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Introduction to the special issue: Music and tourism

Brett Lashua, Phil Long, and Karl Spracklen

“Is there anything else, other than music that has the power to transform the utterly mundane, like a pedestrian crossing in north London, into an international tourist hotspot?”
UK Music CEO, Feargal Sharkey (UK Music, 2011, p. 2)

Music, in various styles and permutations – instrumental and vocal, solo or group, amplified or acoustic; formats – live and recorded; performances and venues, is a near universal and ubiquitous cultural expression. Musical genres are a product of human culture, something cherished for their aesthetic value, and yet also something that is the site of contestations of meaning and purpose across history, social and geographical spaces. In many ‘pre-modern’ cultures, music is bound tightly with ritual and sociality, the performance of belonging and power. In modernity, music has become part of the everyday spaces of leisure, a source of artistic expression and audience pleasure – but also a cultural product that is capable of being sanitised and commodified. Music articulates identities, rebellion, conformity, performance, status, product, community, subculture, high culture, distinction, place, space and more. In the construction of distinctive spaces, styles and genres, music reproduces the inequalities and struggles of the late modern world. The social and artistic status of musical genres, composers and performers ranges from the historical, canonical and ‘great’ such as Beethoven and the Beatles to contemporary forms that may be deemed by some to be tasteless ‘muzak’, subversive and socially divisive, e.g. punk and ‘death metal’ from which we need to be protected, or sexually provocative such as some strands of hip-hop, Mauritian Sega song and dance and Argentinian Tango. Rarely though is music totally suppressed, with Afghanistan under the Taliban and areas of Mali held until earlier in 2013 by puritanical Islamists hostile to music which for a time effectively silenced the acclaimed local ‘world music’ of that country: world music that itself was a product of globalisation and the Western hegemony of the popular music industry, which dictates that pop music from Mali is branded and sold to Westerners as exotic from a far-away place (Spracklen, 2013). Music, then, is one key aspect of everyday leisure and culture that continues to provoke resistance, fear and conservative retrenchment in equal measure. As such, music in its plural forms is inevitably bound up within networks of power relations and the maintenance, reproduction, and rejection of those relations.

Importantly, music travels (including for example the sounds of Mali and other variants of ‘world music’) through commercial and informal digital broadcasts, recordings, downloads, film, etc. Concomitant to this, and where tourism enters the equation, is that people travel to music either as fans, pilgrims, concert goers, festival attendees or more incidentally where the sounds of places enters the travellers’ consciousness as a welcome accompaniment to the experience of place or as an annoying, distracting ‘racket’. The idea of music tourism – travelling to another place to hear music played – is a historical

phenomenon associated with industrialisation and modernity, notwithstanding examples such as the troubadour movement of the medieval period in southern France. In the nineteenth century, as distinctions started to appear between classical music and popular music, European elites would venture out to see the music of the canonical composers played at festivals, while the working classes paid to see travelling performers play popular songs in the music halls. The cultural habit of listening to live music in one's leisure time remains an important way of making distinctions and performing identity in late modernity, and all regions where local cultures have been shaped by the power of Westernisation. The invention of recording technology, radio broadcasting and amplification techniques in the twentieth century changed the way musicians and listeners came to music: capitalism shaped the music industry, music performers and music consumers. As music genres became more distinct, and popular music became pop, the established routes of tours, festivals and music heritage emerged. Tours were ways of selling records, connecting with fans and making money for the labels; festivals brought fans and bands together in one place; and serious music fans sought out the heritage of their music genres as they aged and as fashions shifted. In the contemporary world, then, music tourism has become a polyvalent practice, both an instrumentalising form of exploitation and a communicative act of finding diversions and going against the grain of the market.

This special issue of *Tourist Studies* thus sets out to explore some critical links between music and tourism. A number of key questions have been addressed in the growing body of literature that has been published on the relationships between these two major phenomena of global, local and everyday life. How does music transform particular places into tourist hotspots? Is music just another 'resource' to be exploited by the tourism industry for passive and disinterested consumption by the tourist masses? If this is the case in particular times and places, what are the consequences for music and musicians? What of power, resistance and change – for people and for places – through music tourism? Why does tourism struggle in other 'musical places'?

In attempting to address some of these questions this special issue follows two lines of development. The first is the extraordinary growth of interest, including a burgeoning body of scholarship, at the interface of music and tourism (e.g., Gibson and Connell, 2005; Kruger and Trandafoiu, 2013; Waitt and Duffy, 2010). These scholars, and others including those in this special issue, have highlighted the relations between music, places, spaces, and identities.

