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" For the Love of Music - Crossing the technological divide; an examination of the impact of digital disruption on issues of social reproduction, mental health and inequality in the working lives of the music workforce in the UK."

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For the Love of Music - Crossing the technological divide; an examination of the impact of digital disruption on issues of social reproduction, mental health, and inequality in the working lives of the music workforce in the UK.

Sally Anne Gross

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Published Work.

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Dedication

For my parents and my children, Sam, Adam, Jackson, Cinnamon, and my granddaughter
Juniper.

Acknowledgement


I would like to thank Graham Mielke for his patience, support, and guidance in helping me to bring this all together finally. I am grateful as ever to my friends, colleagues and students at the University of Westminster who have openly engaged in discussions and heated debate about these ideas and helped me shape my thinking. The MA MBM team especially, Jamie Reddington, Hannah Joseph, Toby Bennett, Ben Bishop, Julia Toppin, Sareata Ginda and George Musgrave. Thank you to Professor Catherine Loveday for engaging with my ideas from another angle. The friends of Richard Antwi team, especially Matt Ross, Paul Heard, Phil Antwi, Dora Addei, Will Bloomfield, Alex Hannaby and Esther Bokuma.

A special thank you to my daughter Cinnamon Ducasse for helping me join theoretical dots, and for her encouragement and enthusiasm for barrier crossing and door kicking in general. Thank you to Sam Midgley for always reminding me of another tune from back in the day and the madness of pirate radio. Thank you to Jackson Ducasse for all the podcast recommendations and encouragement and all the food! I just don't know how you find the time to listen to so much stuff. Thank you to Adam Midgley for endless frontline updates from the trenches of pop music war zone, I really do not know how you do it and I am still not sure exactly why anybody would do it either and yes, I really know that some music does make me feel sick!

Author's declaration

I declare that all of the material contained in this PhD by Publication commentary is my own work.

Name: Sally Anne Gross

Signed.....

Abstract

This thesis presents a portfolio of work that, from different angles, asks what it might mean to “manage music” in the digital age, paying particular attention to questions of mental health, equality of opportunity, access, and visibility. It comprises eight pieces of collaborative and single-authored work. At its core is a jointly authored monograph titled *Can Music Make You Sick? Measuring the Price of Musical Ambition*, published by University of Westminster Press, grounded in two substantial research reports of the same name, the first quantitative, the second qualitative, commissioned by the music charity Help Musicians UK. These are supplemented by: two policy-facing contributions (one collaborative and one solo authored); a follow-up multi-authored journal article published in *Psychology of Music*; and two single-authored chapters in edited collections, the first exploring the significance of recording contracts and the second exploring music activism during the pandemic . Although pursued through an ethos of collaboration, all these works are driven by the distinctively hybrid personal, professional, and theoretical approach that I have developed over a career as a music manager, educator, researcher, and feminist. The introductory framing statement makes my own contribution clear and discusses the significant impact of this body of work, within industry, research and learning contexts.

Can Music Make You Sick? the original empirical research report, surveyed professional musicians, aspiring musicians, and workers within the music industries, about the relationship between their working conditions and their wellbeing. It revealed that, irrespective of genre, musicians appeared to be suffering from anxiety and depression in large numbers. 71.1% of all respondents admitted to having suffered from panic attacks and/or high levels of anxiety and 68.2% suggested they had suffered from depression. The second part of the study consisted of 26 in-depth interviews. The interviewees suggested that although they all found solace and enjoyment in the performance and production of music, they often experienced their working lives as traumatic. The subsequent monograph places these findings within wider literature and a theoretical examination of changes in the digital production and distribution of music, and of how musical work is itself understood. In doing so it challenges the popular positive narrative of the democratisation of music production, it concludes that the practices and precarity of the working conditions of musical labour impacts these workers in three significant ways; economically, socially, and psychologically. The last of these claims was empirically tested in a separate study, also presented here.

There is an urgent need to draw attention to how such changes impact the mental health and wellbeing of music professionals. Together this multi-disciplinary portfolio addresses some of the conditions of contemporary music labour and suggests ways to support this workforce and places these issues within wider questions of social reproduction.

Prologue

‘It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.’

Donna J Haraway 2016

The published work I am presenting represents my ongoing attempt to synthesise a life lived with and in and through music. Using my experience as a music manager in order to contribute to knowledge generated through practice. It is an attempt to make stories that make new worlds.

Music has always been the thing that moved me and made me move. Bringing the confluence of experiences and emotional states together of those I loved and lived with from the beginning of my conscious time, ancient currents flowed into our home from different rivers: the Thames and the Lee in England; the Vistula that runs through Kraków, and Warsaw in Poland. Feelings not language floated in these waters.

Part autoethnography, part self-narrative, practice based, and empirical research are filtered apart and reconstituted to produce new research. All of which are informed by history, critical theory, and feminism, in my attempt to understand what is happening to the inhabitants of the music ecosphere.

I understand what it means to embody one’s work, just as those that populate my research do; what it means to be a music subject, I count myself as one: growing up in the London borough of Haringey one of the most unequal places in England and Wales (Eddo-Lodge, 2017) a place always on the edge. To write as many feminist writers have done before me, from lived experience and material worlds, attempting to bring the outside in, is to continue a tradition that is not over (Ahmed, 2017). These othered voices pushed established boundaries as they intersected with the academy. But lifting carpets and kicking at doors, is dirty, noisy work.

