



Turn it Up! – The future of Brisbane’s music economy and heritage

Monday 17th September 2018

- DATE & TIME:** Monday 17th September 2018, 5.00pm – 7.00pm
- VENUE:** The Tivoli
- SPEAKERS:** **MC:** Mike Gillen, Vice President, BDA The Committee for Brisbane (BDAC4B)
Moderator: Craig Zonca, ABC Radio
Panel: Joel Edmondson, CEO, Q Music
Panel: Scott Hutchinson, The Triffid, Chairman, Hutchinson Builders
Panel: Anne-Maree Moon, General Manager, Tourism & Major Events, Brisbane Marketing
- APOLOGIES:** The Hon. Leeanne Enoch MP, Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and the Arts
Brendan Christou, President, BDA The Committee for Brisbane (BDAC4B)

SUMMARY

On Monday 17th, the BDAC4B held a panel discussion at the Tivoli to consider the future of Brisbane’s music economy and heritage.

Craig Zonca from ABC Radio; Joel Edmondson, the CEO of Q Music; Scott Hutchinson, part owner of the Triffid and Chairman of Hutchinson Builders; and Anne-Maree Moon, General Manager of Tourism and Major Events for Brisbane Marketing sat down to consider the following:

1. What are the opportunities and the challenges for the future success and growth of Brisbane’s music industry?
2. What are the levers (policy / economic / planning) that are critical?
3. What next steps can we take to better tell the Brisbane music story to the world?

The event saw a diverse crowd with attendees from the development industry; live music venue operators; Brisbane City Council Councillors; local radio staff; live music enthusiasts; Valley workers; local business owners; and the Valley Chamber of Commerce.

The discussions ranged from how Brisbane compares to other Australian cities, the impact of pokies on the live music scene, the controversial lock out and ID scanning laws, the need for more under 18 gigs and the concept of a Night Mayor.



Setting the Scene

- Craig:**
- Brisbane has a rich musical history, particularly revolving around the streets of the Valley in the past 20-30 years.
 - Recently, the city saw 150 bands play across 10 venues for Big Sound, with 1000s, young and old, running from venue to venue, and bands and musicians running for deals, meetings with producers, etc.
 - Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners with a reminder that music played here long before colonial settlement
 - Brisbane is on the cusp of unprecedented growth and we need to consider how to reconcile this with our rich history
 - We all have our favourite band, our favourite gig, and we want that experience to be here in Brisbane
- Mike:**
- Music, culture and arts are an important component of the BDA's vision for the future of Brisbane.

Panel Discussion – Questions from Craig Zonca

Craig: Icebreaker to start – big gig you've seen in Brisbane?

Scott: Best gig was Iggy Pop at the Big Day Out on the Gold Coast. In Brisbane, The Prodigy at Riverstage. The whole town lights up as the crowds walk from Riverstage to the valley after the gig.

Joel: Due to long term memory problems, Unknown Mortal Orchestra a couple of nights ago at The Tivoli.

Anne-Maree: 1985, Phil Collins at Festival Hall.

Craig: As a 16-year-old on a school trip down from Rockhampton, Livid Festival with a mate, while the rest of the school trip went to Dreamworld.

Craig: Where is Brisbane placed compared to other Australian cities?

Joel: We are in a position where we have amazing event infrastructure, amazing globally recognised events. But we lack intergovernmental organisation and coordination to support growth and development ... no real commitment around this.

We also don't have 24-hour public transport, or a thriving night time economy.

But live music scene has not degraded like in Sydney.

Craig: How do we share the quality of our live music scene?

Anne-Maree: We're not good at telling our story well, we've got to get over our humbleness and shout it out loud.



Brisbane Live, Festival Hall, other ventures would not be possible without confidence in the music scene.

Liverpool is currently going through the same problems with lack of government coordination.

Craig: **Where is Brisbane placed compared to other Australian cities?**

Scott: Although I have been quoted as saying Brisbane is “Dubbo without a Zoo” we are really well placed compared to other Australian cities with three key advantages:

1. No other city has the concentration of a little venues that we do.
2. No other city has a music conference like Big Sound.
3. We have the best festival ground in the world at the RNA. It has the transport connections, the infrastructure, food and drink places, and the hospital for those who overindulge. But it’s underutilised – the RNA is pushing, but the music industry hasn’t embraced it yet.

Craig: **Has the designation of the Valley as an Entertainment Precinct been successful?**

Joel: Unquestionably it has made a difference. Perpetually protects the area, with clear rules.

