

Ups and Downs: Music Venues and Popular Music in Brisbane 1959 – 1989

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any other form for another degree or diploma at any other university or tertiary institution. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been given acknowledgement in the text and a list of references is given.

I also declare that I am familiar with the rules of the School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics and the University of Queensland relating to the submission of this thesis.

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Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to my supervisor Geoff Ginn, fellow students and UQ History staff, and the Fryer librarians. This thesis is dedicated to my girlfriend Victoria, who has always been supportive throughout a challenging year.

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Introduction

Although Brisbane has produced a string of highly successful popular music performers since the arrival of rock 'n' roll, their success has frequently occurred elsewhere. This is partially due to the lack of a stable live music environment. While music scenes everywhere are subject to degrees of fluctuation, Brisbane has frequently experienced an acute shortage of venues and promoters. This is despite a steady demand for live music in Brisbane. When Brian Laver and Mitch Thompson began the Foco Club at Brisbane's Trades Hall, audiences at the Sunday night happenings frequently topped five hundred. When The Saints opened up a dilapidated Queenslander on Petrie Terrace and named it "Club 76," anecdotal evidence points to frequent attendances well over one hundred. And when Triple Zed opened the Queen's Hotel for live music in May 1978, a crowd of eight hundred packed into the pub on a Wednesday night. Despite this success, none of these venues lasted much longer than a year.

Explaining and contextualising the causes of this transience will be the key concern of this thesis. Through an examination of diverse venues and their corresponding scenes, including bands and musicians, educational institutions and radical organs, and other outlets of commercial activity¹, this thesis will provide a history of Brisbane's popular music venues between 1959 and 1989 and how they informed the local production of global – although largely Western – popular music. From the arrival of rock 'n' roll in the late 1950s, the folk revival of the early 1960s, the onset of Beatlemania in 1964, the punk explosion of the mid-1970s, and the diverse strands of alternative rock that emerged in the 1980s, Brisbane has produced local subcultures taking their cues from global music movements. Each of these subcultures has shaped and reshaped the city's cultural geography through live venues in the inner city, Fortitude Valley, and outlying suburbs. Educational institutions including the University of Queensland, Griffith University and the Queensland Institute of Technology, bars, hotels and clubs such as the Queen's Hotel and the Exchange Hotel, and peripheral

¹ Will Straw, "Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music". *Cultural Studies* Vol. 5 No, 3 (1991): 368-388.

bohemian spaces including community halls and residential houses, have become important venues for successive generations of performers and promoters.

However music venues are created in a highly-contested urban environment, and musical subcultures face frequent opposition in their attempts to establish a live music geography. The live music venue is perceived through the everyday experience of its participants, for whom it is imbued with tangible and symbolic meaning. However urban spaces are equally conceived in an abstract way through the instruments of urban planning, bureaucracy, and abstract capital.² For live music venues, the bureaucratic arms associated with the night-time economy, including liquor licensing, health and safety, policing and private security, often dictate to a substantial degree the working environment of venues and promoters.³ In Brisbane, like other Western cities, such bureaucracy has often perceived the night-time economy as a “problem” to be contained and legislated against, rather than a sphere of cultural activity to be celebrated and supported.

This “problem” element has certainly contributed to the ups and downs of live music in Brisbane between the 1960s and the 1980s. The arrival of rock ‘n’ roll via the movie *Blackboard Jungle* and Lee Gordon’s Big Shows was followed by the explosion of rhythm and blues after The Beatles. After the “initial spark”⁴ of R ‘n’ B had faded, the most successful performers, among them the Purple Hearts and The Five, either broke up or moved south. The early-1970s is widely conceived as a lean period, although the absence of live music subcultures, ironically, provided a catalyst for The Saints and globally through the Ramones and the Sex Pistols. The global spread of punk influenced the punk scene of the late 1970s around the Leftovers, Razar, and the Survivors. Like punk scenes elsewhere, Brisbane’s branch of safety-pinned freaks fell into disarray by the end of the decade, although it provided impetus for post-punk, indie and experimental rock bands such as the 31st, the Ups and Downs, and Zero.

² Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006): 116. The Marxist French philosopher Henri Lefebvre’s *spatial triad* serves to emphasise the heterogeneity of urban space, with *representations of spaces* imposed from above, the *spaces of representation* experienced from below, which are connected in turn by *spatial practices*, the medium through which space is negotiated and experienced. For Lefebvre, space is continually produced and reproduced within this triad. Lefebvre expands on this in *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

³ Justin O’Connor and Andy Lovatt, ‘Cities and the Night-Time Economy’ *Planning Practice & Research* Vol. 10, No. 2 (1995): 129.

⁴ Andrew Stafford, *Pig City: From the Saints to Savage Garden* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2006): 15.

What role did Brisbane's music venues play in this narrative? The absence of venues can be partially explained by Sydney and Melbourne's primacy within Australia's music industry. Sydney is considered the home of Australia's popular music recording industry while Melbourne's reputation for culture – including its thriving popular music scenes – has led to a position of Australia's live music capital.⁵ The two larger cities certainly have a greater population impetus for a sustainable culture industry. Indeed, live music in Brisbane has many parallels to Perth, which has witnessed its own fluctuating scenes, shortage of venues, and exodus of talent.⁶

Yet Brisbane's live music environment was also subject to its own forces. The conservative mentality evident in Queensland governance, cultural and institutional discourses has contributed to perception of Brisbane as a “cultural desert.”⁷ This idea has become something of a cliché, since Brisbane has certainly had its share of radical subcultures. However, they have frequently been obscured by the “boring” or “decadent” Brisbane⁸ of brothels, casinos, and – more pertinently to this study – discos. It is a mentality that was frequently taken for granted in the popular press; Brisbane's newspapers typically devoted little more than a page per week to popular music and, in a variant of the “cultural cringe”, placed popular music news from New York or London ahead of local events.

This conservative mentality found a locus in the figure of Premier Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, an ageing “wowser” suspicious of youth culture who became the focal point of youth dissent. The uneducated farmer from Kingaroy maintained ties with the Queensland Police and this, in tandem with his ignorance of Westminster parliamentary protocol contributed to the “police state” mentality that arose in the late 1970s. Police raids on punk venues became a frequent occurrence during Bjelke-Petersen's crackdown on street marching. In the Bjelke-Petersen era, the Premier became a caricature of Queensland conservatism and backwardness; in short, a common enemy for radical and musical subcultures on the fringes of conservative society.

⁵ Seamus O'Hanlon and Tanja Juckins' *Go! Melbourne: Melbourne in the Sixties* (Beaconsfield: Circa, 2005) is the best introduction to Melbourne's cultural and counter-cultural primacy during the 1960s, while Clinton Walker's memoir Clinton Walker, *Stranded: The Secret History of Australian Independent Music 1977-1991* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1996) emphasises the city's role as Australia's alternative rock capital during the 1970s and 1980s.

⁶ Jon Stratton, “Pissed on another planet: The Perth Sound of the 1970s and 1980s.” *Perfect Beat*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (2005): 36-60.

⁷ William Hatherell, *The Third Metropolis: Imaging Brisbane through Art and Literature* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2007): 13.

⁸ Humphrey McQueen, “Foreword” to Raymond Evans and Carole Ferrier (eds.), *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History* (North Carlton, Vic.: Vulgar Press, 2004).

Brisbane's perceived backwardness extended to urban development and the efforts of Clem Jones' Brisbane City Council to develop the "big country town." Starting with Brisbane's first comprehensive town plan in 1965, Brisbane's urban environment was radically altered with high rise development, highways and arterial roads and a long list of public works projects.⁹ High-rise development destroyed much of Brisbane's stock of single and double storey buildings, including bars, hotels and halls ideal for live music. Other venues with strong claims to heritage value, including Cloudland Ballroom and Her Majesty's Theatre, were also demolished in the absence of Queensland heritage legislation.¹⁰

In popular music history, live venues have frequently played second fiddle to performers and subcultures, and frequently are subsumed under the broad umbrella of "scenes." Nonetheless, there are sufficient claims to a history that attempts to focus on the urban spaces of live music. Graeme Turner observed in 2003 that "in conversations and popular memory" of popular music, "it is so often the location of the experience...that is the crucial element."¹¹ This statement came in Turner's foreword to Shane Homan's *The Mayor's a Square: live music and law and order in Sydney*¹², a work that attempts to locate live music in the urban environment of Sydney, along with the relationship between live music legislation at a local, state and federal level and how such legislation is reconciled with industry practices. Paul Chevigny's *Gigs: Jazz and Cabaret Laws in New York City*¹³ provides a similar analysis of New York's twentieth century jazz scenes. Tim Burrow's *From CBGB to the Roundhouse*¹⁴ provides a colourful, if superficial, overview of well-known popular music venues in the Western world, with a short passage on Brisbane's Cloudland Ballroom.

The history of music venues in Brisbane is curtailed by the absence until recently of any attempt to document Brisbane's popular music history. Raymond Evans sought to document the rock 'n' roll of his own Brisbane youth in several works, starting with "...To Try to

⁹ Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: A History of Queensland* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1984): 447-8.

¹⁰ Rod Fisher's "Towards Heritage Legislation in Queensland" in John Rickard and Peter Spearritt's *Packaging the Past: Public Histories* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991): 55-69, provides an overview of the struggle faced by Queensland's heritage movement before the introduction of state legislation in 1990.

¹¹ Graeme Turner, "Foreword" to Shane Homan, *The Mayor's a Square: Live Music and Law and Order in Sydney* (Sydney: Local Consumption Press, 2003): vii.

¹² Homan, *The Mayor's a Square: Live Music and Law and Order in Sydney* (Sydney: Local Consumption Press, 2003).

¹³ Paul Chevigny, *Gigs: Jazz and Cabaret Laws in New York City* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁴ Tim Burrows, *From CBGB to the Roundhouse: music venues through the years* (London: Marion Boyars, 2009).

Ruin': Rock 'n' Roll, Youth Culture and Law 'n' Order in Brisbane 1956-57."¹⁵ Here, Evans explores how the arrival rock 'n' roll in Brisbane provided a catalyst for an emerging youth culture – one which found a moment of expression inside the Brisbane Stadium – and the moral panic that fuelled a backlash from parents, teachers and the law. In 2003 Geoffrey Walden provided a more comprehensive oral history of rock and roll in Brisbane with "It's Only Rock 'n' Roll But I Like It."¹⁶ While Walden's history is concerned largely with performers and personalities, venues from Cloudland to Birdland are frequently brought into sharp focus. Andrew Stafford's *Pig City: From the Saints to Savage Garden*¹⁷ provides a journalistic account of the role of Brisbane in shaping the mindset of musical subcultures from 1975 to 2000. In the process, Stafford's account illuminates several key venues along the way, from Club 76 to the Funkyard. *Pig City* also illuminates the radical strand of Brisbane's popular music history, a theme Raymond Evans, Carol Ferrier and fellow contributors outline further in *Radical Brisbane: An Unruly History*.¹⁸ *Radical Brisbane* establishes a geographical focus on venues that introduced rock 'n' roll, folk, and punk to Brisbane. While Evans provides short accounts of the Brisbane Stadium – later Festival Hall – Allan Gardiner's chapter on Baroona Hall brings Triple Zed's role in live music promotion into the picture.¹⁹

While radio station Four Triple Zed (4ZZZ) originated in 1975 – roughly speaking, the halfway point of the chosen timeframe – it is difficult to understate its importance to Brisbane popular music. As this thesis argues, the station provided the catalyst for successive live music scenes from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, while many of Triple Zed's founding members had earlier played a role in live music promotion at Foco and HARPO. While fellow community radio stations in Sydney and Melbourne enjoyed some success,²⁰ Triple Zed's success in fostering bands, venues and audiences is something unique to Brisbane. The structure of the three chapters that follows will trace Triple Zed's role in live music promotion from early Joint Efforts at the University to the pubs of central Brisbane and, finally, to their brief success at Cloudland.

¹⁵ Raymond Evans, "...To Try to Ruin': Rock 'n' Roll, Youth Culture and Law 'n' Order in Brisbane 1956-57". *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 109 (October 1997): 106-119.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Walden, "'It's Only Rock 'n' Roll But I Like It': A history of the early days of rock 'n' roll in Brisbane... as told by some of the people who were there," Ph.D Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2003.

¹⁷ Andrew Stafford, *Pig City: From the Saints to Savage Garden* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2006)

¹⁸ Evans and Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*.

¹⁹ Allan Gardiner, "Baroona Hall" in Evans and Ferrier, *Radical Brisbane*, 299-303.

²⁰ Homan, *The Mayor's a Square*, 89.

Since Triple Zed began at the University of Queensland at the behest of a committed group of student radicals, the first chapter “Hot night in punk city” seeks to explore the relationship between radical Brisbane and popular music at venues where radical and musical subcultures shared spaces. Popular music was central to the *zeitgeist* of radical organs including the Foco Club, HARPO, and of course Triple Zed. Other promoters were equally “radical” in their approach, however, seeking to solve the lack of music venues through what Robert Forster calls “inspired choices.”²¹ The rejection of punk by Brisbane’s conservative pubs and nightclubs, combined with a desire for independent subcultural spaces, informed the practice of hiring community halls between 1977 and 1979. While some of these venues lasted no longer than a single event, the paucity of alternatives made them crucial for the development of a vibrant local punk scene.

The second chapter, “Pub rock revived” explores Brisbane’s pub and club scenes, with a focus on the often complicated set of relationships between bands, local promoters, venue owners, and regulators. Although some owners were sympathetic to the live music scene, others viewed it as simply a means to revive flagging business. The combination of sympathetic proprietors and entrepreneurial promoters succeeded in creating unofficial entertainment precincts with clusters of venues that accommodated a shared audience. Nonetheless, these precincts existed quite differently to the sanctioned Fortitude Valley entertainment precinct Brisbane has today, and largely struggled in isolation against the intrusions of liquor licensing, health and safety requirements, and policing. The sale of alcohol also characterised these venues, and the need for private security to handle potential violence was sometimes a necessary, if controversial, decision.