All of the publications in this portfolio have evolved out of questions, anxieties and concerns that had been preoccupying me since 1999. At the turn of the last century, I was working full-time running my own music management company, specialising in left-field electronic music. Due to the nature of my client’s work, I spent a lot of time working on the problems associated with sampling and copyright infringement. In the evenings I was studying law at Birkbeck University of London, so that I could sue my ex-client William Orbit and Madonna for copyright infringement, the case was finally settled out of court in 2006. I used to

refer to this time as “the secular void”, where the pervasiveness of post-modernist aesthetic often meant that the irony needed to be explained. It’s hard to be hip if you can’t get the joke, one needed to be quick. Things were moving very fast. In 2000 ‘Faking It’ a playful code-switching reality TV show on Channel 4 that used the *Pygmalion* concept became a surprise hit. Within five years it would be usurped by two much darker models of social mobility and self-improvement ‘The Apprentice’ and ‘Dragon’s Den’ both on BBC, both involving cruel bullying with the ever-present threat of “You’re Fired”. The strangest thing of all to me was the way in which all of these programmes were embraced and mimicked in educational settings. I was not alone in my concerns, but any objections were dismissed as outdated. A new era had arrived, the rebranding was in full swing, the world was digital now. Tune in, switch on but never drop out.

The ideas presented in this portfolio coalesce under the overarching question of what it might mean to manage music in the digital age? This question had preoccupied me since I accepted the role as course leader on the MA Music Business Management at University of Westminster in 2004. At this time, I was particularly interested in how digital music practices impacted the music workforce: the people whose lives depended on music (and on whose lives music depends). Having observed and experienced many of the challenges faced by musicians and music professionals, I wanted to pay particular attention to questions of mental health, equality of opportunity, access, and visibility. The research presented here on women and non-binary music makers seeks to examine the underrepresentation of women working in music. There are more women musicians than ever, and these women have become highly organised, yet the same problems of underrepresentation and inequality of opportunity persist. This portfolio of work examines how diversity and inequality of access are impacted and intersect with the contradictions and paradoxes caused by the democratisation of media production, social media activism and the gig economy. In doing so I hope they might inform new thinking around mental health, self-employment in the gig economy, and the wider creative industries. In the Introduction I set out the background and aims of the initial project and how it got started. The Preview of the work gives a summary of each publication and how each piece of work informed the subsequent publications. In Setting in Context, I situate the rationale behind the development of the research in a specific personal and historic period of time: from 2004 when I entered the University to 2016 and the sudden death of a friend and colleague. I introduce the three intersecting spaces in which I work and in which questions around the management of music are approached in different ways. These are: the Music Industries; Academia; and Music Business Studies that were set up in post 92 Universities. The Impact section covers the

ways in which the original research *Can Music Make You Sick?* and our subsequent monograph of the same name has impacted these three fields. Finally, in the Conclusion, I reflect on this process and offer suggestions for future research.

Introduction

The original report out of which most of the work presented in this portfolio grew is the research into the mental well-being of musicians entitled '*Can Music Make You Sick?*' that was commissioned in 2016 by the music charity Help Musicians UK. This project developed out of ideas I had been incubating since 2014 as I tried to find a way to understand what was happening around me as a music manager and music management teacher in the age of musical abundance. I was writing the paper *State of Emergency: the production of music is out of control* when I first came up with the question can music make you sick? At that point I started to formulate the idea for this research and started approaching people in the industry for funding. When I was introduced to Help Musicians UK, I insisted that I kept my question as the title. As the principal researcher of this project, I provided the underlying concept, the theoretical framework and research design. Additionally, I was able to use my position within the music industry to engage directly with the major music stakeholders. My position allowed me access to key people, and this was to prove very important when it came to further dissemination of the research and the wider impact of the findings. Having secured the funding and agreed the approach, I then invited my colleague Dr George Musgrave to work with me. The project is the largest ever study into musicians' mental health in the world. This research contributed to and informed all of the subsequent publications presented here both co-authored and as sole author.

The aim of this work was to examine the working conditions and experiences of the music workforce, the artists, creators, and producers who provide their labour as music subjects and as raw materials of the music industries. Reconceptualising musical workers as service workers in the age of musical and information abundance allowed me to focus on how they expressed and articulated their relationship to music - often complex and paradoxical - creating simultaneously conflicting and embodied experiences. As such, the portfolio revolves around the need to understand how the changing uses, practices and conditions of music and musical work commonly linked to the pressures of neoliberalism and digital democratization of media production impact the lives of these music workers. Concurrently, as a teacher and course leader of a master's degree, I was also interested in examining the ways in which music business studies and popular music education intersect with a policy emphasis on music's economic value as a creative industry. I was curious to understand how this emphasis on economic value

might in an educational setting, distort and inhibit examinations of the cultural and social impact of the digital transformation on music practices in this conjuncture. Music has always been at the service of something, or someone, making it a rich site for investigating how the expansion of creative and information industries create new models of labour (Lazarotto, 1996). The research therefore sought to examine how these new configurations impact the meaning of musical work, with particular implications for mental health and social reproduction. Examining how emerging models of music work are experienced might offer valuable insights into future working practices and help us better understand the implications for societal change.

The requirement that these workers need to adopt certain prescribed behaviours and characteristics, such as the need to be positive, to be enjoying their work, is an essential requirement of emotional labour in service contexts (Hochschild, 2003). Likewise, having the ‘right attitude’ is seen as a core attribute, embedded within the normative culture of the music industries. Being passionate about music is a demand. Music operates on a multiplicity of planes (Born, 2011) simultaneously providing ways to articulate experiences from a psychosocial perspective, informing and expressing multiple dimensions, personal/interior and public/political, as a maker of territory both exterior and interior (Frith, Cloonan, Williamson, 2009). Sound informs boundaries in space and time. Music as organised sound creates shapes and atmospheres, stimulating, and evoking emotional responses. In this respect music is a particularly utilitarian form of expressive art (DeNora, 2000) with knock-on implications for those that produce and sustain it.