Compare this to Melbourne where there has been a lot more legal wrangling and issues around live music and the ‘Agent of Change’ principle, based on ‘who was here first’. E.g. noise attenuation measures are the responsibility for a residential developer building next to an existing live music venue.

Current challenge for the Valley – the Valley used to be more music dominated, but the influx of clubs has changed the vibe, the patrons, and their behaviours. We need to incentivise live music, so the Valley is not just about going ‘somewhere to drink’.

Scott: The Entertainment Precinct designation has struck the right balance.

The problem now is that every site in the CBD or Valley is valued based on how many apartments it can accommodate. The value of the land is far and above what the music industry can pay to establish music venues. It hasn’t happened yet, but the danger is that this will push out venues.

We’ve had to pay residential price for the land for the new ‘Festival Hall’, it’s not a commercial venture.

It hasn’t happened yet to my knowledge, but we need to be wary that music venues will be knocked down for apartments.

Craig: **Has can Council address this?**

Scott: I think they are aware of the problem, but I don’t think it’s something that can be addressed through regulatory measures.



Craig: **How important is the uniqueness of character the Valley has?**

Anne-Maree: Brisbane is a dispersed city and generating a night time economy can be challenging because of this.

Precincts or clusters like the Valley are a good way to generate the night time economy and there are others at Caxton Street, or in West End.

Our heritage is absolutely important, residents and tourists want to know our history, our stories and where we have come from.

Craig: **Matt Burke at Griffith University has undertaken work on whether Entertainment Precincts work and is sceptical from a planning sense on concentrating infrastructure in one place. How do you foster Brisbane's up and coming talent?**

Joel: I used to run a highly illegal warehouse venue called The Hanger in Red Hill, successfully for 6 years. Never any issues with the police, who were aware of it. Ultimately, we need more venues with character in random suburban areas of Brisbane. Junk Bar is a great example. And we need to provide funding and infrastructure assistance for young / up and coming promoters and musicians.

Anne-Maree: As a young person, the Mansfield Tavern was the best place to go because of the quality of the local live music there.

Joel: The impact of pokies on live music in suburban music venues is significant. The Mansfield Tavern would still be a great live music venue if not for pokies.

So many suburban venues these days are owned by commercial chains – risk adverse, no appetite to try to run things differently. We need to educate commercial pubs on the value of quality live music. And we need to educate young bands to have a business mentality and approach these venues.

Craig: Venues need to be passionate about live music and understand there can be a commercial benefit.

Craig: **How do we get developers to include and consider live music venues?**

Scott: I'd like to see The Arena or The Roxy revived. Ultimately developers worry about insurances, costs, and implications when the community embraces temporary / short-term venues.

Someone needs to speak with developers and encourage them, but Kevin Seymour won't take any notice of me.

Craig: **What have been the impacts of the lock out laws? Scott, you protested heavily against the laws, even dressing up in an Oliver Cromwell costume.**



Scott: Yes, I spent \$480 on an Oliver Cromwell outfit and the journalist said I was a leprechaun. I even told the premier I would self-immolate over it.

People put up with things like lock out laws, they put up with ID scanners, they put up with Boondall. We need more people to push back and not accept lock out laws and ID scanners. I believe the government is about to do something about the lock out laws.

Joel: QMusic recently surveyed live music venues – 22 out of the 27 venues replied.

68% of venues were putting on less live music than before ID scanners were introduced. The amounts paid to artists are now required to be paid to additional security on the front door.

79% of venues had seen reduced patronage. Unsurprising at a time when confidence in data integrity is at an all time low.

90% of venues had operational problems with the ID scanners reducing patronage as the venues legally can't let people in without scanning.

We need a government review. The majority of alcohol violence takes place on the street. Inside venues are heavily secured, and rightly so.

Venues continue to push on, but we have seen a couple of closures in the Valley: the New Globe Theatre and Oh Hello.

Craig: **Anne-Maree, are the lock out laws and ID scanning requirements hurting the city's reputation?**

Anne-Maree: A certain front-page story about a Danish Prince did not help our reputation.

Brisbane Marketing has not been tracking at this stage, but visitor experience is key. It needs to be seamless, with tourists increasingly seeking an experience of 'living like a local'. Live music is part of this experience and we shouldn't be creating barriers.

Scott: Travellers, not tourists want to go to the Valley. They value an authentic experience.

Joel: Compare the experience to the Lower East Side in New York, edgy with live music venues. You can't have a regulated precinct, it needs to be curated and controlled by the community. The community needs to drive the curation of the space, and the amount of regulation in the Valley is not making it feel like an authentic place.

QMusic has approached the Government to suggest a compromise where venues with a capacity of 400 persons or less, hosting 4 or more live music events a week, are not required to have ID scanners.

