

**Submission
No 315**

INQUIRY INTO THE MUSIC AND ARTS ECONOMY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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When I was growing up I was exposed to many great Aussie bands who played in our local town or regularly in venues like the Annandale Hotel in Sydney or at concerts in Centennial Park. Big names like Midnight Oil, Rose Tattoo, AC/DC, INXS, Rose Tattoo, The Radiators, The Divinyls, The Angels, Dragon, Mondo Rock, Crowded House, The Screaming Jets, Hoodoo Gurus and Mental as Anything were some, just to name just a few. These bands didn't play covers they played original music and it thrived!

As a teen in the 80's I sat in front of our television religiously and watched Countdown, featuring great Aussie bands and new unknown artists (local and international). In my eyes, Molly Meldrum was the bomb, he was responsible for introducing me to some of the musicians I would come to adore! I wanted to be Molly! Other kids wanted to be hairdressers or pilots, not me, I wanted to grow up and be just like Molly, interview musicians and provide a platform for local musicians to gain international exposure. I would listen to the weekly top 40 on my cassette player/radio and record my own version of the 'legendary Mix Tape'. I would eagerly share this with my mates on the back of the school bus, first thing next morning.

If we fast forward a couple of decades, one would envisage that Australia would be producing a list of equally renowned musicians who would be reaping global success, household names on an international scale. However, whilst I do not dispute that we produce great Aussie musos, I wonder if many can boast the same or similar success stories of our musician forefathers, leading the way back in the days of Countdown?

As for me, what happened to my dream of becoming Molly? Well, I have tried my hand at being a self-funded freelance music journalist with a YouTube Channel (Live2U TV), event manager, artist manager and I even I tried to start a booking agency for local bands to help do my bit to support home grown talent, mainly at my own expense – and I fear I have not been greatly successful at any. My experiences as a live performer & my inability to make a difference in the business/industry side of things, are now what influence my perception of the Australian Music Scene.

I couldn't tell you how many times I have heard from Aussie musicians how they have had to self-fund tours overseas to make decent money from their craft. Why is that?

Sadly, I have also watched the rise and fall of some of the best festivals that showcased our local talent like no others, Home Bake which featured an all-Australian line-up (with the occasional artist from New Zealand) and what about those side stages at Big Day Out – they too have become another redundant platform for local artist exposure.

One of the questions we often ask performers when we interview them, is “if they could change anything in the Australian Music Scene, what would they change”, I have incorporated some of this insight into my responses below. In an ideal scenario we would see:

- An increase number of venues supporting diversity, maybe some type of government incentive for the venues who support this.
- Improved pay rates for live performances and governance over Booking Agency Fee’s – with a dedicated Government body responsible for random compliance checks.
- More pathways for regional musicians to provide equal opportunities to all types of performers.
- More subsidised platforms and opportunities for exposure for all musicians, not just those who the industry gatekeepers choose.
- Subsidised recording and marketing options to improve affordability and access.
- More grants to inject the Australian Music Scene.
- More public forums to influence the decisions made by the government about the Australian Music Scene.
- Improved access to affordable rehearsal spaces.

In our area, it is increasingly difficult for musicians to get local gigs competing with DJs and the pay rates are really low. I’ve seen expectations from local booking agents/venues, advertising for musicians to travel distances and play 3 hour gigs for \$100, which is well below industry standards. However, if you are a teen still in school, then this is pretty good money, so we see a flood of young people snapping up these gigs and undercutting the more mature and/or professional musicians who are trying to stick to industry pay standards.

There are also countless numbers of Open Mic nights popping up under the premise of 'exposure', but really - what exposure can an artist hope for from a local bar or restaurant on a weeknight in a small town?

I had limited time to put this document together, so it is probably more of blog than a submission. In any case, I thank you for the opportunity to present my story and hope it helps to influence change for the better.

Regards

Mel Miente