Preview of the work

The portfolio is previewed in chronological order beginning with the online survey *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1* commission by Help Musicians UK in 2016, that provided contemporary data and findings on the mental health and wellbeing of musicians in the UK. *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 2* is a qualitative study that includes recommendations. This study as a whole influence all the works presented here. The publications in different ways examine how music workers find meaning in their careers; the weight they give to signing music contracts of various kinds; to the characteristics of the gig economy and associated inequalities of access, specifically gender. The monograph, *Can Music Make You Sick? Measuring the Price of Musical Ambition* brings all of these issues together aiming to synthesise and contextualise the research in terms of the wider challenges brought about by neoliberal practises and digitization.

These publications offer a holistic view of how these musical subjects experience their working lives. With the hope that these insights might enable future research and the development of new working practices and support better mental health awareness.

Published Work: 1

Gross, S. A. and Musgrave, G. (2016). *Can Music Make You Sick? Music and Depression: A Study into the Incidence of Musicians' Mental Health. Part 1: Pilot Survey Report*. London: University of Westminster.

The design and approach of the research developed from discussions with the charity Help Musicians UK. *Can Music Make You Sick Part 1* was an online quantitative survey used to gather data to establish how musicians felt their professional experiences might be impacting their wellbeing and mental health. Additionally, it was an attempt to gather large scale data on the subject. The survey attracting over 2,200 responses making it the largest study of its kind in the world. Interestingly we received many responses from outside the UK which we had to discard as we were limited in our scope by Help Musicians UK territorial boundary. It is important to note that those who responded to the survey were self-declared musicians. Although the survey is large and suggestively alarming, it never claimed to be statistically representative. As there is no standard definition of a music workforce which is why it was important to follow up with qualitative research in which the participants status as professionals was clearly established in Part 2 of the study.

The results of the survey revealed alarming results, as 69% of respondents said they had suffered with depression and 71% had experienced panic attacks.

Published Work: 2

Gross, S. A. and Musgrave, G. (2017). *Can Music Make You Sick? A Study into the Incidence of Musicians' Mental Health, Part 2: Qualitative Study and Recommendations*. London: University of Westminster.

In Part 2 the qualitative study consisted of follow up interviews with twenty-six of the musicians that had taken part in the survey. In addition, we held six interviews with music industry professionals: presidents of major record labels and music managers. We also spoke to psychotherapist who worked with musicians and a member of Alcoholics Anonymous who had worked in the music industry for over twenty years. Although not formal music subjects

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous are well known within the media and music communities and for this reason we felt it was important to include them in our research as recognised (although hidden) support professionals.

Each of the participants were asked to talk about their experiences of working as professional musicians and their career histories in the music industry. In doing so they all spoke about their relationship to music, what it meant to them and how central it was to their sense of identity and their wellbeing. They all described in detail how the working conditions of the music industry impacted their lives, economically, socially, and psychologically. As researchers we were often surprised at how willing and open they were to discuss what were often very harrowing experiences, they seemed overwhelmingly keen to speak about these topics, that they unanimously named as 'difficult'. They were highly reflective and self-critical and often deflected the contradictions and traumatic experiences with humour, but they were also able to convey anger and resentment, as well as disappointment. It was noticeable how they included their own mistakes and misunderstanding of given situations: often blaming themselves, talking about being naïve, or trusting in others and over keen to please. It was very clear that many of those we spoke to, particularly the women and people of colour, were aware of structural inequalities that they felt, were beyond their control. All clearly expressed that they believed their mental health had been impacted negatively by their working conditions in the music industries; yet they all believed that music was an essential source of good in their lives. Talk of giving up music being the ultimate taboo and seemingly for many respondents impossible (Gross and Musgrave, 2017). The paradoxes of women's desire, in particular, to continue to work in these often-hostile environments and their willingness to advocate for inclusivity and an end to discriminations is taken up in my solo research (carried out during the COVID-19 lockdowns).

Published Work: 3

Gross, S. A. (2017). 'Can I Get a Witness? The significance of contracts in an age of musical abundance'. In: Hepworth-Sawyer, R., Hodgson, J., Paterson, J. and Toulson, R. (ed.) *Innovation In Music: performance, technology and business*. New York: Routledge. 481-493.

This work examines how the act of signing a contract with a third party in the music supply chain appears to retain its historic hold and symbolic weight for music makers. During our qualitative interviews for *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 2* it was noticeable how respondents spoke about the contracts they had or had not signed. For musicians signing a contract whether

with a music manager, a record label or a publisher held real meaning for them. Although ostensibly a dry legal document, they talked emotionally about contracts referring to them as ‘high’ or ‘low’ points: important symbolic moments in their career development. In a precarious environment, contracts bind economic relationships for these music subjects, so that being contracted to a third party, be it a record label or a management company, produced a stabilising effect, even if only for a short period. Moreover, public recognition of this formal relationship appears to hold substantial meaning and not or not just financial reward. The contracts therefore act as a boundary, an exchange of obligations in which they felt recognised. While signing a contract signifies a moment of progress and validation, when the contractual relationship ends, many interviewees spoke of anger, resentment, and disappointment. Others saw themselves as being ‘freed’ and being offered a new opportunity and a ‘second’ chance. Yet none of them were ambivalent about contracts, they did not speak about them in the same way one might accept an employment contract. Musicians were all very aware of the ‘exclusive’ nature of these contracts and attached considerable emotional investment to them, as a formal commitment, and important evidence of validation. I use Jodi Dean’s theory of Communicative Capitalism to explain how these exclusive contractual relationships remain significant to music subjects and impact their sense of validation in this precarious setting.

