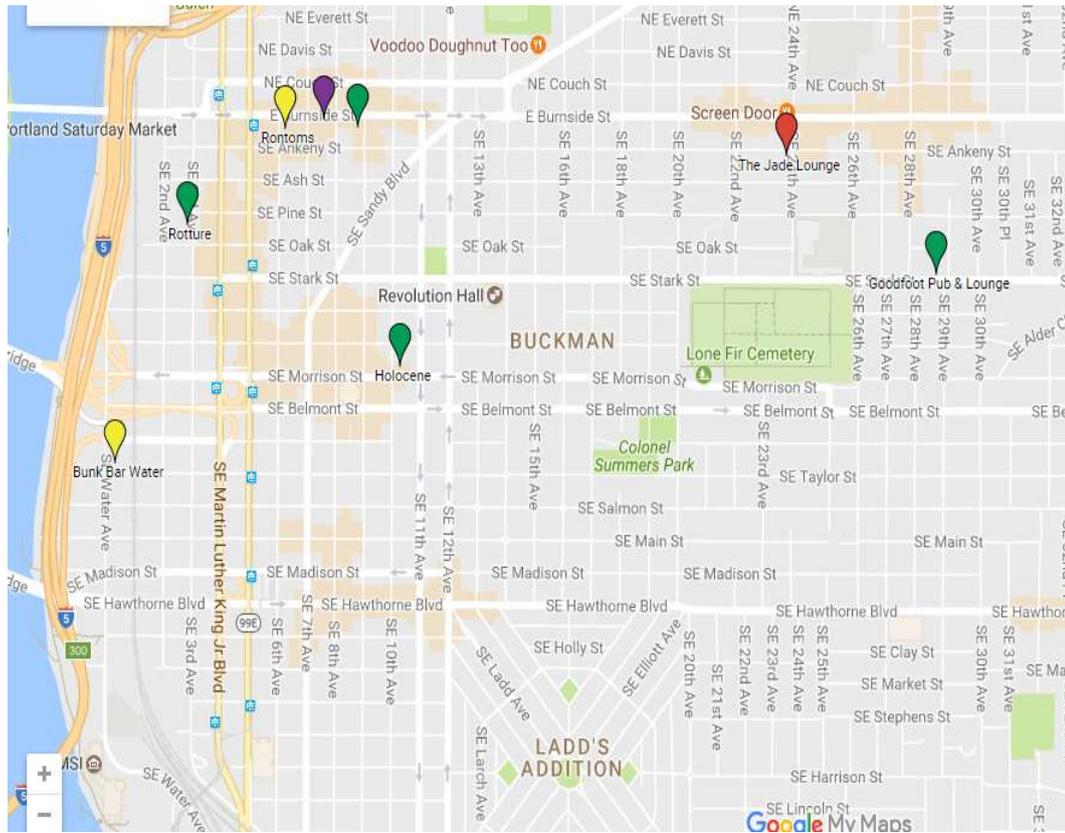


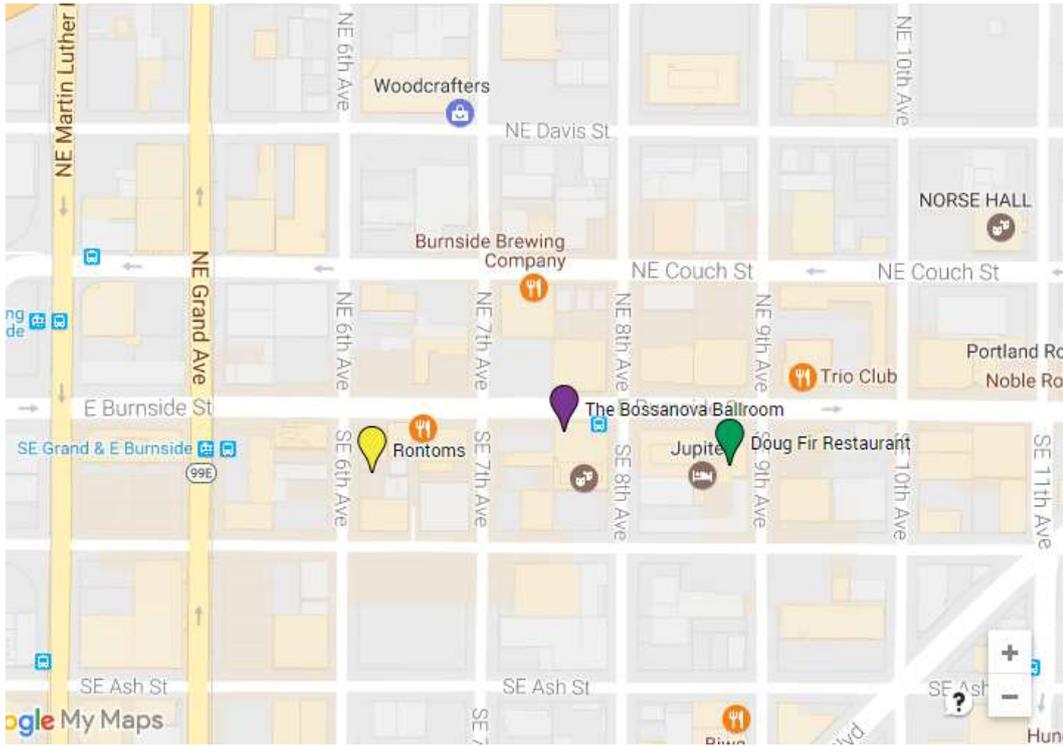


Map 3: Venues in Downtown and South West Portland



Maps 4,5 and 6: Venues in South East Portland





## **Appendix 5 Interview Conventions**

For most contributing interviews, I have left the quoted text verbatim in order for the character of the individual to be projected. On some occasions participants who had seen their quotes requested that their contributions be made more grammatically correct, a request that I always honoured. I made occasional slight alterations to other quotations for clarity.

In consultation with my supervisor I have devised the following formula for interview citations: (Name, Personal interview, Month Year)

Full interview details are provided in the appendices: location of the interview and the way it was conducted (Appendix One). This enables the reader to understand the context of each quotation within my fieldwork and its relationship to the overall research.

In some quoted passages, where a dialogue took place between different participants, I have followed a script format, identifying each contributor's voice. This is to show the interaction and to ensure the contribution of individuals is marked and acknowledged.