A carrot not a stick approach to encourage live music, reduce drinking for the sake of drinking and reduce violence. The social cues in a live music venue are totally different to a place where you just go to drink.

Scott: The less laws the better. They are not necessary, the less nanny state stuff the better.



Craig: **What other infrastructure do we need? Any examples from other cities overseas?**

Anne-Maree: New York is a 24hr city done really well. But I'm not a fan of copying other cities. We need to consider what is authentic to our city. Please can see through things that are contrived.

We have excellent online infrastructure. I've seen the peaks and troughs of the music industry in Brisbane. We need to consider how do we create the demand and keep it sustainable?

Tourists of the future will be predominantly millennials, who love their live music.

Joel: Ways to diversify businesses. For example, in the US there are live music venues that are museums during the day. Although US music history transcends ours.

In Brisbane, we have the mural of The Saints at Roma Street. It's things like this that we need, providing a visual signal of what's important to us and to the city, and encouraging day time activation and connections to the music industry.

About a decade ago we saw a real drain south of publishers, labels and writers. We need radical incentives to bring them back and show there are jobs here in Brisbane.

Scott: South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin is Big Sound on Steroids. Brisbane should model and look for cues from Austin. It's half of Brisbane's size, venues everywhere, and the biggest music conference in the world.

What's different – you're free to walk around with drinks on the street, it's welcoming and friendly, it's easy to go between bars and easy to get in.

Joel: What's interesting is SXSW started as a music venue, and eventually developed a tech component to the event. Since then Austin has grown as a tech hub, as a 'new Silicon Valley'.

The Queensland Government's Advance Queensland Strategy is trying to attract more start ups to the city, but Austin shows this comes through organic growth in a place where there's something cool to do after work.

Anne-Maree: A lot of cities have unsuccessfully tried to replicate SXSW. For us, Big Sound cements what's special about Brisbane more generally. Attendees value the lifestyle, easy accessibility, holding meetings outside, etc.

Craig: **In London and Amsterdam, we've seen the introduction of Night Mayors, someone to champion the nightlife. Thoughts?**

Scott: A Night Mayor is a great idea.

Joel: The Amsterdam Night Mayor manages the precinct like it's a music festival every night. Managing and coordinating transport, safety, etc.

It's a no brainer. If you have a night precinct, you need someone to look after it.



Scott: Where the government sees the Valley as somewhere to control, a Night Mayor is there to develop and grow the night life.

Anne-Maree: The need for a Creative Director or a Night Mayor for the city often comes up during Brisbane Marketing surveys.

Craig: **Is this a position that is appointed or elected?**

Joel: In Amsterdam it came about from an association of venues going to the government with their idea to co-fund the position.

Scott: It'd be a great job.

Craig: **Growing the city as a destination for music?**

Anne-Maree: Brisbane Marketing looks to achieve a balanced portfolio of events but in many ways sporting events are easier – you pitch or buy them, and people always fill it.

For cultural events, a developmental program is needed. Brisbane Marketing is seeking to grow an iconic music/cultural event that is so embedded in the city it won't go anywhere else. E.g. Vivid in Sydney, but it takes 10+ years to establish this.

One of the best pieces of infrastructure we have is the Cultural Precinct. The Asia-Pacific Triennial is a great example of an event embedded in Brisbane delivered by an institution.

Craig: When going to government you need numbers, seats, the commercial imperative.

Anne-Maree: That's easier to do with sporting events. Sporting events are typically broadcast, showcasing Brisbane to hundreds of thousands or even millions of people.

Joel: The dialogue needs to avoid a competition between sport and music, even though more people go to live music in this country than sporting events.

Investment in the ecology of the music industry will drive tourism to the city.

Scott: A 10,000-capacity venue is the gap. We need to bring Boondall to the inner city and it looks like Brisbane Live will do this.

Panel Discussion – Questions from the audience

Audience member: **As the Station Manager for 4ZZZ, we've previously hosted small gigs in our car parking area. Over the past year this has become more difficult as residential development goes up in proximity. How do we grow small scale gigs in a community driven space? How do we get a good balance and give and take – i.e. if you want the benefits of living in the Valley, you can't protest against live music?**

Joel: You've summed up the rational argument. But it's not about the rational argument, but who is having the argument. In Melbourne, the SLAM rally against lock laws saw the



whole community, beyond the live music industry, mobilised and taking action. We have the challenge of motivating the community to protest.

Audience member: **How many venues in the inner city at 1,000 capacity. Do we need an Eaton's Hill in the city?**

Scott: The Triffid is 800-900 and The Tivoli is 1,400 standing. We need some other venues in this space.