Nonetheless, it is easier now than it has ever been for anybody with the most rudimentary of digital mobile equipment, such as a mobile phone, to record and distribute one’s music creations. Individual music makers are besieged by options and bombarded by information and media imploring them to take control and become music entrepreneurs. The ‘old fashioned’ music contracts are frequently represented as ‘bad’ or to be ‘avoided’ ; even so, contracts and contract law still are the dominate form in which creative work is organised. As such the chapter also intervenes in public debates and analysis that suggests that music producers no longer need to involve third parties in their endeavours. I argue it is important to understand why musicians still appear to attach such weight to these contracts and why they might still see them as important to their career development.

Published Work: 4

Gross, S. A., Musgrave, G. and Janciute, L. (2018). *Well-Being and Mental Health in the Gig Economy: Policy Perspectives on Precarity*. London: University of Westminster Press.

In this policy document we use the findings from *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1 and Part 2* to interrogate the implications of the growth of zero hours contracts and self-employment on the mental health and well-being of this work force.

The media and political interest in the issues associated with the gig economy rose significantly during this period. These issues include the wide variety of workers who are on zero hours contracts, the growing numbers of self-employed and part time labour, who rely on additional income sources, often platform driven (such as Airbnb). The findings of our report were considered to speak to this urgent local and global problem.

This policy paper argues that it is important to consider the future of working practices not only from an economic or employment law perspective but from a mental health one too. What are the psychological implications of precarious work and how are factors such as financial instability, the feedback economy and personal relationships reflected in mental health outcomes or connected to the business relationships most musicians and other gig economy participants work under? It uses the findings from our original research as a model to explore the potential long-term impacts of unstable “gig work”. We argue that using the music workforce as an historic exemplar of the gig economy can help inform policy on working conditions. For example, musicians are frequently self-employed, with fluctuating incomes, and have been traditionally excluded from state benefits, such as housing benefits and income support. Current state provision, meanwhile, is complex and difficult enough for even the generic self-employed workers, let alone the music freelancers balancing multiple occupational identity's against an uneven tour schedule. We argue that this demonstrates an urgent need to revisit the benefit and tax regulations to support the growing self-employed population.

Published Work: 5

Gross, S. A. (2019). ‘Mental health in the new economy’. *Minds at Work: Making mental health a priority in the changing world of work, Fabian Society Policy Report*. 3. London: Fabian Society.

In this report I apply the findings from *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1 and Part 2* to further examine the implications for the new economy. This second policy facing contribution picks up from the previous report to argue that these so-called new models of precarious work not only have clear historical roots, but furthermore obscure models of part-time low paid work frequently carried out by women and other so-called minorities. Using the findings from the Help Musicians UK reports *Music Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1 and Part 2* I argue the

need for changes to be made to the Social Security system including self-employment tax regulations and the potential benefits for a universal basic income to support new models of creative and low- paid work in general.

Published Work: 6

Gross, S. A. and Musgrave, G. (2020). *Can Music Make You Sick? Measuring the Price of Musical Ambition*. London: University of Westminster Press.

The monograph is a synthesis of the empirical work and the conceptual frameworks I had been developing since 2014 that contributed to the research in *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1 and Part 2*. In the book these ideas are expanded on using my critical theoretical approach. In doing so my ideas are embedded within each chapter and overarchingly form the analytical cohesion of the entire book. Specifically, I wrote Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 solely, jointly we wrote Chapters 1, 4 and 6. Chapter 3 is mainly Musgrave's work that derives from his PhD interests on how competition in music is experienced in the UK rap scene.

In this monograph we trace ways in which the entrepreneurial model of musical labour can be seen as an exemplar of neoliberal practices and examine our findings using the analytical framework of communicative capitalism. The emphasis on the economic potential of music meant that the issues surrounding the changing uses and economic value of music and musical work was at best underplayed and at worst ignored entirely. This singular economic approach meant that the impact of oversupply, hyper competition and precarious working conditions were also further side-lined. We map the history of the expansion of music business and music technology courses, from the Brit School to Higher Education institutions, and ask what role they play in these developments. The growing crisis of mental health issues in the music industry is placed alongside the more general mental health awareness in the media and Sociology of Culture and we examine the impact of social media in these debates.

Published Work: 7

Gross, S. A. (2022). 'Women Working in the Music Business: An Alumni Study'. In: Abfalter, D. and Reitsamer, R. (ed.) *Music as Labour: Inequalities and Activism in the Past and Present*. London: Routledge.

This Chapter has its origins in a keynote address I was invited to deliver in 2019 at isaScience a conference run by the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. The theme of the

conference was “Music as Labour”. My paper *Free Music, Free Women*, examining the ability of women-led music pressure groups to deliver equity or liberation for women with musical ambition in the current conjuncture, was well received. Subsequently, however, the pandemic and the events of 2020 demanded a new approach. Inspired by the feminist theorist Sara Ahmed (2017) I devised a small-scale research project in which I reached out to women and non-binary alumni from the MA Music Business Management to hear first-hand how they were experiencing this seismic moment.

Nowak and Haynes (2018) also raised the role of friendship in enabling female music researchers to draw richer insights from interviewees because they trust share and better understand each other's perspective and experience of living music lives. This position resonated with our research approach and findings in *Can Music Make You Sick?* The paper examined more directly how social media activism, notions of feminism and post-feminist sensibilities impacted the working lives and experience of these music subjects, contributing to the growing body of research and discourse that considers the gendering of working conditions, resilience, and well-being in music.

Published Work: 8

Loveday, C., Musgrave, G. and Gross, S. A. (2022). Predicting anxiety, depression, and wellbeing in professional and nonprofessional musicians. *Psychology of Music*, 51 (2), 508-522.