The third and final chapter focuses on Brisbane’s large concert arenas. Festival Hall and Cloudland have witnessed some of most celebrated occasions of Brisbane popular music history largely through the reputation of overseas performers they witnessed. These large multi-purpose venues became the domain of heavily capitalised entrepreneurs, from the “Big Show” promoters of the late 1950s and early 1960s to successive promoters of a national touring circuit for overseas acts. Many of these promoters conceived live music in terms of a business opportunity; large venues and prolific entertainers represented the culmination of their entrepreneurial career. The size of these venues had to content with the issue of heritage and town planning in Brisbane’s urban development. The problems of urban disruption

²¹ Robert Forster interviewed by Andrew Stafford (06/03/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

associated with Cloudland were solved with the introduction of the Brisbane Entertainment Centre at Boondall, but as a venue it lacked the ballroom's architectural and social significance and disrupted popular music's inner city geography.

No attempt will be made to document each and every venue in full. The sheer number of venues during this time-frame makes this an unrealistic undertaking. Rather, a selection of some of the most important venues from each of these categories will suffice to explain the key figures, events and turning points behind live music in Brisbane. From a ballroom overlooking Bowen Hills to a Queenslander house on Petrie Terrace, Brisbane's popular music venues have had a colourful history, and the bands they supported gave performances that live on in popular memory.

Chapter One: “Hot Night in Punk City”

The Saints were widely perceived as an anarchistic band, even by the standards of punk. By the beginning of 1976 The Saints had exhausted the patience of music promoters across Brisbane. Having started out as Kid Galahad and the Eternals at Corinda High School, the band and their peers moved into Brisbane’s network of alternative venues. Andrew Stafford compares the anarchistic punk band’s approach to live performance as a “scorched-earth policy”,²² where the nihilistic tendencies of band and audience gradually exhausted the stock of available venues. The anarchistic band had hired several Returned Servicemen’s League (RSL) and community halls, venues which were affordable and easily arranged, but the damage that followed in the band’s wake ensured no return on their bond and no welcome back. The same problems occurred at the University of Queensland after two Triple Zed-promoted shows ended in acrimonious circumstances. After the venue provided by the UQ Union was trashed, station manager Haydn Thompson promptly locked away the station’s copy of the Saints (*I’m Stranded*), vowing never to play it again.²³ As Clinton Walker recalls, “the Saints were too far out even for this supposedly liberal audience.”²⁴

Such destructive tendencies, ironically, led to the creation of Club 76, one of Brisbane’s most celebrated live venues. Club 76 was little more than a faded Queenslander house on Petrie Terrace where members of the band – along with lead singer Chris Bailey’s sister Margaret – resided. Every night the band practised their relentless interpretation of rock’ n’ roll.²⁵ When neighbours indicated their displeasure at the noise by throwing a brick through a front window, the residents wrote the words “Club 76” across the boarded up facade; on Saturday nights the house became an improvised live venue without a liquor license, security,

²² Stafford, *Pig City*, 57.

²³ John Stanwell interviewed by Andrew Stafford (28/08/2001), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

²⁴ Clinton Walker, *Stranded: The Secret History of Australian Independent Music 1977-1991* (Sydney: Macmillan, 1996): 15.

²⁵ Bill Riner interviewed by Andrew Stafford (24/08/2001), Andrew Stafford Manuscripts (Fryer Library, UQFL440). Riner passed the band’s Petrie Terrace house every night going home from work and noticed how the Saints “got good in a short space of time.”

or a cover charge. The Saints became the unofficial “house” band, and performed up to three sets a night in the Queenslander’s front room, sets that featured select covers and their own original material that would soon receive favourable reviews in the British music press.²⁶ While initially patronised by members of the band’s inner circle, Brisbane’s lack of compelling Saturday night entertainment drew a more diverse audience to the venue, including, in the memory of Saints guitarist Ed Kuepper, “some fairly violent people...who weren’t coming along to see the band.”²⁷ In November 1976, *Rock Australia Magazine* journalist Andrew McMillan ventured to Club 76, where he found “a couple of hundred kids packed into every room of the house, tugging on cigarettes and bottles of beer and wine and whisky and dancing.”²⁸ Founder of *Pulp* fanzine and Saints acolyte Clinton Walker recalled this crowd spilling out of the venue in between sets “waving Fourex long-necks and generally seeming to threaten the traffic whizzing by only inches away.”²⁹ When the police – whose headquarters were conveniently placed across the road – turned up, “they were met with resentment and insolence, if not outright abuse, and someone was always hauled away.”³⁰ By the end of the year the police and health department had shut down the venue for having no liquor license, fire exits or adequate toilets.³¹

Club 76 encapsulates an improvised form of music promotion that had lasting significance for Brisbane’s popular music industry. The absence of appropriate venues became a major problem for Kuepper, who was repelled by the dull cover band circuit of musicians perfecting Deep Purple riffs.³² Rock music had become bombastic and decadent and no longer celebrated any sense of liveness; 1975’s best-selling album, Peter Frampton’s *Frampton Comes Alive*, reflected this decadence. Simultaneously “the first stirrings of disco were being heard”³³ at several inner city bars and clubs, a development detested among punks. In the face of this opposition, an alternative live circuit emerged thanks to what Go-Betweens singer Robert Forster argues were “inspired choices”³⁴ on the part of sympathetic promoters. Punk venues emerged at community halls from Sandgate in the north-east to Darra in the south-west, while Triple Zed’s Joint Efforts at the University of Queensland provided opportunities

²⁶ Stafford, *Pig City*, 63.

²⁷ Ed Kuepper interviewed by Andrew Stafford (28/02/2001), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

²⁸ Andrew McMillan, “Club 76 and all that” *Meanjin* Vol. 65, No. 3 (2006), 114.

²⁹ Walker, *Stranded*, 19.

³⁰ Clinton Walker, *Stranded: The Secret History of Australian Independent Music 1977-1991*, 19.

³¹ Ed Kuepper interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 28/02/2001.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Walker, *Stranded*, 15.

³⁴ Robert Forster interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 06/03/2002.

for more professional performers. The Joint Efforts represented the culmination of a radical student activist lineage that began with the Foco Club at Labor's Trades Hall in 1968 and inspired 1978's Cane Toad Club at Baroona Hall. For several of Brisbane's best alternative bands, these venues became an important catalyst for their underground or mainstream success. The Coloured Balls became a band of polished professionals through a residency at Foco, The Saints sharpened their punk product to perfection at Club 76, while the Go-Betweens song-writing duo of Forster and Grant McLennan made an impromptu debut at Baroona Hall.³⁵ Many of Forster and McLennan's contemporaries, including students emerging from the University of Queensland's School of Architecture, performed at Joint Efforts at the UQ Union's Relaxation Block and, a decade later, at the first Livid Festival held at the University in 1989.

The University of Queensland was of fundamental importance to radical youth culture.³⁶ During the era of "Australia's 1960's"³⁷ the University – considered amongst Australia's most radical campuses³⁸ – housed the Students for Democratic Action (SDA), later the Society for Democratic Action. Formed by student activists Brian Laver and Mitch Thompson, the SDA organised and participated in anti-war and anti-conscription marches and campaigned for University reform. In doing so they shared an uneasy alliance with the "old left" communist and trade union radicals. However the student activist movement of 1968 represented a fundamental break from the old left; William Hatherell observed how the student radicals embraced "the predilections and preferences of youth" – namely, sexuality, pop music, and drug-taking – "as sources of liberation."³⁹

However the new left took their initial cues from the old, who had previously instigated Brisbane's own folk revival, at the University of Queensland's Folk Club and John Manifold's annual "ballad nights" at his home in North Wynnum. Such events crystallized the old left's networks of political activists and literary and artistic sympathisers,⁴⁰ as well as attracting a frisson of mainstream disquiet. In July 1964 the Folk Club caught the attention of

³⁵ After forming the Go-Betweens with people they met on the night, Forster and McLennan landed a residency at the Hungry Years Cafe in Toowong owned by Triple Zed's John Woods. Robert Forster interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 06/03/2002.

³⁶ Jon Piccini, "Building their own scene to do their own thing": Imagining and contesting spaces in Brisbane's youth radicalisation 1968 – 1976. Hons. Thesis, University of Queensland, 2009.

³⁷ Piccini, "Building their own scene to do their own thing." Australia's 1960s' is widely understood as constituting the years between 1968 and 1976.

³⁸ Raymond Evans, *A History of Queensland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 223.

³⁹ Hatherell, *The Third Metropolis*, 181.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 160.

the National Civic Council, and the *Sunday Truth* picked up on the Council's crusade against a "ghastly Communist plot to indoctrinate Australian youth"⁴¹ patronising the University's Folk Club and the Coolibah Folk Lounge on George street. The *Truth* ran with the story, warning of the introduction of folk singing into suburban homes at Red Hill and Holland Park featuring Manifold's group, the Bandicoots.⁴² In his reply to the *Truth*, Secretary of the Eureka Youth League's Queensland Branch Brian Moynihan argued this represented an improvement on "the youth soaking up some of the Hollywood stuff", before noting that Mr Santamaria "must have an awful cramp in his neck from looking under the bed every night to see if there is a Communist hiding there."⁴³

These efforts from old left activists to establish a Brisbane counter-culture led to the SDA's formation of the Foco Club in March 1968. Foco arose from SDA leader Brian Laver's idea for some collective R 'n' R after two years of demonstrations and street marches.⁴⁴ Forming a Sunday night club to circumvent the City Council's ban on Sunday opening hours, Foco became a rare (although not exclusive – see Chapter Two) hub of Sunday night entertainment in Brisbane for over a year.⁴⁵ Foco's Sunday night "happenings" transformed the third floor of the Trades Hall into a multi-media spectacle of radical youth culture, with lectures on radical politics supplemented by films, poetry, drama, folk-singing, and rock music. This also became the running order; according to Laver, the Sunday evening schedule began with "political" activities – namely theatre, cinema, folk singing, and lectures – "and then you'd move into party mode."⁴⁶

While the disco was sometimes seen as an unwanted distraction – especially when amplified music drowned out the folk-singing – it became the main attraction for significant proportion of members. While 4BC disc jockey Tony McArthur gave a "lecture" on popular music⁴⁷ – an excellent illustration of 1960s counter-culture discourse – he was most enthused about Foco's potential to provide Brisbane with a regular procession of "top folk, jazz and pop"⁴⁸ performers. As Foco progressed, the efforts of disco promoter Larry Zetlin became

⁴¹ *Sunday Truth*, July 12, 1964.

⁴² *Sunday Truth*, July 19, 1964.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Brian Laver interviewed by Andrew Stafford (06/11/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

⁴⁵ Jon Piccini provides an excellent account of the Foco Club in the first chapter of his "Building their own scene to do their own thing."

⁴⁶ Brian Laver interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 6/11/2002.

⁴⁷ FOCO Club Newsletter, 24 April, 1968, 3.

⁴⁸ *Sunday Truth*, February 25, 1968.

pivotal to the Club's success. Zetlin's knowledge of popular music trends – gleaned from a time spent writing for Melbourne's *Go-Set* – led to the appearance of several hip interstate acts such as Max Merritt and the Meteors, the Wild Cherries, and the Living End. The less musically inclined Laver "trusted Larry's appreciation of that so much and when he brought them...that's when we got the 800, you know, we'd get big crowds."⁴⁹ Those crowds included those from outside the local radical left. After finding herself stranded in the city for the weekend, *The Australian's* theatre scribe, Katharine Brisbane was advised to relieve her boredom through a visit to Foco.⁵⁰ Similar advice may have also reached a contingent of American soldiers on R 'n' R from Vietnam.⁵¹ The presence of such diffuse outsiders no doubt contributed to the crush that occurred in the Hall, and the subsequent suspension of membership applications.⁵²

Foco's spectacular life was cut short through declining attendances and divisions between student radicals and trade unions that shared the Trades Hall space.⁵³ However the club became an important stepping stone for a generation of student radicals who founded Triple Zed. While John Stanwell participated in Foco was largely ancillary, he was more directly involved with the early 1970s radical collective HARPO, who staged fundraising events under the "HARPO Nites Out" moniker. While these events are best remembered the appearance of beat poet Allen Ginsberg, American folk singer Phil Ochs also appeared and popular bands from Melbourne reaffirmed the importance of popular music for the consolidation of student radicalism. While HARPO was more short-lived – "probably 48 hours"⁵⁴ for writer and HARPO contributor Gerard Lee – it served to further develop Stanwell's promotional acumen.

The involvement of Triple Zed founders Stanwell and Jim Beatson in this radical movement directly informed the creation of radio station Triple Zed in November 1975. After sustained lobbying for a community radio license from Gough Whitlam's Federal Labor Government, Triple Zed was constructed on the University campus in the closing months of 1975 and the station went to air in December.⁵⁵ While the station's goals were ostensibly to

⁴⁹ Brian Laver interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 06/11/2002.

⁵⁰ Katharine Brisbane, "Guerrillas in Brisbane," *The Australian*, July 17, 1968.

⁵¹ Mick Hadley interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 11/03/2010.

⁵² *FOCO Club Newsletter*, 13 June 1968, 2.

⁵³ Piccini, "Building their own scene to do their own thing," 39.

⁵⁴ Gerard Lee, "HARPO" in Robyn Sheahan-Bright and Stuart Glover (eds) *Hot Iron Corrugated Sky: 100 Years of Queensland Writing* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2002): 61.

⁵⁵ Stafford, *Pig City*, 35. Stafford's chapter on "Guerrilla Radio" is a concise account of Triple Zed's birth.

increase media diversity, the station would do so most profoundly through the medium of popular music. While lobbying for the radio license, station founder Jim Beatson emphasised the need for an alternative, arguing that Brisbane's conservative radio stations had marginalised popular music listeners. For Beatson, commercial radio playlists no longer represented the tastes of contemporary ears.⁵⁶ Upon going to air, Triple Zed played a wide gamut of popular styles from progressive rock to punk and jazz, while music journalism flourished in subscriber magazine *Radio Times*. No wonder, then, that Triple Zed's first piece of "serious business" was to play The Who's *Won't Get Fooled Again*.⁵⁷

While Woods, along with on-air personalities Alan Knight, Michael Finucan, and Bill Riner provided Triple Zed's on-air cultural component, John Stanwell's lasting contribution was as director of the stations "Joint Efforts" that provided the live music equivalent. At the end of Orientation week in February 1976 the Relaxation Block became a Foco-esque youth culture extravaganza; similar to the Trades Hall happenings, live music supplemented poetry, films, and discussion.⁵⁸ The first two Joint Efforts took place over consecutive evenings at the end of Orientation Week in February 1976 at the UQ Union Relaxation Block. Amongst the live performers were Carol Lloyd – formerly of Rainroad Gin – country rock band Whyte Lightning, and local punks The Survivors.