Attention to music, with its distinctive affordances for 'sounding out' places, offers unique insights into otherwise unmapped spaces and overlooked social relations (Cohen and Lashua, 2010). Key texts in the cultural geography of music include Swiss, Sloop and Herman's (1998) *Mapping the Beat*, Connell and Gibson's (2003) *Sound Tracks*, and Leyshon, Matless and Revill's (1998) *The Place of Music*. These texts were groundbreaking in their

fusion of geographical theorisations as applied to popular music. For example, Leyshon, Matless and Revill (1998: 424-425) described the interplay between music and geography:

[...] a richer sense of geography highlights the spatiality of music and the mutually generative relations of music and place. Space produces as space is produced. To consider the place of music is not to reduce music to its location, to ground it down into some geographical baseline, but to allow a purchase on the rich aesthetic, cultural, economic and political geographies of musical language.

Building upon earlier work, critical attention has flourished at the intersections of music and geography since the 1990s (Carney 1997). Watson, Hoyler, and Mager (2009) noted that attention has followed three general trajectories related to (1) sonic environments and performance (Smith, 2000); (2) economic geography related to issues such as cultural industries, urban regeneration, and music festivals (Gibson & Connell, 2012); and (3) in terms of spaces, places and identities. In this latter regard, scholarship such as Finnegan's (1989) and Cohen's (1991) ethnographies of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes and Liverpool, as well as Kong's (1995) work on transnational identities in Singapore, and Bennett's (1999) ethnography of hip-hop in Newcastle forged new pathways. For scholars interested in musical geographies, the city remains a critical focus of questions of place, identity, and – increasingly – cultural heritage (Cohen, Knifton, Leonard, and Roberts, 2013). Cities such as Sheffield (UK) – the site of the failed National Centre for Popular Music (see Long, this issue) – Cleveland (the site of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame), Memphis, Liverpool and numerous others have attempted, with varying success, to reimagine and regenerate their urban centres via popular music museums, heritage trails, and cultural quarters (Cohen, 2007; Florida and Jackson, 2008; Krims, 2007; Roberts, this issue). These studies echo through the work of Duffy (2001), Morton (2005), and other ethnographers, including that of the guest editors (Lashua, 2006; Spracklen, Lucas and Deeks, 2012).

Music provides an important and emotive narrative for tourists, as an expression of culture, a form of heritage, a signifier of place, and a marker of moments. Indeed, it is increasingly difficult to imagine tourism 'in silence', outside of the scores and songs which accompany and punctuate journeys. From touristic performances of traditional dance, pilgrimages to the homes and graves of composers and singers, impromptu street entertainments, tours to concerts, attending festivals, to the sounds of the car radio, travelling with iPods and the 'muzak' of hotel lifts, music can both activate and shape journeys, and passively permeate its duration. Music both defines and transcends the borders of destinations, while it emphasises and challenges notions of tradition, provides opportunities for liminal play, transgression and resistance, and helps define the identities of visitors and the visited. Broadly, these tensions between music and tourism underscore the special issue.

A second line in this issue's development passes through the international *Soundtracks: Music, Tourism and Travel* conference held in Liverpool in July 2012. The conference

emerged from discussions between Spracklen, Long and Mike Robinson, then the Director of the Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change (CTCC) at Leeds Metropolitan University. Music was a shared passion, and music tourism an obvious way of exploring this passion in the context of leisure studies (Spracklen) and cultural tourism (Long and Robinson). Although Robinson soon moved on after the CTCC was wound down, the conference went ahead. The organising committee recognised that the topic of music tourism would be hugely popular, crossing from tourism management and events management through cultural tourism, leisure studies and musicology. Echoing in the footsteps of work by Connell and Gibson (2003), the *Soundtracks* conference invited papers that explored music in the context of new and old global mobilities, musical pilgrimage, the material and social flows of travellers and musicians, the cultural and economic policies that promote music tourism, festivals and performances for tourists, ethnographies of touristic encounters with music, the place of music in the representation of tourism destinations, and the role of music in the construction of tourist discourses, narratives and memories. The conference, spread over three days in Liverpool, (arguably) the foremost 'musical city' in the UK (Du Noyer, 2007; Leonard and Strachan 2010), included 88 paper presentations given by over 100 scholars from institutions around the world. From these outstanding presentations, five papers were invited for this special issue.

In addition to questioning critically the relations between music and tourism, ongoing debates about place and heritage also interconnect the papers in this special issue. Leading off, Les Roberts conjures up some 'magic' in his article on sites of popular music heritage in the UK. Through anthropological theories of contagious and sympathetic magic, Roberts explores how the marketing and promotion of music heritage tap into its symbolism as part of civic boosterism and urban regeneration strategies. This is often done in hopes that some of the 'magic' of those artists and places may 'rub off' on visitors or 'spill over' to enhance civic image.