In this journal article we test the findings from *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1 and Part 2* using a scientifically approved framework the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale also known as HADS. This was very much a joint effort where we all contributed equally to the research. In discussion with Professor Catherine Loveday, we designed the questionnaire and added in new questions to further examine the differing positions of solo artist and performers. Musgrave and I brought our experience and knowledge of musicians and musical work to the design of the methodology and interpretation of the findings. Loveday as a neuroscientist and a specialist in statistic, used her knowledge to create the data and write up the findings.

In this research our original findings that “People working in the music industry report significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression than the general population” was scientifically tested and proven.

Our insight that musicians appear to suffer from mental health issues at a higher rate than the general population was seen as a significant validation for our findings, since musicians

taking part in the original research had self-reported their mental illness. Whereby in this study the respondent's mental health was accessed using the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale also known as HADS (Zigmond and Snaith, 1983).

The research explored if there were differences between the mental wellbeing of professional musicians and musicians who described their practice as being mainly recreational. The study involved 254 musicians from 13 countries. The respondents were asked to categorise themselves, either as professional or amateur. Additionally, they were asked specific questions about their work experiences, which included questions on whether they worked with managers, agents, record contracts etc. This analysis revealed that the musicians that viewed music as their main career were more likely to have poor mental wellbeing and higher levels of clinical depression. It also showed that solo artist or lead artist and those musicians with perceived level of success had lower levels of mental wellbeing and significantly higher levels of anxiety and depression. Our findings revealed a correlation between musicians who identified as, or aspired to be professional, and poor mental health, suggesting the latter was linked to working conditions and professional identities, rather than any inherent neurological trait.

The validation from neuroscience gave the research scientific weight that increased the impact of our original research and would lead to further research opportunities.

Setting in Context

In this section I contextualise the work by separating the three main areas that inform my practice: the music industries, as an artist manager and business affairs consultant; academia, as a researcher and the subject area music business studies, as an educator. These three areas intersect with each other. I am interested in how they do so in ways that reflect the growing impact of neo-liberal practices over the last three decades. In these overlapping environments, time and normative cultures operate in different and complex ways but all three attempt to influence and adapt to the impact of the expansion of democratised digital technologies. The recording industries' whose narrative dominated the music industries, emanated from the global music stakeholders. They sought to set a scene in which they were the victims of illegal activity and launch a war on "pirates". They justified their actions and position in terms of a moral battle to preserve music for the future. This version of the music industries' origin story is well known and, in the age of streaming, now seen as a past best forgotten. When the major companies were cast as anti-progressive and authoritarian 'dinosaurs' attempting to hold on to their control by prosecuting consumers and musicians. Whilst they portrayed the independent DIY music producers and music fans as destructive lawbreakers. The competing story came from the pro-

‘independence’ progressive tech-positive lobby who portrayed DIY musicians and producers as the future of music. Both versions are oversimplistic and underplayed the influence and position of big tech and ignore the ramifications for domestic music markets. It is clear now that the major music companies aligned with streaming services in ways that arguably disadvantaged both signed artists and DIY music producers alike, as they sought to protect their market share.

It is within this environment that the academy, and music business studies, supported by government policies, sought to benefit from the potential these opportunities might afford the creative industries and the wider knowledge economy in the UK. Unsurprisingly the focus in academia and music business studies circulated around creativity and entrepreneurship as drivers of positive economic change. Although in media and cultural studies and the sociology of work there had been a growing body of work critiquing neo-liberal practices and the marketisation of everyday life, it was difficult to find the space and time to integrate these approaches into the curriculum of music business. The literature on music courses promoted the need to know *what was happening now*: the reading of music business trade journals; the volume of tech-positive messaging and business literature focused on the future. In this highly charged information environment, it felt like there was little time, space, or desire to consider the impact of these changes on the music workforce or working conditions in the music sphere more generally.

Then with the advent of social media and the debate sparked at first by #MeToo, the music industries’ public-facing communication changed. Post 2020, a new era of industrial reflexivity is visible across the music industries as well as academia and music business studies. All three are positioning themselves as in tune with the millennial zeitgeist and against the dark forces of the authoritarian right. The complexity of this atmosphere demands attention to the small details of ordinary lives.

I outline the ways in which my position as a female music business practitioner working across these three spaces gave me particular insights from which to critically evaluate these long-term changes. Developing new approaches to the curriculum whilst also teaching and working on my own music management projects has meant all of this work took a long time. Just as 2020 has proven to be a key moment in shifting the discourse across the music industries, I too had key events that propelled me to re-evaluate and adapt the approaches I had taken in my life as a music subject. As I worked across these three fields in the UK and internationally, I was able to observe the different ways in which domestic and international policy impacted music production and music labour. Drawing from personal history, I track the changes in the

music workforce and my place within it. Changes happen in unexpected ways, chance meetings with the right person, can still change lives, in music as much as elsewhere in life.

The Music Industries

When I started working in music in the late 1980's, music industry was the only term used to describe the contemporary popular music sector. However, the term music industry is problematic, as several academics and commentators have noted it gives a false impression of some kind of unified space or place (see Sterne, 2014). In the Note section at the beginning of the monograph I lay out our position on the music industries as a complex set of networked industries in which music workers and musicians seek to make living (Williamson and Cloonan 2016). I suggest that it is better to understand the music world in terms of an ecosphere. Although equally complex this broader and more inclusive term describes a far wider and looser environment in which music is embedded. The occupants of this music ecosphere see themselves if not as full music subjects, at least driven by music. The dominance of the major music corporations' messaging and the use of the term music industry in mainstream media has meant that the term has stuck. Although, in the later part of the 20th century it was used to denote a much narrower field of commercial music companies and music managers, mainly recording, publishing and live music. Now it is used to describe a much wider collection of music related companies. This shift coincides with the positioning of music as a driver of new technologies and content media.