Through the staging of such performers, Joint Efforts thus came to reflect the station's approach to providing a diverse outlet of popular music. The events, however, also had the more pragmatic aim of raising funds for the fledgling station, which otherwise received limited funding from the UQ Union and a Federal Government grant.⁵⁹ "The most striking difference about 4ZZZ-FM,"⁶⁰ an early Triple Zed flyer argued, "is that the station isn't funded by endless commercials. Nor is it like the A.B.C. and funded by the government. So we are relying on you, our listeners, for financial and moral support."⁶¹ In this environment, Jim Beatson had observed "the key lessons of Foco and HARPO:"⁶²

that Brisbane's student and cultural activists had demonstrated a consistent capacity to raise substantial funds from well-run cultural events, mainly built around rock music. Jim therefore targeted me for several months... to be the

⁵⁶ Jim Beatson interviewed by Andrew Stafford (24/08/2001), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

⁵⁷ John Woods' carefully worded opening broadcast is reproduced in Stafford, *Pig City*, 36.

⁵⁸ Gary Williams, *Generation Zed*, 51.

⁵⁹ John Stanwell interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 17/03/2010.

⁶⁰ "4 Triple-Z FM STEREO," (Fryer Library, UQFL458: Box 16, Folder 7).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² John Stanwell interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 17/03/2010.

station's fundraiser (later called Promotions Coordinator), based on my experience with HARPO and as UQ Union Activities Director.⁶³

While Triple Zed's twelve paid staff – led by Stanwell – took responsibility for organising the event beforehand, the evenings themselves relied upon the volunteer labour of subscribers and students. Roughly 120 volunteers were employed for tasks ranging from bar duties,⁶⁴ security, and cleaning.⁶⁵ Although Triple Zed was not a recognised “club” like Foco, station subscribers received a discount on entry price and this concession, along with the presence of volunteers, reflected the inclusive and communal ethos of preceding student radical organs.

The opening Joint Effort double-header was a resounding success and foreshadowed the station's future as a local promoter of considerable influence. The two nights grossed an estimated ten thousand dollars,⁶⁶ while the crowd and volunteers created a festive atmosphere that compared favourably to the cover bands and discos in the city's bars and nightclubs. For station worker Buck Samrai, “It was great to see all these people together, having a good time in Brisbane town.”⁶⁷ Although the Relaxation Block had been used sporadically for live music prior to Triple Zed, subsequent events – held at the end of each month – established the UQ Union Refectory as a major venue that tapped into the demand for popular music amongst the student body.

As soon as we became successful, we were able to ring up and say “We want so-and-so”, and they'd say okay we'll put together something, if they were a Uni-type band. We had enough buying power. We were the only show in town.⁶⁸

Although Triple Zed promoted diverse popular music consistent with student tastes, the pragmatism in the student radical movement proved to be incompatible with the combusive nature of punk. This became evident after two early shows at the university featuring the Saints ended acrimoniously and tested Triple Zed's relationship with the UQ Union and university administration. These relationships were seriously tested on New Years Eve 1975 when The Saints performed at the university.⁶⁹ As expected for the occasion, the show had a boisterous atmosphere, with inebriated punters jumping into the pool.⁷⁰ While the dangers for

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Triple Zed Joint Efforts were fully licensed.

⁶⁵ John Stanwell interviewed in *Radio Timewarp*, 23.

⁶⁶ *Radio Timewarp: Ten years of Independent Radio in Brisbane* (Brisbane: Creative Broadcasters, 1985): 22.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gary Williams. *Generation Zed: No Other Radio Like This* (Brisbane: Kingswood Press, 2000): 51.

⁶⁹ John Stanwell interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 17/03/2010.

⁷⁰ Clinton Walker interviewed by Andrew Stafford (05/10/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

safety, not to mention the risk of glass in the pool, ruled out further pool gigs⁷¹, the evening took on a darker complexion when allegations of a sexual assault in the poorly-lit pool grounds surfaced. Triple Zed provided full co-operation with the police investigation although the allegations were never resolved.⁷² Even so, the station showed a willingness to take another chance with the band. The Saints' second appearance on campus in early 1976 threatened to disrupt the relations between the UQ Union and Triple Zed.

The Saints asked the station to book the room for them (to obtain a "student" discount) and the Union (understandably) assumed that the usual level of Triple Zed security would be in operation (which it wasn't). The place was trashed; The Saints took no responsibility whatsoever; 4ZZZ-FM repaired or paid for the damage, and wore the wrath of the Union for a while; and the relations between The Saints and the station worsened.⁷³

The show allegedly ended with Chris Bailey throwing the evening's takings into the crowd. While Thompson temporarily prevented The Saints being played on Triple Zed,⁷⁴ such events like contributed to a lasting ban on punk performances at the university.⁷⁵

While these occasions marred the relation between punk and Triple Zed, some individuals associated with the station were more welcoming. Architecture student Kevin Hayes, who had helped design and build Triple Zed's studios, provided an important early punk venue with the opening of the Curry Shop on George Street in 1977. The success of Razar's Sunday night residency in drumming up flagging business transformed the restaurant into a venue, although curry was still served for those willing to take the risk, and other bands soon followed. For Go-Betweens bassist Robert Vickers, the Curry Shop "had a definite feel of squalor."⁷⁶ The basement venue was filled with rows of wooden columns surrounding a tiny makeshift stage, and a dressing room that "doubled as a urinal."⁷⁷ It was a fitting space for new-wave queen Deborah Harry, who was known to have graced the venue during Blondie's 1978 tour.⁷⁸

Overall, the bands of Brisbane's punk scene embraced punk's "Do-It-Yourself" ethos, becoming their own promoters at a plethora of community halls. With halls available for between \$30 and \$40, the costs were beneficial for Brisbane's punks who emerged from

⁷¹ John Stanwell interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 17/03/2010.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ John Stanwell interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 17/03/2010.

⁷⁴ John Stanwell interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 28/08/2001.

⁷⁵ "Hot night in punk city!" *Cane Toad Times*, No. 5 (1978): 17.

⁷⁶ David Nichols, *The Go-Betweens* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997): 35.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Nichols, *The Go-Betweens*, 35.

working class backgrounds.⁷⁹ The ease of self-promotion became evident to Rod McLeod – who played in several punk bands including the Young Identities during the late 1970s and early 1980s – after a student-organised event at Griffith University in 1978.

I loved the way the whole thing worked, because there was no real organisation at all. He just booked the venue and just let everyone run rabid over the top of it. There was a very poor hired PA, bands played, and the mess was just left for someone else to clean up. I thought ‘wow, that’s fantastic, this is how easy it is to put a gig together.’⁸⁰

In addition to community halls, McLeod and his peers took punk’s self-autonomy one step further, turning up uninvited and performing at a girls’ school formal for which the Aliens were officially booked. “They were hired,” McLeod remembers, “but we gatecrashed it.” Overall McLeod’s testimony seems to reflect the prevailing punk attitude of providing an environment there they could display “blatant disregard” for accepted live venue etiquette, and where acts of destruction and displays of nihilism served only to unite band and audience “in a communion of spittle and mutual abuse.”⁸¹ The attraction for McLeod became “having all of your friends in a singular place that you had complete control over for a small amount of time.”⁸²

While this approach frustrated Triple Zed promoters, the link between radical political and musical subcultures was maintained at Baroona Hall. For Allan Gardiner, the arrival of punk at Baroona Hall became the latest chapter in the evolution of a radical venue⁸³ that housed the Paddington Branch of the Labor Party and the Caxton Street Legal Service. The hall became used for gay liberation and nuclear disarmament campaigns which employed live music in a similar way. It was more frequently the site for the Cane Toad Club, the fundraising arm of satirical newspaper the *Cane Toad Times*.⁸⁴ *Radio Times* illustrator Matt Mawson provided the artwork, while the publication marked Gerald Lee’s return to Brisbane radical circles after HARPO. Razar manager John Reid was employed as promoter of the “Toad Hops”⁸⁵ as monthly events at Baroona Hall became an important fundraiser for the magazine.

⁷⁹ Ed Kuepper interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 28/02/2002.

⁸⁰ Rod McLeod interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

⁸¹ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Clays Limited, 1979): 110.

⁸² Rod McLeod interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

⁸³ Allan Gardiner, *Baroona Hall*, in Evans and Ferrier (eds), *Radical Brisbane*: 298.

⁸⁴ John Jiggins Linden Woodward, Michael Finucan and Graham Nunn, “Personal stories: media activism in Brisbane, 1970s and 1980s,” *Queensland Review*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (2007): 89. The newspaper was inspired by “that enduring Queensland joke” – Johannes Bjelke-Petersen.

⁸⁵ John S Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

While the hall itself was, for Anne Jones, little more than a “big empty box” with an elevated stage at one end and a bar at the other⁸⁶, the colourful atmosphere made the venue an important incubator for Brisbane’s live music scene. While Jones described Barooka Hall evenings as “too casual, too much like a party,”⁸⁷ this casualness was pivotal to the success of a venue that, in line with English punk’s ideology, sought to break down barriers between audience and performers. This environment became instrumental in the formation of the Go-Betweens, after Robert Forster and Grant McLennan made their debut there in February 1978. At the casual punk dance, Forster approached organiser Anne Jones and successfully arranged an improvised set in between the Survivors and the Leftovers.⁸⁸ Clinton Walker described the occasion when Forster and McLennan “took the stage – unannounced – and fumbled their way – drummerless – through two songs that were obviously the product of their inexperienced hands.”⁸⁹ This performance was crucial to the duo’s introduction into Brisbane’s radical performing circuit.

Although the Go-Betweens made an unlikely addition to several punk dances, the efforts of the Cane Toad Club formed an important hub of the local punk subculture. While copies of the Sex Pistols’ *Never Mind the Bollocks* disappeared quickly from Rocking Horse Records,⁹⁰ stores selling punk fashion appeared in Fortitude Valley.⁹¹ Soon Reid was able to attract audiences exceeding three hundred, and thus displayed an astute business sense rare for a punk promoter, attempting to discourage destructive activities and knocking back bands who sought to extract a higher appearance fee. Similarly, the Club’s strong media acumen resulted in coverage in the mainstream media when the *Courier Mail* billed the Deranged Ball of August 1978 as “Our first punk ball.”⁹² While the Deranged Ball held at West End’s A.H.E.P.A. Hall seemed to fetishize punk fashion, such a policy no doubt contributed to attracting a wider audience beyond the “hard-core punks.”⁹³

⁸⁶ Anne Jones, “Drongos, Yobbos, and Derros, yes, but are Ockers rockers?” *New Musical Express*, November 22, 1979, 32.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Robert Forster interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 06/03/2002.

⁸⁹ Clinton Walker, “Go-Betweens,” *Roadrunner*, December 1979, in Nichols, *The Go-Betweens*, 33.

⁹⁰ Warwick Vere interviewed by Andrew Stafford (11/10/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

⁹¹ Rod McLeod recalls a shop in central Brisbane called “The Closet” carrying punk fashion. Rod McLeod interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

⁹² *Courier Mail*, August 19, 1978.

⁹³ John Reid suggests Brisbane had between 150 and 200 “hard-core” punks during the late 1970s. Reid defines the hard-core as those “that were wearing their hair pink, or strange, and they were walking around the street {like that} all the time.” John S. Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

If such events reflected a strand of mainstream appeal, the extreme “hard-core” element compromised the integrity of the scene with the damage caused to punk venues, including the frequent destruction of toilets and washrooms.⁹⁴ The efforts of Gary Smith and the aptly-named V2⁹⁵ curtailed the local punk circuit. A punk dance organized at the Queensland Rugby League Club in April 1978 ended acrimoniously after Smith cut his hands on a smashed glass and spent the rest of the evening

bleeding on surfaces and people, also indulged in door-kicking and finally with another “angry youth against all” looking person succeeded in doing small damage to the toilets and breaking and bloodying up the portrait of one of the Rugby League’s founders.⁹⁶

With V2 and Smith ejected, the music continued for twenty minutes before the two troublemakers returned, at which point Q.R.L. officials announced the end of the dance.⁹⁷ Events like these were, however, rarely celebrated as an expression of the punk majority but rather as “an out-of-control minority”⁹⁸ whose presence exacted a sense of resignation. “I didn’t hear, but someone probably smashed up a toilet”, Anne Jones wrote in *New Musical Express*,⁹⁹ adding “they always do – it’s fashionable.”

This destruction fuelled the police harassment after the formation of the Special Branch to quell the “Right to March” movement. The right-to-march movement that took place between 1977 and 1979 witnessed bloody clashes between demonstrators and police.¹⁰⁰ In this climate punk dances became “the easiest of small targets” for the Task Force, a squad that grew out of Antony Murphy’s notorious Fortitude Valley CID unit.¹⁰¹ Like undercover Special Branch officers who stirred up crowds of demonstrators, Task Force members in plain clothes “infiltrated” punk dances, wearing a recognised uniform of lumber-jackets and summer frocks.¹⁰² Later, they incorporated punk fashion; an undercover officer at the *Deranged Ball* was observed wearing “safety pinned shirt”, a style by this point considered “passé.”¹⁰³ At the first sign of trouble, uniformed cars and officers turned up, sometimes accompanied by police

⁹⁴ Warwick Vere interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 11/10/2002.

⁹⁵ V2 – real name Peter McGrath - was a notorious figure on the Brisbane punk scene. McGrath was responsible for punk band V2 and the Hiltons, although he was more renowned for causing mayhem at punk dances.

⁹⁶ *Radio Times*, May 1978: 8.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ “Hot night in punk city,” 17.

⁹⁹ Jones, “Drongos Yobbos and Derros, yes, but are Ockers Rockers?,” 32.