Audience member: **Is there an opportunity to negotiate with the government – advantages to liquor licenses for venues who host live music?**

Joel: This is something we've explored. The State Government has backed out of multiple attempts to set up a live music round table over the past four years whenever regulatory issues have come up.

Audience member: **There's a gap at the lower end for small scale venues in suburban areas for up and coming / garage bars to play or for a wider demographic audience. Demographic group 40+ years who grew up listening to live music in local suburban pubs and don't want to come into the Valley.**

Scott: Hoping this demographic group will come to the new Festival Hall and realise the Valley's okay, encouraging greater visitation and changes to the demographic of the Valley.

Anne-Maree: I think The Triffid and The Tivoli are already changing perceptions of the Valley and changing the demographics due to their programming.

Audience member: **The Old Museum was probably Brisbane's first music venue back in 1902. What do you see the Old Museum's place in the future of the Valley?**

Scott: The Old Museum would be amazing as a live music venue.

Joel: It's all dependent on your programming.

Audience member: Currently we do very little programming and operate as a venue for hire. How do you see it fitting in, I see it as a building for the people?

Joel: It needs to be a space that encourages young people to come and try new things.

Audience member: **What is the status of Music City Consultation?**

Anne Maree: There have been a number of iterations of the report, with consultation and the music city audit setting out benchmarks for where a music city strategy might evolve from. There's four players around the table delaying things but getting back out to the industry is a priority for this Financial Year. We're not far from recommendations.



Audience member: **The Valley Chamber of Commerce is working on a vision for the Valley. More population is good for live music, but we see gentrifying of large areas of the valley. Should live music be targeted to 18-25 years or should we broaden and cohabit different music genres and demographics?**

Joel: The way young and old consume music, due to its accessibility these days, is changing and so are behaviours. We can plan or vision assuming the current or previous behaviour of certain demographics.

Strategic gentrification is the way to go. We want an edge, but we need to do something about the Brunswick Street Mall. It's a blight on the city and needs to be dealt with.

Big Sound has a strong focus on dressing up the Valley and showing how it could look all the time with public art. We want people to land at the airport and say, 'You should go to the Valley, even during the day'.

Scott: A lot of the apartment development has already taken place and there's not a lot of future hard-core gentrification.

Public art is the way to go. I see a lot of stuff at Burning Man that would go so well on the Brunswick Street Mall, but I can't bring it back with me.

Anne-Maree: Music is a passion play and programming is key. The Valley is expanding out beyond the Entertainment Precinct to encompass surrounding areas. HSW and QWB will change the landscape further.

Scott: The Festival Hall project will include two smaller venues and the thinking is underway on how to activate the Brunswick Street Mall during the day.

Audience member: **Pokies in smaller venues – how do you approach the venue about balancing pokies and excessive drinking with live music?**

Joel: Pokies have scientifically proven social and mental impacts and the pressure needs to be on government to do more to deal with the matter.

It's not fair to put the responsibility on smaller venues, when pokies are a legal option for them. It's a broader social matter but for venues, it's less about a moral argument and more about enticing and communicating the value of live music.

Scott: The perception of pokies is changing, they're not cool, they are hidden away at venues.

Audience member: **I've taken my teenage daughter to a few underage events at The Triffid and the Riverstage, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of options. What else is there?**

Joel: Increasing the number of all ages events is a number one priority for me, to start the habit of going to and enjoying live music (not screens) and increasing the diversity of those consuming live music.

There are regulatory barriers and costs in many cases for security, insurances, closing of bars that limit existing options.



Brisbane City Council has the opportunity to utilise community spaces like Roma Street Parklands and encourage programming developed by young people. We have the climate for way more outdoor events with less focus on drinking because it's not a commercial venue.

Anne-Maree: The doors are open, and the need for more underage events has been identified during consultations and is likely to inform recommendations.

Panel Discussion – Final Question for the evening

Craig: What will the Valley look like in 20 years? Final thoughts / comments?

Scott: More options, don't have to plan your night, you can have a night of 6 or 7 things you do rather than driving to one thing and then driving home. Lightening lockout laws and stupid scanning laws is needed for this.

Joel: Neural implants...

Get out and see music, you have to actually be an active citizen to keep the live music industry going.

Anne-Maree: Support live music, get out and see a live band.

Wrap Up

Mike: Key takeaways:

1. Push for more under 18 gigs
 2. More curation, less restriction
 3. The need for a Night Mayor
 4. The catalysing effect live music has on other ancillary activities.
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