Back in the 1980's the unspoken assumption was that the closer you were to the 'talent' the more of a 'real' music person you were. This music industry was the commercial popular music business, back then nobody spoke about opera, classic music, or jazz. The collection societies and the Musicians Union were also seen as peripheral: organisations that you had to know about but were generally seen as 'boring'. If the artist had a problem, you asked your lawyer or your accountant for help. Nonetheless there were distinct subcultures that reflected changing times. When I visited the old EMI building in Gordon Square, it always reminded me of the dole office I used to work in on Lisson Grove, Maida Vale in the 1970s: you had to sit and wait for your name to be called and then you were given a pass. Virgin Records on Harrow Road on the other hand was more like a Sixth Form College common room, with everyone was just hanging out and recovering from the night before. By the nineties, everyone was on the move, Richard Branson ditched music for aeroplanes! There were mergers and sell-offs and new offices. The new vibe was less corporate more entrepreneurial. Even the music managers formed their own associations in Manchester, under the leadership of the band Simply

Reds manager's and my soon to be bosses Elliot Rashman, and Andy Dodd. The former was an outspoken socialist and Labour Party supporter, the latter a quite contemplative Buddhist. Elliot and Andy were close friends and business partners of the King of Madchester Tony Wilson, so the ride was always going to be dramatic (Richard and Rowlands, 2007). This was to be an important moment in the professionalisation of the UK music industry. It was Tony and Elliot's understanding of national and regional funding that enabled them to launch the first ever UK music industry conference 'In The City' in 1992. It was during that conference that Elliot and Andy would propose the setting up of a Music Managers Forum and I would stand up and ask awkward questions. Within a month they hired me as managing director of their new record label. In this position I became the first woman to work in Artist and repertoire (A&R) at Mercury Records UK. Mercury Records was the biggest music company in the world at that time.

Just as they were then, popular music industries are focused on contemporary and future issues and, in being so, often display an aversion to reflection. Some have argued they are anti-intellectual (Bennett, 2018). Ignoring history despite aspiring to create it. Their focus on youth culture and youth markets is paid for by their accumulation of music catalogues. The normative culture, the atmosphere of major music companies, is one of living in the present. Being in the here and now and focusing on 'what's happening' is the order of the day. It's around these kinds of ideas and within this atmosphere that one saw how the volumes of information that circulate must be filtered and ordered. For those people with musical ambition, or those professionals working in the industry, the acute awareness of the need to be up to date creates an anxiety around being 'out of date'. This kind of industrial neurosis, around the pressures of the present and the future, circulates making it very difficult, almost taboo, to think about historical similarities, infrastructures, and problems of intersectionality. Beyond references to cycles of cultural trends and fashion and on-going sector tensions, asking questions around structural issues within the music industries was rarely ventured into.

This was very much the setting when the research started. In 2023, however, post-pandemic and Black Lives Matter, couple with the reamplification of gender inequality and abuse of power that circulate under the #MeToo hashtag, we appear to be in a period of industrial reflexivity across the Anglo-American music industries. This has led to a new interest in music histories, and exploitation and wealth extraction. A liberal ideal of restoration and in some cases even reparation in terms of reviewing historical contractual terms (Snapes, 2020), has become part of the current language and communication around the music industries. Initially, I feared that this shift would impact negatively on the reception of our monograph. By

contrast, it actually seemed to have had the opposite effect and our work was received and evaluated as provocative and timely.

Academia

Back in the late 1970's when I entered higher education as an art student, as a single mother on a full grant living in a council flat in Haringey, things were very different. Art schools were not (yet) academia. The vibe was very different, the hierarchy was more informal, there was a lot of just hanging out and talking. It was messy and there was stuff everywhere. We had *ad hoc* performances, we staged sit ins and occupations, we experimented with materials and ideas, it was exciting (Libcom, 2010). By 2004 when I arrived to lead the MA Music Business Management (MBM) in the music department in the school of Media, Art, and Design in Harrow, the site of the former Harrow School of Art, the excitement had been exhausted. Art schools were, for the most part no longer stand-alone institutions, having been largely integrated into the post 92 Universities subsector. The University of Westminster with its emphasis on training for professional life and preoccupation with brand development, is an exemplar of this shift. I cover this transition in detail in Chapter 1 of the monograph *Can Music Make You Sick: Measuring the Price of Musical Ambition*.

In the new configuration of neo-liberal HE practices; positivity and possibility go hand in hand. So, it was no surprise that creative labour discourse has tended to overlook musicians' experiences and working conditions. The positive aspects of a musical life were always at the centre of MA MBM course materials, emphasising the positive potential for music to be a sustainable career. Alternative career options for music students included music teaching or music therapy. There was very little acknowledgement or comment on the implications of how such a course feeds an oversupply of aspiring workers. The focus is always on the exceptional: the hits rather than the misses. On the MA MBM the only area that presented the darker side of the music business were in music law cases that covered the abuse of power and duty of care - usually under the doctrine of "restraint of trade". The search for specialness diverts attention from material realities that are experienced differently depending on the intersectional position of individual actors. There is also a noted difference in the way classical music and pop culture are treated which is well covered in sociology and cultural studies, that forms part of the discussion in Chapter 1 of the monograph.

The emphasis in academic media studies and business literatures, like music business trade journals, was on consumers and products, corporate global structures, supply chains of distribution and marketing and the generation and acquisition of intellectual property/

copyrights. The music industries were at this time most frequently situated in academic literature as a subsector of global entertainment and media literature. For example, a core reading on the MA Music Business Management was David Hesmondhalgh's (2013) 3rd edition 'The Cultural Industries' it is over 400 pages long, but it never addresses the issue of diversity of music creators. Hesmondhalgh conceptualises authors of media texts as 'symbol creators' and dedicates under twenty pages to them. The book only considers diversity in terms of the kind of texts circulating rather than considering the diversity of the 'symbol creators'. Discussions of diversity at the time related to "cultural diversity" in the context of globalisation. The topic of diversity as we understand it now had yet to make any impact in any of these areas.