¹⁰⁰ Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the Early 1980s: A History of Queensland* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1984): 573-575.

¹⁰¹ Stafford, *Pig City*, 95.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁰³ Peter Steinheuer, “Special Punk Squad Report: Part 1: The Deranged Ball Blow-Up,” *Semper*, September 20, 1978: 9.

dogs.¹⁰⁴ The first notable occurrence of Task Force involvement was a show at Hamilton Hall in December 1977. At nine thirty, an estimated twenty police turned up with paddy wagons and police dogs to shut down the show.¹⁰⁵ Similar events curtailed the Deranged Ball, where revellers were thrown into paddy wagons with brute force, while Reid remembers a medical student ending up in hospital after receiving a large gash across one ear.¹⁰⁶

By 1979, Stafford writes, the punk scene “was splintering like the brittle bones of an under-nourished child.”¹⁰⁷ The fragmentation of the punk scene was twofold; while bands and individuals succumbed to infighting and self-destruction, the interference of the Task Force and venue owners and managers had exhausted the stock of community halls. Nonetheless, opportunities remained, and Triple Zed attempted a return to punk promoter David Darling attempted to stage The Great Brain Robbery at West End’s Colossus Hall, hoping the use of a new venue would elude the Task Force. Darling remembers the event going smoothly until the janitor arrived, at which point there were “toilet doors hanging off” and “passed-out punks all over the floor.”¹⁰⁸ After calling the police, the evening was derailed in the manner of the Deranged Ball. According to *Time Off*, twenty-one arrests were made and twenty-eight charges were laid.¹⁰⁹ Triple Zed also faced a damage bill of \$278,¹¹⁰ while a considerable portion of the evening’s takings was spent bailing punters out of the watch house.¹¹¹ After grossing over eight hundred dollars, Darling arrived at the following week’s station meeting “with about eight bucks, and a bill for alcohol that we had to provide to the hall.”¹¹²

The violence at community halls was also evident at Baroona Hall, despite John Reid’s estimation that the venue’s Labor Party background would provide

a measure of protection from the police closing down the dances, even though it was over the road from the police barracks – it was still the Labor Party, and they’d be less likely to surround a Labor Party hall than people when they did them out at Hamilton.¹¹³

¹⁰⁴ Warwick Vere interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 11/10/2002.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ John S. Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

¹⁰⁷ Stafford, *Pig City*. 110.

¹⁰⁸ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁰⁹ *Time Off*, July 1979, 33.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ John S Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

In April 1979 a dozen police cars surrounding the venue during a gay liberation dance. The police moved in at eleven p.m., “kicking over furniture and pushing people around.”¹¹⁴ However, the most widely publicised disturbance took place in December 1979, when police broke up what Deputy Commissioner Varn McDonald described as a “full-scale riot” that required “more than twenty police cars, including CIB units”¹¹⁵ to bring under control. McDonald described to the *Courier Mail* how police were “showered with bottles thrown from the building.”¹¹⁶ However several present at the dance had registered complaints of police brutality,¹¹⁷ and alternative versions of the riot emerged the following year in the university student newspaper *Semper*. According to Lindy Woodward’s report, a crowd of fifty people were waiting outside the venue after the dance had ended when several plain-clothes police emerged from an unmarked car and “made their way through the crowd to one particular man, and proceeded to assault him.”¹¹⁸ When the crowd objected, the police “ran amok, pushing, and throwing punches.”¹¹⁹ Complaints of police brutality on the night were subsequently resolved and several victims successfully took legal action.¹²⁰ The incident, and the success of participants in having their convictions quashed, demonstrates the Task Force’s active role in provoking some of the worst violence at community halls.

While the University was largely sheltered from police intrusions, Triple Zed experienced the growing difficulty of holding concerts there.¹²¹ A Joint Effort at the Refectory organised for Thursday, October 8, 1981 featuring Midnight Oil was cancelled after the University administration deemed the concert to be a disruption to evening lectures.¹²² A year later, Joint Efforts at the University were temporarily suspended after the appearance of Manchester post-punk band The Fall on Friday August 13 caused tensions between Triple Zed and the Civil Engineering Society, who held their annual ball on the same evening. The evening’s events caused damages to university property that reached a total of \$2,000; this included smashed glass louvers in the Architecture, Music and Planning Building and a broken boom gate in the Senate car park, while a car belonging to a Triple Zed patron was pushed into the

¹¹⁴ *Time Off*, April 5, 1979, 50.

¹¹⁵ *Courier Mail*, December 11, 1979.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Lindy Woodward, “Rock Against Intimidation”, *Semper*, May 19, 1980, 21.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Anne Jones interviewed by Andrew Stafford (21/08/2001), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

¹²¹ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹²² *Time Off*, October 9, 1981, 6.

university lake. While Triple Zed argued they “did not foresee”¹²³ the event attracting a punk audience, the CSA secretary denied any involvement and the administration absolved them of blame on the following Monday.¹²⁴ The evidence against Triple Zed, namely “the sighting of punks on Jacks Road”, meant they took the blame, despite Shelley Dempsey’s calls for further investigation. A student union eager to appease the university administration banned Joint Efforts for the rest of the year, including the eagerly anticipated appearance of the Sunnyboys scheduled for September 17.

While Joint Efforts became sporadic, Triple Zed’s fundraising efforts switched to Market Days.¹²⁵ Starting in 1988, this became a fund-raising activity of increasing importance in the absence of Joint Efforts, which became rarer in the mid 1980’s. While Market Days provided an extension of the Joint Effort concept, the Market Days provided little of political engagement of Foco or early Joint Efforts. While live music was complemented with art stalls and community workshops, the events also featured the novelty sport of radio and pineapple throwing.¹²⁶ The events were held at the University until 1989 – when Triple Zed was abruptly evicted from campus – and then moved on to a series of public parks.

Triple Zed had, however, paved the way for a new source of live music through the efforts of nineteen year old Peter Walsh. While not connected to any radical movement, Walsh experienced the frustration of a city once again without a stable live music circuit and a paucity of performing talent. The expression “Livid” was intended to express a degree of dissatisfaction with Brisbane’s political and cultural climate in the late 1980s¹²⁷, one that echoed the frustrations of the student radicals of the 1960s. Andrew Stafford labelled the first Livid Festival “a real DIY story in itself.”¹²⁸ Walsh and Jeremijenko pursued the project with the inspiration of early punk promoters, obtaining \$8000 through a university credit fund, ostensibly was intended for “buying a car.” Walsh’s efforts resulted in annual festival that contributed to a rejuvenation of popular music. In preparing the Festival, Walsh recruited several important Brisbane bands from the previous decade, including the Go-Betweens, Died Pretty, and the Ups and Downs, all of whom were keen to participate. For Walsh, having the event at the University was of symbolic importance for bands like the Go

¹²³ Shelley Dempsey, “Joint Efforts Extinguished,” *Semper*, September 1982, 9.

¹²⁴ *Semper*, September 1982, 10.

¹²⁵ Williams, *Generation Zed*, 60.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Peter Walsh interviewed by Andrew Stafford (30/07/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

¹²⁸ Stafford in interview with Walsh, 30/07/2002.

Between, while the presence of the Livid's "arts" component, thanks to the efforts of Natalie Jeremijenko, lent Livid a multi-faceted event with similarities to the Joint Effort concept. While Walsh's desire to meet the Go-Betweens was one motivation, the festival was overall aimed at promoting Brisbane music. According to Walsh,

the idea of the first Livid Festival was to show that hey, there is a lot of talent here, it's not just Expo, it's not just this, we have some real home-grown stuff, and let's bring it all back, put it together and have a best of Brisbane.¹²⁹

While the Livid Festival went on to become a major music festival in the 1990s, the first event reflects the continuation of a radical promotion at the University that had a considerable influence on popular music in Brisbane.

¹²⁹ Peter Walsh interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 30/07/2002.

Chapter Two: “Pub Rock Revived.”

While the efforts of Brisbane’s radical activist and punk promoters sometimes stemmed from genuine attempts to foster alternative youth subcultures, their efforts can also be explained through the absence of bars and nightclubs willing to host live music.¹³⁰ This absence was certainly evident to nineteen year-old David Darling upon his arrival from Melbourne in January 1978. Having been involved in live music promotion in Melbourne Darling found Brisbane’s live music options comparatively slim.¹³¹ While Darling joined Triple Zed at the behest of Promotions Co-Ordinator Peter Williamson, he found even the station’s venues lacking. After watching country rock band Whyte Lightning perform at the Exchange on a Friday night, Darling threw his cigarette in the gutter outside and said to Williamson, “there’s got to be something better than this!”¹³² Such a reaction motivated Darling and Williamson’s search for a new venue that led to Triple Zed’s reign at the Queen’s Hotel.

The Queen’s Hotel, however, is itself an excellent example of the problems live music faced in Brisbane’s unstable night-time economy. Such instability can be partially explained through an absence of municipal support for night-life, consistent with prevailing attitudes of municipal governments to bars and night-clubs as spaces to be managed and contained, rather than supported and promoted.¹³³ While City Council regulations in place in the 1960s prohibited Sunday opening hours, the Queensland Licensing Commission cracked down on pubs that breached noise limits and liquor licenses. In the late 1970s, the Task Force’s harassment of community halls extended to live music pubs, while frequent police patrols targeted colourfully dressed punks and hippies after dark.¹³⁴ Elsewhere, Brisbane’s night-life had a decadent underbelly in Fortitude Valley. The Whiskey Au-Go-Go fire-bombing in March 1973 led to the deaths of three night-club patrons and staff; after the incident, the Valley’s police presence was upped, which in turn fuelled police corruption. Finally, pubs and night-clubs suffered during the process of urban development; many single and double

¹³⁰ Tony Mockeridge, “Rock ‘n roll – what future?,” *Radio Times*, March 1980, 11.

¹³¹ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Andy Lovatt and Justin O’Connor, “Cities and the Night Time Economy,” *Planning Practice and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1995): 130.

¹³⁴ Ron Peno interviewed by Andrew Stafford (27/08/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (UQFL440, Fryer Library).

storey pubs and halls in the CBD used for live music performance were demolished during the influx of capital and the onset of high-rise development.

In spite of these struggles, however, live music pubs and nightclubs experienced frequent success and unofficial entertainment precincts flourished throughout central Brisbane, forming a vital part of Brisbane's subcultural geography. The coffee houses on Elizabeth and Albert Streets capitalised on the first wave of rock 'n' roll in the late 1950s and the Beatles-fuelled explosion of rhythm and blues. The presence of coffee lounge proprietors sympathetic to popular music provided an outlet for the first local groups seeking to replicate the sounds of the Fab Four. A decade later, when Triple Zed began to colonise the inner city pubs in the late 1970s, a similar precinct emerged around Elizabeth and Creek Streets, eventually extending to the outer suburbs as the station's influence spread beyond the University.

John Reid's assertion that "Teenagers ruled the streets of Brisbane circa 1965"¹³⁵ was certainly true of Saturdays. The teenage Reid became a member of a youth gang who called themselves the "Treasury Steps Mob". On Saturday nights the Mob gathered outside the colonial Treasury Building and used the tram network to travel to the best of the evening's suburban parties.¹³⁶ In the afternoon, however, Reid and his peers gravitated to the city's coffee lounges, where they could dance to live bands or records played on expensive sound machines. The most prominent venue became the Primitif Cafe, which opened in 1957 along with Albert Street's Piccadilly Arcade. Although the Primitif came to be associated with a bohemian crowd who came to drink coffee, play chess, or listen to jazz records, in 1965 Hackworth sought to provide a venue "for the kids"¹³⁷ who were enamoured with the emerging sounds of rhythm and blues. When Hackworth opened the Primitif Junior in 1965 in the shop space above the cafe, it soon cultivated a large teenage following on Saturday afternoons who came to see the Purple Hearts perform for three to four hours.¹³⁸ The venue became pivotal for the Hearts, whose singer Mick Hadley had emigrated from London in 1962 and brought with him a strong repertoire of R' n' B. Hadley recalls how their sound was initially "quite different from what the other groups in town were playing,"¹³⁹ a distinction that also served to distinguish the venue.

¹³⁵ Kelvin Johnston, "Purple Hearts". *Revolution Rock Oral History of Brisbane Music 1942-Present*. id 22. <http://web.revolutionrock.com.au/oral-hist/index.php?id=22>

¹³⁶ John S Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

¹³⁷ Peter Hackworth interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 19/02/2010.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Mick Hadley interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 11/03/2010.

The success of the Purple Hearts was shared by The Five, a like-minded group who also performed at the Primitif. The Five also had a residency at De Brazil's coffee lounge, situated further down Albert Street. De Brazil's provided stiff competition for the Primitif on Saturday afternoons and for Ronnie Williams of The Five, reflected the lingering presence of Beatlemania:

I think the kids desperately wanted a Brissie "Cavern" of their own, and it would be fair to say that on these Saturdays the DB came pretty close, complete with long lines down Albert Street of corduroyed teenyboppers awaiting entry.¹⁴⁰

Complementing these two were several coffee lounges on Elizabeth Street, including T.C.'s, the Alley Cat, Sadlers, and the Sound Machine. While Sadlers leant towards an older audience – patrons sometimes danced foxtrots and waltzes – T.C.'s pandered more directly to the latest adolescent trends. Manager John Bell provided the "garish red colours" the kids preferred, and although live entertainment ranged from jazz to cabaret, the lounge was aptly described in the *Courier Mail* as one of "the teenage clubs, where boys and girls, mostly in tight slacks and jeans, stomp noisily to super-loud music."¹⁴¹ While ostensibly in direct competition, the coffee lounges welcomed such close proximity, proving variety for the rabble of revellers who moved amongst the lounges on Saturday afternoons.¹⁴²

On Sundays, however, the coffee lounges faced a similar problem to that encountered at Foco, with Sunday entertainment requiring church sanction. It was a requirement Hackworth routinely ignored, with jazz and folk nights held at the Primitif on Sundays with little Council intervention¹⁴³, while Ronnie Williams recalls a Sunday night residency at De Brazil's that became "patronised to full capacity."¹⁴⁴ Other proprietors in this precinct sought to challenge this regulation. In October 1963 the proprietors of T.C.'s, Sadlers and the Alley Cat presented a proposal to City Council for limited Sunday trading hours. While the Council initially agreed to review the proposal, Brisbane's Council of Churches firmly opposed the motion despite the sound lounges insistence on operate "outside Church hours."¹⁴⁵ The Council of Churches took the view that permitting Sunday dancing "would aid those influences already

¹⁴⁰Kelvin Johnston, "The Five." *Revolution Rock Oral History of Brisbane Music 1942-Present*. id 83. <http://web.revolutionrock.com.au/oral-hist/index.php?id=83>.