Tensions when musicians 'busking' for tips and the sale of recordings of their work to tourists clash with the regulations that tourism agencies and local government authorities seek to impose at major tourism sites are discussed in the paper by **Adam Kaul**. The case he explores is the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland, a spectacular coastal landscape that is a major destination in that country. Attempts by the authorities to control access by musicians to the site following the opening of a visitor centre led to a lively public debate played out through the media, including interventions by high profile Irish musicians. The prominence of music (and the Cliffs of Moher) in Irish tourism promotion reinforces the significance of such tensions for local communities, politicians, officials and visitors.

In contrast, **Phil Long** discusses relationships between music, tourism and place in the context of a Northern English city that is not regarded widely as a major tourism destination – Sheffield. However, this city can lay claim to prominence in genres such as electronica, folk, pub rock and, 'Britpop' scenes past and present. Artists from the city such as Jarvis

Cocker, Richard Hawley and the Arctic Monkeys have also explicitly and implicitly sketched a 'psychogeography' of music tourism spaces in the post-industrial city which, again, highlights tensions with 'official' tourism narratives and invites comparisons with the music tourism geographies and strategies of cities elsewhere.

Questions of performativity, authenticity and festivals also link the contributions. The article from **Robert Fry** explores the performativity of music fandom through blues music tourism pilgrimages to the King Biscuit Blues festival in Helena (Arkansas, USA). He recognises that the festival is a product of the commercialisation of the music scene, and notes the ways in which localism and authenticity are carefully constructed by the organisers of the festival. However, for Fry, the performative nature of the pilgrimage and celebration allows blues music fans (and musicians) to control their own identity making. As such, the festival becomes a space where performances of localism, identity and authenticity can continue to take place, where the traditions of the blues are protected and honoured, and where blues fans can continue to (re)construct 'true' blues fandom.

Finally, **Karl Spracklen and Beverley Spracklen's** paper is a case study of the Goth scene in the north of England, and its ambivalent relationship with the development of music festival tourism centred on the English coastal town of Whitby. The Whitby Goth Weekend has become an established part of local and regional tourism strategies, offering one key music festival for the town amongst a number of other music festivals (such as the Whitby Folk Week and Musicport). Spracklen and Spracklen explore the circumstances in which the town of Whitby came to be associated with the gothic and the Goth scene. They explore the ways in which older Goths in the north of England identify with the festival, and the ways in which Goth identity and Goth tourism is performed, to argue that performative identities still remain ontologically coherent for those at the heart of the Goth scene.

This special issue is, of necessity selective in its coverage of cases, theories and methodologies that may be applied to the study of music tourism. This is a snapshot of work presented at the *Soundtracks* conference, and of course represents only a small part of the burgeoning subject field. There are many researchers and theorists out there who did not attend that conference, and we hope that this special issue will inspire further connections, collaborations and critiques. We recognise the need for more critical research on this phenomenon and suggest an overarching imperative to investigate other genres of classical and contemporary music forms in diverse settings and their packaging and consumption as tourism 'product' and in conveying senses of place. Attention might also be directed to 'world' music genres and the ways in which they 'travel' among diaspora communities around the world (e.g. Afro-Caribbean, African, Indian, Celtic, etc.). There is much more to be said about the tensions between the local and the global, the commodification of the tourist industry and the position of music tourism as a product in that industry, and the problem of agency. Music tourism research has tended to come primarily from individuals with a background and interest in popular music studies, musicology or ethnomusicology.

This special issue, like the *Soundtracks* conference, is an attempt to redress that imbalance by trying to problematise the topic using the lens of critical tourist studies. We believe that the meeting of these two epistemological traditions, with their tacit assumptions about how to understand the phenomena in question, creates something that is more critical and coherent: a sustained theoretical explanation of music tourism, rather than a collection of descriptions.

The intermediation of music and tourism through for example the output of specialist channels such as BBC Radio 3 and 6 Music, magazines, guide books, promotional clips (such as for David Bowie's 2013 album "The Next Day" with its references to locations in Berlin), tourism board maps and trails is also a rich field for further study along inevitably to the implications of how emerging mobile technologies are changing our relationships with music and place. There is, then, a growing phenomenon that needs our attention, and a growing number of individuals interested in understanding the meaning and purpose of music tourism. We hope this special issue offers departures and stopping-off points for colleagues in tourist studies, in leisure studies, and beyond. For researchers, the beat well and truly goes on.

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