In 2014, I was appointed as an external examiner and music industry consultant by Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. It was during my stay that I serendipitously found a copy of Jacques Attali's book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* on the bookshelves in the tiny room I was lodging in. Rediscovering this book provided me with a much needed compass, as Attali's centring of the changing uses of music provided me with a way to rethink how the uses of music were changed by digital disruption and then how this change impacted the lives of professional musicians and music producers.

In 2016 I was invited by the University of Leeds Music Research Group to present my work in progress which I had titled 'A State of Emergency: The Production of Music is Out of Control. Using Stuart Hall's concept of 'articulation' and Angela McRobbie's critique of the Culture Turn, specifically her 1999 essay 'Art, Fashion and Music' helped me to critique digital music practices. In McRobbie's essay she poses a prophetic question: 'How many cultural workers can there be?'. This was later to become one of the driving questions behind the analysis in *Can Music Make You Sick?*. I found further resources in Mark Fisher's concept 'Capitalist Realism' (Fisher, 2009), in which he examined how neoliberal influences on art, education and music had come to signify the limits of resistance to Capitalism. Commenting on the disengaged young men he taught, Fisher made links between anomic, anti-critical practices of video-gaming and the smoking of Skunk, (a particularly strong strain of marijuana) with increasing incidents of mental health issues. As a mother of three young men and as a music manager, this resonated with me. I had seen first-hand the impact of weed psychosis and felt the resistance to discussing the possible harms of such strong strains of marijuana coming from similar young men. I fused some of Fisher's ideas with Simon Reynolds (2011) concept of Retromania to help me explain the atmosphere and distortion of time and place in contemporary music production. On the MA MBM, I used 'Retromania' as a core reading on the module Music Development, in order to help students understand how electronic music

production techniques allow for a new way of recycling and citing older pop music forms. Reynolds's (2011) argument sometimes collapses into a cynicism towards 'new' music, which he considers just sounds just like 'old' music and I offer students a counter critique from the rapper Nas (2002): that 'No Ideas Original' "No idea's original, there's nothing new under the sun, It's never what you do, but how it's done". Such ideas allow entry routes into discussions over time and space, exclusions, and distortions and the complexity of hyper-competitive music markets.

Fisher and Reynolds introduced me to the political media theorist Jodi Dean's Blog Theory (Dean, 2010), in which she developed a new model of communication theory she named "Communicative Capitalism". The monograph uses this theory to explore how looking at democratised digital participatory music practices, through this lens, helping to identify their impact on music subjects. It was within the nexus of these idea that I argued that such ideas provoke us to understand what was going on within the music ecosphere in more detail. . At that point, it felt imperative for me and my students to turn towards media and communications and political theory and away from all the volumes of tech-positive literature about the future of music. My thinking was progressed here by Darin Barney's lecture 'One Nation Under Google' (Barney, 2007) and a paper by Tiziana Terranova 'Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy' (Terranova, 2000) both of which identified the digital media space as far from democratic or revolutionary and much more complex and troubling than the music folk I knew seemed to think .

Thus, I struggled to conceptualise what music (the musical object) and management might mean, in an age where every individual music producer (musical subjects), no matter where they were positioned, across the music 'supply chain' were being implored to 'just' believe in themselves and follow their dream. My presentation in Leeds suggested that 'dream management' might become a new occupation. But in this setting of democratised participatory media, accelerated time, hyper competition and market fragmentation, music business theory (such as it existed at that time) was woefully ill equipped for any such exploration.

Just as I was starting to get to grips with the world of theory, the material world brought me to a sudden and painful halt when on the following day after giving my presentation in Leeds I was woken in my hotel by the sound of my mobile phone, which was ringing and pinging simultaneously. I answered the call, and I could hear my son Adam, sobbing. I couldn't make out quite what he was trying to communicate. I looked at my phone with multiple texts from my youngest son Jackson. One read 'Richard Antwi has been found dead'. Richard Antwi was my friend and my son Adam's 38-year-old manager and lawyer. A brilliant, successful

healthy young black man, he had transformed his love of music into a glittering career. He could not be dead. It could not be true, but it was, the news of his passing was all over Twitter. The messages read: Rest in Power.

These events and ideas hastened my resolve to turn towards research, in an attempt to formulate a response to these issues, as presented in this portfolio. At the time I could not have imagined the changes that the events of the pandemic, Black Lives Matter and the continued complaints of the #MeToo movement in 2020 would provoke. As the global music and entertainment industries were revealed, by their own admission, to be systemically racist and misogynistic, and began to reassess their histories and practices.

Music Business Studies

Music business studies describes a set of hybrid courses that started to appear in the early nineteen nineties. We cover their history and relationship to policy in our monograph. As a discrete subject area (rather than a module or vocational scheme within wider degree programmes) music business management is concerned primarily with the economic potential of music. Additionally, it focused on popular music specifically for key policy reasons that concerned the potential for growth in terms of cultural capital, soft power, and the knowledge economy. The academic literature that existed to support these nascent courses came from business and management studies with supporting context from a variety of overlapping disciplines such as media studies, popular music, sociology, and cultural studies. A key component that all of these new courses shared was the hiring of music industry practitioners as educators (Ashton and Noonan, 2013). This strategy presupposed that anybody who worked in the music business from musician to music journalist to record label executive would have similar experiences, knowledge and importantly perspective. As a woman with a background in music management and legal and business affairs working with artists and independent labels in the UK and France, I was acutely aware of both the potential to disrupt this position and equally concerned with the weakness embedded in hiring practitioners that might reinforce the systemic issues of an industry characterised as male dominant.