¹⁴¹"From 15 to 35...they went to 3 lounges", *Courier Mail* October 26, 1963, 10.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Peter Hackworth interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 19/02/2010/

¹⁴⁴Kelvin Johnston, "The Five."

¹⁴⁵ *Courier Mail*, October 24, 1963.

at work breaking down the moral fibre of our young men and women.”¹⁴⁶ In reply, a protest took place the following Sunday organised by the Eureka Youth League. Three hundred protestors – mainly teenagers – met outside T.C.’s at 2 p.m. before moving to Centenary Place, moving in groups of twelve to circumvent the ban on street marching. After the meeting, where the League’s speaker urged the teenagers to start their own club, the protestors returned to T.C.’s where several pioneered the “sit-down stomp”, while others skipped with a rope and played leapfrog.¹⁴⁷

Since venue owners provided tacit support for such events, they were often themselves targeted for their influence on youth culture, particularly in the more sensational corners of the popular press. The sense of moral panic associated with the Folk Club recurred in the pages of the *Truth* after a police raid on De Brazil’s in 1966 received coverage after eight CIB detectives discovered “one bottle of rum, four bottles of beer, a flask of whiskey and an empty half-gallon spirit keg.”¹⁴⁸ From this evidence the *Truth* concluded “there can be no doubt that long-haired weirdos and their gaudy girl friends are drinking – some openly and defiantly; others secretly – in some of the city’s coffee lounges.”¹⁴⁹ To defend this claim, the paper’s reporter observed “bottles of wine on tables occupied by pimply faced kids”, while “four mysterious drug pedlars” moved amongst the tables offering “kick-up tablets.”¹⁵⁰ Although De Brazil’s manager Les Williams could not deny the incriminating evidence unearthed by the police raid, he denied his club’s involvement in underage drinking, arguing his cafe “did their best” to minimise the practice.¹⁵¹

These practices, by and large, did not prevent the coffee lounges from fostering a successful rhythm and blues scene which succeeded The Five and Purple Hearts, who continued to perform at the Primitif until Ivan Dayman – owner of Sunshine Records and manager of a national live music circuit (see Chapter Three) – offered the group a recording and touring contract¹⁵². Likewise, The Five enjoyed support from De Brazil’s proprietor Johnny Morris – himself a prolific musician – until their relocation to Melbourne. In their

¹⁴⁶ *Courier Mail*, October 26, 1963.

¹⁴⁷ *Courier Mail*, October 28, 1963.

¹⁴⁸ *Sunday Truth*, July 17, 1966.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Sunday Truth*, July 17, 1966.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Mick Hadley interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 11/03/2010.

footsteps came a second wave of R 'n' B, with Matt Taylor's Chain and Glenn Wheatley's Bay City Union "keeping the Saturday lunchtime flame alive at the DB."¹⁵³

If the presence of sympathetic proprietors contributed to a vibrant live scene, their absence was notable in the 1970s. In particular, the gradual of disco throughout the decade had a tangible impact on live music. Instead of a live band punctuated by records, venues increasingly opted for the latter – and lots of glitter. Musician Tony Mockeridge recalls the Lands Office Hotel hosting live music on a weekly basis, before "suffering an identity crisis" and turning to one of Brisbane's first disco's in 1974-75.¹⁵⁴ Towards the end of the decade Brisbane fell into the clutches of *Saturday Night Fever*, and no venue reflected this more than Whispers in Fortitude Valley. Upon its opening in 1977, the Brunswick Street club catered for a clientele who were "well dressed, well groomed and ready to dance out their Saturday Night Fever dreams."¹⁵⁵ This theme extended to the men's and women's toilets, named respectively the "Olivia Newton John" and the "Travolta John."¹⁵⁶ Other venues hedged their bets; at PIPPS nightclub on Elizabeth Street, formerly the Sound Machine, disco music and live bands alternated at half hour intervals.¹⁵⁷

Nonetheless, the demand for live music was apparent amongst young male audiences who sought a more "authentic" experience. Such an experience could be located in the intimate, sweaty confines of the pub. The rise of "pub rock" in Australia represented an extension of the rhythm and blues culture, one that celebrated the exertions of skilled performers able to "sweat" for their audience as much as for themselves.¹⁵⁸ It was a phenomenon pub entrepreneurs exploited by converting their suburban beer gardens into large concert arenas. While the pub invariably holds the upper hand in the relationship, bands gained considerable agency through fostering close relationships with certain pubs, and thus with their audience.

While "pub rock" has usually been associated with Sydney and Melbourne, the phenomenon arrived in Brisbane in the late 1970's. The Exchange Hotel became the first pub to regularly open its doors to bands, offering a residency to Tony Mockeridge and his group Carnival in late 1977. Situated on the corner of Charlotte and Edward Streets, the pub had featured occasional cover bands and country rock proponents Whyte Lightning. When

¹⁵³ Kelvin Johnston, "The Five."

¹⁵⁴ Tony Mockeridge, "Rock 'n roll – what future?," 11.

¹⁵⁵ "Saturday Night in the City....," *Time Off*, April 11, 1980: 3.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵⁷ "Saturday Night in the City....," 4.

¹⁵⁸ Homan, *The Mayor's a Square*, 96-98.

Carnival convinced the pub to put on live music, with the added incentive of a Triple Zed discount, the scene was set for the station's transformation of the pub into a regular hub of musical activity. Although a dispute between The Survivors and the Musician's Union curtailed the opening night's entertainment – the pub was, to a disappointed *Semper* reviewer, “like any other disco in town”¹⁵⁹ – the Exchange soon rivalled Baroona Hall as a regular punk venue. On any given night, punks could be found “sitting, standing, dancing or falling over wherever they wished” and “throwing cake and drinks at one another.”¹⁶⁰

The Queen's Hotel, however, was the real success story. In John Stanwell's estimation, the Queen's was crucial in providing a venue for touring bands from Sydney and Melbourne¹⁶¹, including Cold Chisel, The Angels, and the Sports. In The Queen's, such bands found a venue and audience that provided them with added incentive to include Brisbane on their tour itinerary. The success for Triple Zed went further; in September the station marked its first foray into international promotion with UK punks The Stranglers. For these bands, local bands benefited from regular work as opening acts.

Prior to May 1978, The Queen's Hotel was little more than “a sombre brick sterility of a facade hidden away in the dead end of town.”¹⁶² Situated near St Stephen's Cathedral on the corner of Charlotte and Creek Streets, the Queen's possessed a large beer garden with an estimated capacity of eight hundred. Other than a moderately popular cover band evening on Fridays¹⁶³, however, the beer garden's capacity was rarely tested. Peter Williamson became aware of the vacant space after a recommendation from fellow promoter Harvey Lister. On a quiet Sunday afternoon in early 1978, Williamson and Darling visited the pub to test the waters:

I remember getting out of the car and looking at this place and thinking, “jeez this is a big pub. I don't know how I've missed this before!” It was only on the opposite corner down the road from the Exchange. I remember bending these metal louvre windows open on a Sunday afternoon and looking into this beer garden thinking, “this is fucking fantastic.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Cee Walker, “The Exchange Hotel: Atcherly House,” *Semper Floreat*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (March 15, 1978): 25.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Finucan, “Venue Violence,” *Radio Times*, October 1978: 7.

¹⁶¹ John Stanwell interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 28/08/2001.

¹⁶² Rob Cameron, “Pub rock revived,” *Semper*, June 7, 1978: 33.

¹⁶³ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

To Darling, it was just like the large suburban barns he had experienced in Melbourne, “only it was in the city.”¹⁶⁵ Such a situation reflects the uneven flow of capital into Brisbane; while high-rise development was occurring with greater frequency, a considerable stock of pubs, along with other low-lying buildings, remained.

Duly impressed, Darling and Williamson approached Hotel manager Andrew Maguire and successfully arranged a joint venture between Triple Zed and the hotel, with an opening night to feature Skyhooks and the Survivors scheduled for Wednesday 24 May. For Williamson and Triple Zed, the Queen’s represented an opportunity to “expand our sphere of operation”, with a “cultural expansion to the station’s ‘On-Air’ content” and an additional source of fundraising.¹⁶⁶ For Triple Zed and its supporters, the Queen’s also posed a challenge to “the sleazy pre-packaged, pre-recorded disco atmosphere”¹⁶⁷ dominating Brisbane night-life. This challenge was taken up on the opening night when the queue for the venue at 7 p.m. extended around the corner. Those in line constituted a diverse crowd:

Never mind the pub rule about no thongs and compulsory collars, the hard core punkers were there, the aggro sneer and carefully ripped shirts...There were glazed businessmen in straight brown shirts who looked like they’d been wandering the streets of town and heard the music. There were oldies hoping for a rage. And rock promoters eager to gauge the public response.¹⁶⁸

In Cameron’s estimate, eight hundred packed into the pub while a further three hundred were refused entry. For the unlucky punters, however, the metal louvres offered an alternative vantage point, and throughout the night the louvres were frequently crowded with passers-by hoping to catch a glimpse of the action.¹⁶⁹

While the Queen’s Hotel was privately owned by the Carmichael family¹⁷⁰, Triple Zed’s active role in the rejuvenation of the pub made them an active partner in the venture. The beer garden – converted into the “African Queen” room, complete with fake palm trees – was provided to the station at no cost and Triple Zed kept the door takings.¹⁷¹ This allowed Triple Zed to maintain a small cover charge – \$3.50, or \$2.50 for subscribers¹⁷² – comparable to

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Peter Williamson, “Promotions,” *Radio Times*, June 1978: 6.

¹⁶⁷ Cameron, “Pub Rock Revived,” 33.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Cameron, “Pub Rock Revived,” 33

¹⁷⁰ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁷¹ Peter Williamson, “Promotions,” 6.

¹⁷² Cameron, “Pub rock revived,” 33.

Joint Efforts at the University.¹⁷³ The pub would make up for any shortfall with increased alcohol sales. While the price of drinks, higher than at Joint Efforts, put some Triple Zed noses out of joint, the station was otherwise given “carte blanche.”¹⁷⁴ Triple Zed’s promoters nonetheless worked hard to meet their end of the bargain, sound-proofing the African Queen room at the station’s expense.¹⁷⁵

Triple Zed also took responsibility for organizing private security, although this became a source of tension within the station. The pub, along with Darling and Williamson, deemed it necessary in an environment susceptible for alcohol-fuelled violence. The promoters also hoped private security would discourage police harassment; their presence on the opening night had resulted in a handful of arrests.¹⁷⁶ While karate black-belt Jean-Jaques Burnel of The Strangers performed an impromptu act of crowd-control, knocking out local punk V2 with his bass for being spat on, a more continuous security presence was demanded. Darling and Williamson therefore

had to train these [Telecom] technicians...this guy came to us who wanted to do security for some extra money, and we said, ‘You organise the team and this is how we want it done.’ And he looked after it. It just happened he was a Telecom technician and all the bouncers he got together were all his mates from work. But they were really good. Their whole idea was to put people in cars and send them home. Don’t bash them up around the corner in the car park.¹⁷⁷

For Michael Finucan, however, hired security at the Queen’s meant “the atmosphere; ‘the feel’ is not quite as we would wish.”¹⁷⁸ In Finucan’s experience, the Queens bouncers – or, as he preferred, the “Gorillas in Red T-shirts”¹⁷⁹ – failed to engage the crowd other than in an aggressive manner and, while not resorting to physical violence, used their physical presence to intimidate punters, sometimes extending this treatment to female audience members. While women had by now won the battle for admission to public bars, the Queen’s, like the majority of rock pubs,¹⁸⁰ was not always a welcoming place for women, and the private

¹⁷³ The entry price was generally favourable; elsewhere, clubs in the city were charging \$4 or \$5 for entry.

“Saturday Night in the City...,” 3-4.

¹⁷⁴ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁷⁵ *Radio Times*, September 1978, 16.

¹⁷⁶ Cameron, “Pub Rock Revived,” 33.

¹⁷⁷ Dave Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁷⁸ Finucan, “Venue Violence,” 5.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Vivian Johnson explores the marginalised place of women in pub rock with her “Be my woman rock’ n’ roll” Paul Hayward (ed.) *From Pop to Punk to Post-modernism. Popular music and Australian culture from the 1960s to the 1990s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

security sometimes contributed to this discomfort. Finucan observed the Gorillas “draw themselves up, chest out, muscles on display [and] make sure they make the woman acutely aware of the physical discrepancy of size.”¹⁸¹ Overall, Finucan emphasised the gap in expectations between student radicals at the station and Queen’s management as Joint Effort became “joint venture”:

We work there in conjunction with the management of the hotel. They are not young, they are business people, not rock n roll fans looking for fun...They want a good, stable, well controlled predictable environment to calculate their profit margins in. They want everything that Rock and Roll should not be – i.e. safe, inoffensive, stable etc...So the Queens is always going to be a compromise between *their* practical constraints and *our* ideals.¹⁸²

Despite these setbacks, the Queen’s ushered in Triple Zed’s expansion well beyond the confines of the university. The absence of competition observed earlier by John Stanwell provided with a plethora of opportunities; besides the Queen’s and the Exchange, Triple Zed cultivated a small suburban circuit which included the Cleveland Sands Hotel, the Aussie Nash at Woollongabba, and the East’s Leagues Club at Coorparoo, while during the early 1980’s their presence in central Brisbane was maintained at the New York Hotel and National Hotels, the latter dubbed “Amyl’s Nightspace.”¹⁸³ Situated near the top of Queen Street, the New York Hotel began hosting live music in August 1981 and, like the Queen’s, was large enough for interstate and overseas acts; Nick Cave’s Birthday Party performed there and six hundred turned out to see John Cooper Clarke.¹⁸⁴ However it was in some ways an unlikely venue. Triple Zed’s Phil Parker considered the New York to be more “swanky” than the average rock pub; with waiters and waitresses working the room, “you could sit in your seat and watch a band, and someone came around and asked for your drink order.”¹⁸⁵

Triple Zed’s success was also apparent in the career paths of Darling and Williamson. At the end of 1979 the duo left the station to form their own promotions company, going by the name “The ‘Piranha Brothers.’”¹⁸⁶ Darling and Williamson’s most successful venture became the rejuvenation of the Exchange Hotel as the 279 Club. Opening in the closing months of

¹⁸¹ Finucan, “Venue Violence,” 5.

¹⁸² Ibid, 7.

¹⁸³ Howard Stringer, “The Brisbane Venue Vacuum: Putting the Life back into Nightlife” *Semper*, No. 1, March 4, 1985: 28-29.

¹⁸⁴ *Time Off*, August 28, 1981.

¹⁸⁵ Phil Parker interviewed by Gary Williams, *Generation Zed: No Other Radio Like This*. (Brisbane: Kingswood Press, 2000): 50.

¹⁸⁶ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

1980, the 279 became the hub of Brisbane's emerging post-punk and goth scene, hosting bands including Zero, the 31st, and The End. While Williamson left the fledgling operation at the end of 1980,¹⁸⁷ Darling's ongoing presence provided continuity for Triple Zed audiences and bands associated with the station. John Willsteed relied upon his "social connection"¹⁸⁸ with Darling to snare regular gigs for Zero. Indeed the 279 largely reflects Triple Zed's ethos right down to the subscriber discount.¹⁸⁹ This made the 279 a favourite venue for Darling,

simply because it did everything I set it up to do in the first place. It fostered local music, it was self-perpetuating, and we always made money. Even when we had a bad month we still made four hundred dollars.¹⁹⁰

Darling and Piranha also attempted to break into the Fortitude Valley market. While the Whiskey Au-Go-Go bombing had turned away Brisbane's young people, the entrepreneurs at Piranha sensed an opportunity to tap into a moribund market. The opening of the Silver Dollar in April 1980 was arranged through a deal with Fortitude Valley night-club impresario Ron Cantarella,¹⁹¹ and industry knowledge and contracts gleaned from Triple Zed allowed Darling to book Skyhooks for the opening of another venue. An inconspicuous club down a flight of steps on Ann Street, the Silver Dollar could accommodate close to five hundred people, although it was a tight crush. The venue had a low ceiling, improvised stage, and no backstage area for bands, who performed without any running order or timetable. For Rod McLeod, the Silver Dollar was a punk venue in the mould of the Curry Shop, where punters could "jump the bar and serve themselves because the service was crap."¹⁹² Meanwhile, Barooka Hall promoter John Reid attempted to move into Pinocchio's on Ann Street, the club owned by underworld figure Tony Bellino.¹⁹³ For a short time, patrons at Pinocchio's could "listen to some of Brisbane's most interesting experimental rock in an authentically humid" venue.¹⁹⁴ If that wasn't enticement enough, the three dollar cover charge also came with of a congealing bowl of Spaghetti bolognese:

The beauty was that according to the law you had to serve food, so when you charged them the cover charge they were allowed to get this big bowl of

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ John Willsteed interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 01/02/2010.

¹⁸⁹ *Time Off*, February 27, 1981.

¹⁹⁰ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Rod McLeod interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

¹⁹³ John S Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

¹⁹⁴ "Saturday night in the city....," 4.

spaghetti; a big bowl of home-made Italian spaghetti would be plonked on the table...for them to eat.¹⁹⁵

Such venues were always subject to the predilections of the owners, and a disagreement between Bellino and Reid curtailed the live music phase of Pinocchio's. Although the 279 Club was a more stable venue in comparison, by November 1981 a change of management at the Exchange had made Piranha's position untenable. The new regime created a hostile atmosphere for local bands, to the point where 279 regulars longer felt welcome. Whereas Piranha had once enjoyed a free hand, new management chose to introduce a team of private bouncers that caused trouble with 279 regulars, who were either denied entry or voluntarily refused to patronise the venue:

The first casualty was Gary Warner, from Out of Nowhere, who was involved in a fracas while helping Xero take their equipment from the Club. The last incident concerned Ron DoRon [Ron Peno] from the 31st, who was barred for, as Exchange bar manager said, 'kissing his boyfriend in front of everyone – I don't like that'.¹⁹⁶

Rising bar prices contributed to steadily falling crowds; one of the final 279 Club shows drew only thirty-four punters. While the pub was keen for Piranha to continue a more successful monthly blues night¹⁹⁷, their compromised autonomy led Darling to withdraw from live music at the Exchange.

Such closures contributed to the dire situation observed in the middle of the decade. In early 1985, a *Semper* survey of live music activity in Brisbane – aptly titled “The Brisbane Venue Vacuum” – found only seven regular night spots, the majority affiliated with Triple Zed¹⁹⁸. By this point Piranha had disbanded, leaving the radio station as the only major promoter in town. However the talent drain affecting Triple Zed, one that witnessed the departure of Williamson and Darling, meant the station lost some of its impetus as a promoter. Howard Stringer blamed Triple Zed's “altruistic”¹⁹⁹ approach to live music for the demise of some venues; at Amyl's Nightspace bands were scheduled without regard to talent or prestige and the venue consequently drew wildly fluctuating crowds. The National Hotel's management eventually decided a “smooth cover band night spot”²⁰⁰ would be better for business. Overall, the live music scene of the 1980s presents a picture of unremarkable and

¹⁹⁵ John Reid interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 24/07/2002.

¹⁹⁶ *Time Off*, November 20, 1981.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ Stringer, “The Brisbane Venue Vacuum,” 28.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Stringer, “The Brisbane Venue Vacuum,” 28.

peripheral venues unable to sustain a vibrant scene, and several bands sought out opportunities elsewhere. Leading the mid-1980s exodus were the Ups and Downs, Ron Peno and Brad Meyers, and Tex Perkins. While Ups and Downs drummer Darren Atkinson remembers Triple Zed as “the focal point”²⁰¹ for the music scene, the band also sought opportunities with the Hutchinson booking agency, a more commercially minded circuit for cover bands. For Atkinson, “if you’re drawing 80 or 90 people to the Aussie Nash Hotel you’ve really gone about as far as you can in Brisbane.”²⁰²

The Riptides had earlier reached the same conclusion and their decision to move to Sydney was partially influenced by the closure of the Queen’s Hotel in early 1979.²⁰³ Considering its regularity and success, the demise of the Queen’s in early 1979 was more acutely felt and serves to encapsulate the problems that fed the venue vacuum. On Thursday, 15 March, the station received news that the hotel’s temporary entertainment license²⁰⁴ had been revoked. The Licensing Commission cited noise complaints received from Kangaroo Point residents, combined with the venue’s “limited seating”, for the decision.²⁰⁵ Without large pub rock audiences, the hotel was bleeding money, even after manager Andrew Maguire released over forty casual staff.²⁰⁶ The following Monday Maguire submitted an application for an annual entertainment license and proposed a \$10,000 overhaul of facilities, including – of all things at a rock pub – extra seating. By the end of the week, however, the Licensing Commission had rejected this proposal, and with it any chance of live music at the Queen’s.²⁰⁷

The timing of the Licensing Commission’s decision caught the station by surprise, given that most of the problems identified had been tolerated for some time. Subsequently, theories of a conspiracy against Triple Zed began to emerge. According to one, a National Party politician with a “vendetta” against Triple Zed investigated the station’s financial situation and, discovering a perilous week-to-week existence, sought to sever the station’s major

²⁰¹ Darren Atkinson interviewed by Andrew Stafford (04/10/2010), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440)

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ *Courier Mail*, May 5, 1979. The Riptides estimated the demise of the Queen’s cost them \$1500 in lost income over two months.

²⁰⁴ The Hotel had a temporary entertainment license, which it had been renewing every three months. David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

²⁰⁵ *Courier Mail*, March 17, 1979.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ *Courier Mail*, March 22, 1979.

source of revenue;²⁰⁸ indeed, the Queen's had raised an estimated \$10,000 over eleven months.²⁰⁹ When negotiations between Triple Zed and the York Hotel to replace the Queen's broke down after the pub was refused an entertainment license due to "inadequate facilities,"²¹⁰ such speculation was only fuelled further. Like many rock pubs of the era, the Queen's was a chaotic venue and its closure reflects the contested nature of live music pubs between promoters, audiences and licensing authorities observed in other Australian cities.²¹¹ For Darling, however, the final days of the Queen's were a reflection of the political climate of the Bjelke-Petersen era and Triple Zed's opposition to the State Government. Promoting the Queen's became a "constant fight with authority," and

being the Joh Bjelke-Petersen period you were never going to win when you ran a venue that had a rabble of people that turned up every week and got pissed and listened to live music.²¹²

While Bjelke-Petersen's role as "the focal image, the very locus, of politics in his state"²¹³ contributed a more tangible cause of the closure of the Queen's was the impact of urban development on inner city venues conducive to live music. By 1979 the Queen's was already overshadowed by high-rise development in Eagle Street. Shortly before the closure of the Queen's, the A.M.P. society had purchased the pub and site, and by late March had submitted an application for redevelopment,²¹⁴ with the pub demolished two months later. During the course of the 1980s, the New York Hotel – which was subsumed by the Myer Centre development²¹⁵ – the Arcadia Hotel, and the National Hotel also faced the wrecking ball.²¹⁶

The absence of municipal support for live music venues and the actions of a State Government that perceived music subcultures as "a social and political problem than as an economic asset"²¹⁷ must be considered in tandem with the City Council's unconditional approach to urban development and renewal and Bjelke-Petersen's active pursuit of investment in Queensland. Evident in this process is the conservative mentality evident in the politics and moral panic associated with the coffee lounges of the 1960s, and in the mindset

²⁰⁸ Calvin Noack, "Brisbane Rock In Doldrums: License To Rage Cancelled," *Time Off*, April 1979, 8.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Noack, "Brisbane Rock In Doldrums: License To Rage Cancelled," 8.

²¹¹ Homan, *The Mayor's a Square*, 95-97.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ James Walter, "Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: 'The Populist Autocrat,'" in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear (eds), *The Premiers of Queensland* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2003): 304.

²¹⁴ *Courier Mail*, March 22, 1979.

²¹⁵ Williams, *Generation Zed*, 50.

²¹⁶ Stringer, "The Brisbane Venue Vacuum," 29.

²¹⁷ Terry Flew, Gillian Ching, Andrew Stafford and Jo Taachi, "Music industry development and Brisbane's future as a creative city" (Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, 2001): 16.

of venue proprietors suspicious of alternative subcultures. Although the efforts of Triple Zed and other sympathetic promoters succeeded in creating improvised entertainment precincts of like-minded bars and clubs, the approach adopted by government, regulators and the media meant the full economic benefits of a stable night-time economy were unrealised.

Chapter Three: “Cloudland Sports True Colours”

Brisbane’s largest music venues accommodated a succession of big-name overseas performers and attracted heavily capitalised live music entrepreneurs. While these large venues held considerable significance for multiple generations of musicians and audiences, they also held equal importance for successive generations of promoters seeking to capitalise on the growth of a transnational music industry. The substantial sums of capital used to stage the Big Shows in the late 1950s and early 1960s were reflected in the efforts of national entrepreneurs such as Michael Gudinski, Rae Evans, and local promoters Harvey Lister and – for a short time – Triple Zed.

The development of Festival Hall in 1959 is regarded as a turning point for Brisbane’s live music industry. However, in reality it did little to change the character of the former Brisbane Stadium, an open-air arena with rows of bleachers and a central arena used for boxing or roller derbies. The revamped venue, however, held lofty ideals, and early reviews²¹⁸ suggested the Hall would be suitable for orchestral and chamber music; an upward-slanting canopy would ensure “every single note of the music would be reflected”, while the raised stage could accommodate a 120-piece orchestra visible to every member of the audience. As it turned out, the renovations made little difference to Festival Hall’s purpose. The Brisbane Stadium had already been the scene of Brisbane’s first “rock’ n’ roll riot”²¹⁹ in November 1956, when an audience of three thousand clashed with police during a concert featuring local bands. In January 1957, United States entrepreneur Lee Gordon’s Big Shows toured, bringing a full complement of American entertainers. Despite the “tin barn”²²⁰ acoustics, audience members danced wildly in the bleachers in defiance of the amassed police.

The large stadium venues were crucial to the arrival of rock ‘n’ roll in Australia. The effects of this large proximity of globally renowned stars provided a visceral experience that could not be experienced through radio or television. Away from the controlled and sanitised appearances on radio and television, the live setting represented a more intimate setting for the audience. For popular music journalist Ritchie Yorke, who spent his teenage years in Brisbane, concerts at Festival Hall represented “the real rock thing, powering into shape in

²¹⁸ *Sunday Mail*, 29 March, 1959, 7; *Telegraph*, April 22, 1959, 39.

²¹⁹ Evans, ‘‘...To Try to Ruin,’’ 113.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

Brisbane before our never-to-be-satiated eyes, a quintessential rite of passage for all in attendance.”²²¹

In Shane Homan’s estimate, the Big Shows “provided a crucial forum for performers and audiences to witness international acts, usually at the height of their popularity.”²²² Highly capitalized and lucrative, Big Shows were organised by entrepreneurs working on a national scale. The importation of a “full and varied”²²³ roster of entertainers, including cabaret singers, jazz bands, jugglers and acrobats, made them a kind of huge variety show. By the start of the 1960s, rock’ n’ roll’s rising popularity, after the success of the film *Blackboard Jungle*, saw Big Show line-ups become steadily inclined towards the newer forms popular music; the performers at Gordon’s first Brisbane event incorporated groups performing western swing, rhythm and blues, and doo-wop;²²⁴ for isolated Brisbane youth, it was a comprehensive introduction to the multi-faceted beast of rock’ n’ roll.

With little regard for the renovated hall’s initial high-culture pretensions, Big Show events came to dominate Festival Hall in the early 1960s, with performers including the Everly Brothers, Bill Haley and his Comets, Jerry Lee Lewis, the Kingston Trio, Chubby Checker, Roy Orbison, and of course, the Beatles.²²⁵ While Gordon faded away in the early 1960s, the Big Show format continued through the efforts of Kenn Brodziak and Harry Miller. Emerging in the early 1960s, the duo built on Gordon’s format and formed a “triumvirate”²²⁶ between their competing companies of Aztec Services and Pan Pacific Promotions and Stadiums Limited, which provided near exclusive access to Australia’s stadium venues. While Brodziak and Miller’s passion for music was debatable, their business acumen was beyond doubt. Both eagerly sought out new musical trends, Miller with the Surf music craze in the United States and Brodziak with the rhythm and blues emerging from Britain. Having chosen the Beatles on a whim in 1963, their subsequent explosion of popularity allowed Brodziak to ride the “tidal wave”²²⁷ of Beatlemania. When the wave hit Brisbane at the end of June 1964, the Fab Four booked out Festival Hall for two nights.

²²¹ Ritchie Yorke, “Brisbane’s House of Rock”, *Sunday Mail*, 23 May 1999, 5.

²²² Homan, *The Mayor’s a Square*, 33.

²²³ Zion, “The Pop Music Scene in the 1960s,” 219.

²²⁴ Evans, “...to Try to Ruin’,” 114.

²²⁵ Yorke, “Brisbane’s House of Rock,” 5.

²²⁶ Zion, “The Pop Music Scene in the 1960s,” 220.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 216.

While other venues – among them City Hall and Her Majesty’s Theatre – sometimes hosted large concerts, Festival Hall became Brisbane’s venue for an international touring circuit, for whom southern promoters Ray Evans and Michael Gudinski sought to tap into throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s. Among others, Led Zeppelin, Bob Dylan, the Who, Led Zeppelin, R.E.M., Elvis Costello and the Cure performed at the venue.²²⁸ Evans and Gudinski booked the hall in conjunction with other stadium venues, and from the mid 1970s, Tour Promotions run by Brisbane-based Harvey Lister.²²⁹ The promoters provided considerable logistical support to artists, organizing transportation, accommodation, equipment and catering.²³⁰ Briefly joining them was Darling and Piranha Brothers, who began to take the risk of promoting international outright. It was a daunting opportunity for the young promoter:

I think we [paid] \$36,000 dollars for the Eurythmics to do Festival Hall, and it was one of the first where we brought the act, and I mean that was an insane amount of money. I think the most we’d spent on an act in those days up until then was about three grand. So this was a huge gamble I took and this was when Williamson wasn’t around...[but] the thing sold out in about two days. All in all it was a no brainer.²³¹

While large-scale promoting worked out for the well-established Darling, the initial capital outlay required prevented the majority of local promoters from hiring the venue.

Inside the Hall, the heat was stifling. Gavin Sawford compared being inside Festival Hall to Dante’s inferno: “hot, humid and packed with thousands of tortured souls.”²³² If the heat was torturous, the security and seating attendants hardly helped matters. The Festival Hall attendants were often viewed as overbearing in their efforts to ensure audience members sat in their allocated seats, in a distant echo of the clash between Brisbane youth and police at the Brisbane stadium. The acoustics were hardly an improvement on the “tin barn” stadium. Visibility was equally problematic; while the band was indeed visible to every member of the audience, those at the rear of the hall required binoculars for a decent view. Although a popular venue with a rich social history, Festival Hall became a somewhat detested venue for those wanting a good live music experience. The *Cane Toad Times* review of Bob Dylan’s

²²⁸ Yorke, “Brisbane’s House of Rock”, 5.

²²⁹ *Courier Mail*, May 30, 1979. Like the Big-show promoters, Lister organised a wide range of entertainers, including the Tchaikovsky Ballet Company and the Vienna Boys Choir.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

²³¹ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta.

²³² Gavin Sawford in *Razar: Young, Fast & Non-Boring* (Brisbane: Queensland Performing Arts Museum, 2004): 25.

Festival Hall performance in March 1978 suggested the venue “should have been burnt down years ago.”²³³

While John Willsteed recalls performing at the venue to a sparse crowd of five hundred at a local band contest,²³⁴ the venue was more frequently packed to capacity with diverse audiences. A reviewer of Status Quo in 1978 found himself surrounded by “a sea of twelve year old boppers thrusting their first upwards to the beat of the music,”²³⁵ while the *Cane Toad Times* poked fun at the ageing audience at the Dylan concert. Those who came to see their 1960s counter-culture idol seemed afterwards “to have post-catharsis serenity”; on the other hand, “maybe it was old age.”²³⁶ There were also moments of anarchy and violence to rival the Brisbane Stadium riots. When the Dead Kennedy’s arrived in 1983, the male toilets were “awash with blood”²³⁷, while onstage singer Jello Biafra was “a white hot blur of sweat, bare flesh and mic lead who repeatedly hurled himself into the frenzied mass.”²³⁸ Earlier, local support band The White Assassins had dismembered an effigy of police commissioner Terry Lewis. Although Festival Hall had a reputation for avoiding police harassment – even during the late 1970s²³⁹ – the police made an exception on this occasion.

If Festival Hall dominated the international circuit, the arrival of rock’ n’ roll provided opportunities for a local industry to flourish. These were succinctly realised by Ivan Dayman and his Sunshine Records label. Dayman was a metal contractor from Adelaide turned who started from a belief that he could provide a better standard of rock’ n’ roll dance.²⁴⁰ His early success with The Ballroom in Adelaide in the late 1950’s fuelled his expansion, first to Melbourne and then to Brisbane in 1962. Although working exclusively with Australian performers, Dayman was an entrepreneur on a par with Gordon, Brodziak, and Miller; he ruthlessly pursued promotional opportunities for Sunshine artists, sometimes taking a strong personal interest in their career development. TV appearances, magazine profiles and national and regional tours were pursued with the intention of squeezing the most out of the growing popular music market.²⁴¹

²³³ “Dylan in the unknown,” *Cane Toad Times*, April 1978, 15.

²³⁴ John Willsteed interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 01/02/2010.

²³⁵ *Semper*, August 2 1978, 23.

²³⁶ “Dylan in the unknown,” 15.

²³⁷ *Razar: Young, Fast & Non-Boring*, 25.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Semper*, October 11, 1978, 24.

²⁴⁰ Charles Higham, “Getting Wilder Every Hour,” *The Bulletin*, March 5, 1966, 25.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Dayman's entrepreneurial skills are aptly demonstrated in his approach to Cloudland Ballroom, the venue he perceived as his point of entry into Brisbane. The whimsical domed structure in Bowen Hills was the highly visible centre of Brisbane social life. Originally conceived as Luna Park Brisbane in 1939, the planned amusement park never materialised and the venue served instead as headquarters for the U.S. Forces occupying Brisbane during the Second World War. After the war the venue took the name of Cloudland and became a popular destination amongst Brisbane's post-war youth for debutante balls. Cloudland became a frequently used multi-purpose venue, hosting university exams, annual conventions, and car shows.

Cloudland was a venue for several of Brisbane's early rock 'n' roll dances²⁴² and hosted the visit of Buddy Holly in February 1958.²⁴³ However, the venue was more frequently used for ballroom dancing, as Dayman discovered upon arrival in 1962. For Pat Aulton, Dayman's right-hand man at Sunshine Records, an early visit to Cloudland felt like a "time-warp"²⁴⁴ for those accustomed to rock 'n' roll promotion; Dayman and Aulton witnessed a 1930's style swing band entertaining an audience of little more than a thousand.²⁴⁵ Dayman decided that the venue needed a "good broom through it"²⁴⁶ and through steady promotion transformed the venue into a more regular rock 'n' roll venue. By 1966 Dayman, with a hint of entrepreneurial pride, boasted to the *Bulletin* that Cloudland could accommodate "up to three or four thousand teenagers."²⁴⁷ On Dayman's watch, the stately ballroom was transformed by young people, dressed in the latest fashion and practising the informal dances of rock 'n' roll. Such a development serves to add another layer of social significance for the venue that spanned successive generations.

Despite Dayman's success, Triple Zed's association with the venue in the late 1970's represented the venue's greatest popular music moment. Similarly, the Joint Efforts at Cloudland in 1979 represented the apex of the station's success as a live promoter. By this point the station's roster of regular performers spanned the local to the international, who were accommodated with frequent events at the University refectory and its growing pub circuit. With a handful of paid staff and an army of volunteers, the station staged Joint Efforts of Big Show proportions. This success, however, was influenced heavily by the closure of the

²⁴² Walden, *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll But I like It*, 93.

²⁴³ *Courier Mail* 19 February, 1958, 3

²⁴⁴ Walden, *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll But I like It*, 93.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ Walden, *It's Only Rock 'n' Roll But I like It*, 93.

²⁴⁷ Higham, "Getting Wilder Every Hour," 25.

Queen's Hotel in March 1979. For Triple Zed's Williamson and Darling, who were now facing contractual obligations from bands booked for the Queen's, Cloudland presented the best alternative:

We had Richard Clapton and someone else booked at the Queen's when it shut down. And because you signed contracts, you're up for a certain amount of money if the gig didn't go ahead. So we thought we'd chuck it in Cloudland to save our arses without paying for something that never went ahead.²⁴⁸

While the Queen's Hotel established Triple Zed's live credentials, Cloudland cemented Triple Zed's growing reputation in overseas punk and new wave circles. After the successful appearances of The Stranglers at the Queen's, fellow UK acts Graham Parker, XTC and the Members played Cloudland Joint Efforts in 1979, with the latter group making a Cloudland appearance a pre-condition for their Australian tour.²⁴⁹ The station's success in this regard was buttressed with a sponsorship arrangement with Festival Hall promoters.²⁵⁰ In this, the station's promotional support was exchanged for a monetary donation to the station. When Elvis Costello arrived in Brisbane in 1978, his Festival Hall show was preceded by an appearance on Triple Zed's airwaves:

I remember driving Elvis Costello out to Triple Zed for a Saturday afternoon where he'd play his favourite records. And his manager said to me, mate, Elvis is like this. If he hates it, he'll leave after two songs. If he really enjoys it, you won't get rid of him. Four hours later Mark Bracken still had him in the studio, pulling out tapes and records. He just loved it. And the next time he came out he asked if he could do it again. So these are the sorts of relationships Triple Zed had with the artists.²⁵¹

Hiring Cloudland allowed Triple Zed to work directly with such artists in a Joint Effort environment, while also allowing the station to directly benefit from attendances ranging from 800 to 2,500.²⁵²

This opportunity for Triple Zed emerged as Cloudland faced an uncertain future. After Sydney property developer Peter Kurts purchased the ballroom and site in 1974 for \$750,000,²⁵³ Cloudland's demolition became a distinct possibility when a residential development was proposed for the hilltop location. After the proposed deal collapsed,

²⁴⁸ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/2/2010.

²⁴⁹ John Stanwell interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 28/08/2002.

²⁵⁰ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta. For international acts that had a niche audience, larger promoters often sought out Triple Zed to help with promotional duties.

²⁵¹ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta.

²⁵² *Radio Times*, August 1979, 7.

²⁵³ *Sunday Sun*, 9 September, 1979.

however, Kurts opted to maximise his investment through the venue's role as an entertainment centre. This he pursued with some effort, spending some "hundreds of thousands of dollars"²⁵⁴ to restore the venue's structural framework. "We are trying to bring back the days when Cloudland was one of the biggest entertainment centres in Brisbane," Kurts explained to the *Sunday Sun*.²⁵⁵ By 1979 Kurtz had established a booking schedule that catered for traditional and contemporary formats; a ballroom dance complete with big band took place on Wednesday evenings while a disco took place in the Panorama Room on Thursday and Friday nights. Triple Zed Joint Efforts occupied the ballroom on Saturday nights, and quickly became memorable occasions for audience, performers, and local residents alike.

For Darling, "every event at Cloudland was unique,"²⁵⁶ and this view was reflected in contemporary reviews. Those accustomed to the more prosaic spaces of community halls and pubs and pub circuit were treated to a venue of exceptional architectural distinction. The interior featured a balcony spanning the main hall, the full-length mirrors adorning the walls and an expansive dance floor. The relatively small stage provided close access both for those on the floor and those on the balcony.²⁵⁷ Once the show was underway, the combination of pogo dancing and Cloudland's sprung floor was often spectacular. One Cloudland reviewer found that "the whole hall bounces madly and the lights hanging from the front of the stage look like they're going to cause an unpleasant accident the way they sway."²⁵⁸

The atmosphere at Cloudland was equally influenced through Triple Zed's approach to booking that presented a line-up that, like the Big Shows, represented disparate strands of alternative rock. An early show featuring local punks Razar and pub rock favourites the Angels emphasises this. While Razar may have been more accustomed to community halls, the thousand-strong audience who had come to see the Angels were equally unprepared for the local punks. Faced with a potentially hostile crowd, Razar singer Marty Burke won over the pub rock audience with a life-size cut-out of John Travolta liberated from the Panorama disco. Burke threw the Travolta effigy into the crowd, where it was swiftly destroyed.²⁵⁹ Cloudland Joint Efforts thus represented a new chapter of rock'n'roll anarchy, which extended beyond the confines of the venue's interior. Joint Efforts at Cloudland were

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ *Sunday Sun*, 9 September, 1979.

²⁵⁶ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

²⁵⁷ Anne Jones interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 21/08/2001.

²⁵⁸ Bridget Van Tinteren, "Joint Effort No. 12," *Time Off*, September 1979, 23.

²⁵⁹ Marty Burke interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 29/01/2002.

infamous for the chaos that ensued after the Triple Zed audience poured out of the venue to escape the stifling heat and took over the Ballroom grounds and surrounding streets. Rod McLeod remembers how “there was always car doors wide open with stereos blaring,”²⁶⁰ while Anne Jones recalls “people fucking in the front yards of people’s houses”²⁶¹ after the Graham Parker concert.

While Cloudland Joint Efforts made a significant contribution to Triple Zed finances, a Radio Times editorial sought to dispel the myth that, thanks to Cloudland, Triple Zed must be “rolling in Moola!”²⁶² A combination of Triple Zed’s generous subscriber discount and the array of logistical expenses associated curbed the potential income of the Cloudland “Big Ones”. While the legion of subscriber volunteers provided door and bar duties on the night, a shortage of paid staff made planning the event a difficult proposition. Because of this, the purchase and delivery of food and alcohol had to be outsourced to private contractors, as was the security, despite the noted resentment of hired bouncers at the station.²⁶³ At an event of Cloudland’s size, “someone, somewhere is going to be unpleasant, and understandably an unpaid volunteer trying to stop a fight shouldn’t have to take the punishment.”²⁶⁴ Similarly, professional cleaners were often needed once volunteers had cleaned up the surface mess. Although Cloudland Joint Efforts were an overall success,²⁶⁵ they did little to alter Triple Zed’s hand-to-mouth financial predicament.

The station soon needed to look elsewhere for fund-raising as the difficulty of maintaining Cloudland Joint Efforts manifested itself. In December 1979 Triple Zed’s liquor license for Cloudland was revoked due to “complaints at a recent concert.”²⁶⁶ Triple Zed had to find alternative venues or, failing that, alternative promoters. On one than one occasion radio station 4IP picked up Triple Zed concerts.²⁶⁷ However, the commercial station not surprisingly rejected the Joint Effort model. For Anne Jones, this produced a closed and sanitised environment, as suggested in her review of the “Sporting True Colours” event featuring the Sports and Split Enz.²⁶⁸ Jones’ review described a passive audience who refused

²⁶⁰ Rod McLeod interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

²⁶¹ Anne Jones interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 21/08/2001.

²⁶² *Radio Times*, August 1979, 7.

²⁶³ David Darling interviewed by Thomas Vuleta, 24/02/2010.

²⁶⁴ *Radio Times*, August 1979, 7.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Of the first five Cloudland Joint Efforts, three were considered profitable.

²⁶⁶ *Courier Mail*, 13 December 1979. The ‘recent concert’ is most likely the one featuring Graham Parker described earlier.

²⁶⁷ 4IP regularly promoted ‘mainstream’ performers, often holding free open-air concerts in public parks.

²⁶⁸ Anne Jones, “Cloudland Sports True Colours,” *Time Off*, March 28, 1980, 8.

to provide the bands with anything other than enthusiastic applause. The end of the concert at half past eleven was also, for most in attendance, was also the end of the evening; the bulk of the audience departed immediately, leaving behind nothing but “the debris of the evening.”²⁶⁹

The appearance of the Clash in February 1982, however, reinforced the ballroom’s new subcultural associations. The event organised by Darling crystallized the earlier crossover between radical politics and punk anarchy in Brisbane during the Bjelke-Petersen era. While a large police presence kept a watching brief throughout the performance to quell potential crowd troubles, Joe Strummer repeatedly questioned the audience’s tolerance of life in “pig city.”²⁷⁰ Strummer then introduced Bob Wetherall, an Aboriginal activist at the forefront of the 1982 indigenous land rights movement.²⁷¹ Thus, while Cloudland reflected popular music as big business, it was a venue with equally radical associations.

This would also be the venue’s high water mark for live music. By the end of the year Cloudland had been demolished in controversial fashion. With a revised unit development being planned, the notorious Deen Brothers moved in during the early hours of Monday 8 November, destroying the ballroom in less than one hour. The absence of the ballroom from the city skyline was the first most knew of the disaster. The headlines the next day expressed the sense of shock at the demolition of the old ballroom. The National Trust of Queensland, who that year ran a sustained campaign to preserve the building on architectural grounds, expressed outrage that was still fresh from the loss of the Bellevue Hotel in 1979.²⁷² An equal sense of rage came from those associated with Triple Zed, with the belief that Triple Zed’s association with Cloudland contributed directly to its demise. John Stanwell described it as “an act of political vandalism” on the part of Joh Bjelke-Petersen.²⁷³ The State Government’s position was largely one of indifference; Bjelke-Petersen argued “it was up to the owner of the building to decide what he wanted to do with it.”²⁷⁴ The state government had no inclination towards introducing heritage legislation. The actions can best be seen in the context of Queensland’s bitter heritage battle in the early 1980s. Like the Queen’s Hotel, however, the reactions from those at Triple Zed are an apt reflection of the political climate of the Bjelke-Petersen years, and the station’s largely oppositional stance.

²⁶⁹ Jones, “Cloudland Sports True Colours,” 8.

²⁷⁰ *Courier Mail*, February 22, 1982.

²⁷¹ Linden Woodward interviewed by Andrew Stafford (12/11/2002), Andrew Stafford Collection (Fryer Library, UQFL440).

²⁷² *Courier Mail*, November 8, 1982.

²⁷³ John Stanwell interviewed by Andrew Stafford.

²⁷⁴ *Courier Mail*, November 8, 1982.

Irrespective of the demolition, however, Cloudland had become unviable as a live music venue for two reasons. Firstly, the venue's inner city location was ill-equipped for large crowds. Savvy concert-goers knew to arrive early; the venue's small car-park would fill up quickly, and late-comers parking in nearby streets faced an uphill walk to the venue. Problems associated with parking, in addition to those of a large unruly crowd, drew the fire of local residents. In the wake of the Clash concert, residents of Bowen Hills announced their opposition to subsequent Cloudland concerts. When interviewed by the *Sunday Mail*, residents cited the presence of "street fighting, broken bottles in gutters and people using obscene language"²⁷⁵, along with parking, as their foremost concerns. As for parking, residents complained the streets around the venue became cluttered with cars on both sides, sometimes across driveways, to the extent that "you'd be lucky to squeeze a small vehicle through", creating both an inconvenience for residents and a hazard for fire or emergency crews. State Transport minister Don Lane backed the residents, promising greater police presence at Cloudland shows.²⁷⁶

Secondly, the venue itself could no longer meet the demands of the contemporary live music industry. The ballroom's pre-war design had never adapted to the demands of amplified music and at least two reviewers were highly critical of the venue's terrible acoustics.²⁷⁷ Similarly the ceiling beams proved problematic for demands of stage lighting. The light fittings swayed dangerously when large crowds began to work and discouraged at least one promoter from hiring the venue.²⁷⁸ Adding to these problems was the damage successive concerts had caused, with the effect of three thousand pogo-dancing fans leaving shards of woodwork. Such practices contributed to the state of the building shortly before its demolition, when a report prepared for Kurts revealed the dance floor was in danger of collapse, while the building itself was structurally unsound and susceptible to fire. A "total reconstruction" was deemed necessary at considerable expense.²⁷⁹ Thus, by the time the Clash arrived in Brisbane Cloudland was no longer a regular live venue.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ *Sunday Mail*, 21 February, 1982.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Kjaz Perry, "Oz Songwriters at Cloudlands," *Time Off*, December 1979, 32; Van Tinteren, "Joint Effort No. 12," 23.

²⁷⁸ Warwick Vere interviewed by Andrew Stafford. According to Warwick Vere, the difficulty of attaching light fittings to Cloudland's ceiling beams discouraged promoter Michael Coppell from using the venue. In Vere's estimation, Cloudland "would not have lasted much longer as a rock venue."

²⁷⁹ *Courier Mail*, November 9, 1982.

²⁸⁰ Anne Jones interviewed by Andrew Stafford, 21/08/2002.

While Festival Hall benefited temporarily from a monopoly on large entertainment venues, the Brisbane Entertainment Centre constructed in 1986 soon became the venue of choice for large promoters. As one of a new breed modern entertainment complexes developed in most capital cities,²⁸¹ the BEC was constructed at Boondall on the city's northern outskirts and reflected Brisbane's urban planning. Serviced by the Gateway Arterial motorway, the BEC possessed over four thousand parking spaces and catered for Brisbane's growing dependence on the automobile. The BEC's location circumvented problems of parking and noise in residential areas that blighted Cloudland.

However this development came at a price, for the BEC moved live music to a peripheral space in the city. The approach employed by the entertainment centre constructs both the image and the reality of a deviant subculture. The subcultures perceived as an urban disorder are moved into a marginal space designed to contain and regulate this perceived deviance.²⁸² As Graeme Turner argues, the practices of these centres effectively constructed a sense of deviance, starting with the practice of locking the doors until the band is ready to take the stage. This practice "creates an unruly and impatient mass outside the doors which, when the doors *are* opened, storm inside in such a way as to, of course, justify the strategy of exclusion."²⁸³ Turner offers a pertinent comparison to Festival Hall. Although the earlier examples demonstrated the hall had its own problems as a rock venue, the older venue in comparison provided a stronger sense of audience engagement and satisfaction, providing greater access to the hall and a closer proximity to the performers.

The Brisbane Entertainment Centre became rapidly established as the venue of choice for heavily capitalised rock shows in the lineage of Lee Gordon, Michael Gudinski, Ray Evans, Michael Chugg and Harvey Lister. However it lacks the social significance of Festival Hall or the architectural splendour of Cloudland, and it seems unlikely a local promoter like Triple Zed could ever hope to achieve success at such a venue. It seems equally unlikely that such a removed venue could contribute to Brisbane's live music geography in the colourful manner of the Brisbane Stadium and Cloudland Ballroom.

²⁸¹ Graeme Turner, "Australian popular music and its contexts" in Hayward (ed), *From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism: Popular music and Australian culture from the 1960s to the 1990s*, 18.

²⁸² Michael Foucault, "Of Other Spaces", *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1986): 22-27.

²⁸³ Turner, "Australian popular music and its contexts," 18.

Conclusion

Despite an acute shortage of venues between the 1960's and the 1990's, live music in Brisbane was nonetheless lively. The presence of unofficial entertainment precincts on various occasions succeeded in cultivating healthy live music scenes. The coffee lounges of the 1960's represent a pertinent example. Their success, despite City Council restrictions and church and media opposition, bred a vibrant r'n'b scene whose success informed the development of a local popular music industry. Similarly, the efforts of punk promoters in commandeering community halls bred a successful local industry, curtailed through sustained police harassment and its own self-destructive tendencies. The advent of a healthy pub rock in the late 1970's reflects the entrepreneurial talent evident within Brisbane's live music subcultures. Such scenes, although marginal, displayed the sustained appetite for live music and popular entertainment which has informed the creation of the legitimised Fortitude Valley entertainment precinct of the present day.

In the absence of legitimate support, the unstable nature of Brisbane's night-time economy reflects the transient nature of subcultures which created and supported them. Like the r'n'b coffee lounges or punk's halls of the 1970s, most venues formed a particular subcultural association that was liminal by nature. The demise of the coffee lounge circuit reflects the splintering of Brisbane's r'n'b scene, while punk's more nihilistic tendencies no doubt ensured the demise of the halls scene, even without Task Force harassment. The broader trend of an exodus of artists and performers from Brisbane has contributed to the transient nature of music venues.

Brisbane's healthy appetite for popular music has attracted its fair share of heavily capitalised entrepreneurs. The work of Big Show promoters, from Lee Gordon to Harry Miller, and a range of capitalised entrepreneurs made Brisbane a viable destination for some of popular music's biggest names, a development crucial to the creation of a local popular music industry. The procession of top performers to grace the Brisbane Stadium, Festival Hall and Cloudland Ballroom made large stadium venues crucial to the local dissemination of global popular music trends, from rock'n'roll and folk to punk and indie. While such entrepreneurs were largely motivated by the bottom dollar and thus isolated from the popular culture *zeitgeist*, the concerts that took place in these venues were often pivotal to changing

popular music trends. Thus, the demolition of Cloudland in 1982 and Festival Hall in 2003 represents a substantial loss to Brisbane's cultural heritage.

The efforts of financially-motivated entrepreneurs in turn created a local industry, based around enterprising cafe, pub and nightclub proprietors and promoters. While sometimes finding themselves out of favour with liquor licensing, City Council bureaucracy, and the predilections of church authorities, healthy pub and club scenes catering for popular music flourished alongside the more decadent elements of Brisbane's night-time economy – brothels, illegal casinos, and discos. Sometimes live music subcultures found space in close proximity to such elements, and cultural differences frequently fuelled dissent between promoters and proprietors.

However these two spheres of venues have frequently paled into comparison with those of radical promoters, who adapted marginal bohemian spaces from community halls to university campuses to residential houses. These promoters – from radical student activists to independent punk musicians – were most keenly attuned to the popular culture *zeitgeist*, and this acumen created some of the liveliest venues, from the Foco to Club 76 and Baroona Hall. Club 76 is now regarded in global popular music circles as a pivotal punk venue, while Foco informed the development of an ongoing radical student culture that culminated in the creation of Triple Zed.

The success of this radical culture, however, was built on a sense of pragmatism that was apparent in Foco and HARPO and became fully realised in the form of Triple Zed. A succession of talented entrepreneurs, drawn from within and from outside the student radical movement, led to Triple Zed's success as a live music promoter. Through Joint Efforts at the University, joint ventures with pubs, and brief but remarkable success at Cloudland, Triple Zed became Brisbane's most successful and relevant promoter. The station's efforts became the catalyst for rejuvenating live music in the mid 1970's and providing ongoing impetus through the lean years of the 1980's.

While Triple Zed faced considerable hurdles in this journey, its substantial efforts cannot be underestimated. The station's importance – both for creating venues for touring acts and providing an outlet for emerging local groups from the Saints and the Go-Betweens to the Ups and Downs – is beyond doubt. While their role in doing this faded, the live music scene they fostered was fully realised at the first Livid Festival held at the University of Queensland in 1989. Peter Walsh intended Livid to be a "best of Brisbane." Musicians from the Ups and

Downs, to the Go-Betweens all showed a willingness to perform at the Festival which became the catalyst of the vibrant indie scene of the 1990s. Livid's subsequent success, from a small DIY project in 1989 to a music festival that extended to Sydney and Melbourne in 2002, mirrors Triple Zed's rise from small-time promoter to the big-time at Cloudland.

The success of today's music venues located in the Fortitude Valley entertainment precinct is sometimes taken for granted. Between the 1960's and the 1980's Brisbane's music venues often had a problematic relationship to the urban environment, a problem that created a frequent shortage of venues. However, this instability informed some of the most successful performers in Brisbane popular music history, and some of its most celebrated chapters. The present success should be celebrated, but equally so the sometimes overlooked triumphs of those who faced a battle on every stage.

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