The music industries are territorial and hyper-competitive, with competing stakeholders in constant tension. The musicians and creators who supply the goods for the industry are in the weakest position. The mid noughties saw an increase in positive rhetoric again powered by “democratised” participatory media technology. In this configuration artists were again promised more power as Web2.0 technologies would put them in control not only of music distribution but also global promotional opportunities. Nobody thinks this is so simple now.

The line from the techno-futurists has since morphed into Web3.0 with endless blockchain and NFT chatter, but, the significant problems faced by creators, and the lack of regulation and policy interventions in the field has justifiably become a major global issue.

Before the pandemic it was still possible to detect the absence of the position of musicians and music producers and a troubling lack of attention to labour conditions beyond references to public goods, quality uncertainty, oversupply (Kretschmer, 1999) and risks that are common across the field of cultural/creative work. The new language of digital cultures produced new words such as “prosumer” and “co-creator”, that act to de-historify the boundaries of power. It seemed urgent to me that if the field of labour was ever widening in an industry that exploited scarcity it was imperative that we attempt to understand what the material realities of these shifts, this “disruption” might actually mean.

To foreground the interests of creators in the music supply chain was therefore a novel approach in music business studies. This allowed me to redress the prior absence of their experiences and to critically examine how the entanglement and embodiment of their work in their daily lives played out in relation to the wider music supply chain.

Across the portfolio, I argue that this model of creative labour presents opportunities to increase our understanding of the implications of expanding self-employment and the future of work across the wider creative industries and the knowledge economy in general.

Impact

The initial report *Can Music Make You Sick? Part 1* had an immediate impact across the international music ecosphere (Bassil, 2016); (BBC, 2016); (Day, 2016); (Williams, 2016); (Chapple, 2016); (Moore, 2016). As the largest ever study into musicians’ mental health in the world, the findings from the report received a great deal of attention and put mental health and well-being of musicians’ centre stage of discussion in these areas. From major music companies’, music institutions, music conferences and music education. It was also widely cover by popular news media from BBC to the *New York Times* (BBC, 2016), (Marshall, 2019).

It acted to open up discussions around the practices and conditions of music work and musicians and music professionals’ mental health. In music education it highlighted what for many had been missing and music students reacted enthusiastically to the work making it a topic of many dissertations and new research initiatives. I was overwhelmed with email requests from students from around the world, wanting me to answer their questions and/or appear on podcasts and videos (Shiel, 2020).

I have disseminated this research at numerous Higher Education institutions including New York University, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of Bristol, University of Southampton, and University of West London. I have also given talks on undergraduate and Further Education music courses such as, British and Irish Modern Music Institute, Academy of Contemporary Music and Access to Music. This has led to the development of new curricula for music students that covers the importance of understanding the working conditions in the music industry and the importance of mental health awareness and well-being practices. *Music Management, Marketing and PR* a new textbook from the Solent University Music department includes a chapter on diversity and mental health that was informed by this research. *Can Music Make You Sick?* is now included in curricula on music courses in the UK and internationally.

I was invited into music companies to speak to staff and HR departments to talk about our findings in roundtable discussions and staff workshops. This research has also contributed to the development of new company mental health guidelines, the training of staff to become mental health practitioners and has informed internal communications on duty of care to employees and signed artists. In November 2021 Sony Music appointed a Director of Artist and Employee Wellbeing, an industry first (Sony Music, 2021). The shift in attitudes and the initiatives that developed out of the research findings, have brought about a change in the way in which mental health and working conditions is dealt with and understood across the sector. This has benefited signed artist and music company employees as they are able to access the supports that large companies now offer. The three major music companies all now have mental health policies for staff and artist that include training and mental health first aiders (Solomon, 2020).

However, as the research makes clear, not all musicians are equal. The problems of equality of access to mental health support is as fraught and precarious as many musicians' lives continue to be. So, it was equally important that the work contributed to political discourse around both the gig economy and emotional labour that has become such a feature of the growing knowledge economy. The research enabled us to submit evidence to parliamentary enquires such as the 'Misogyny in Music' inquiry (Gross and Musgrave, 2022), and an All-Party Parliamentary Group report (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2023), which contributed towards establishing the National Centre for Creative Health. It has been cited in several reports for example *Supporting London's self-employed workers* (Belcher and Bosetti, 2021) which contributed towards the recommendation of the Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board Creative Freelancer Allowance Framework (Greater London Authority, 2022). The research was also cited in Equity's *global scoping review of*

factors related to poor mental health and wellbeing within the performing arts sector (Clements, 2022)

The recommendations have led to several significant initiatives. The charity Help Musicians UK launched a 24/7 helpline for musicians suffering from mental health problems with initial investment of £100,000. In 2022 Help Musicians launched a stand-alone charity Music Minds Matter to cater for the mental health needs of musicians (Help Musicians, 2022).

Internationally the research has informed the establishment of therapeutic initiative ‘Communion’ Berlin created a wellness centre. In France the Guild of Music Artist and the Collective for the Health of Artists and Music Professional (CURA) used the research as the basis of their own work and have consulted with us on how to initiate changes in mental health awareness across the French music industry (La Gam, 2019).

The performing rights society (PRS) which is the second largest collection agency in the world published an article about the research on their Facebook page that was shared 96,000 times making it their most shared article ever (Ottewill, 2016). This led to PRS developing a series of mental health workshops and publishing further articles and advice for musicians (PRS Members’ Fund, 2019).

The Music Managers Forum which represents music managers in the UK has issued a guide entitled the *Music Managers Guide to Mental Health* that was published and distributed at the Great Escape festival in May 2017. Music managers are now reporting a direct change in the way they support their artists in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. They also sought my consultation when developing their new code of conduct which also includes a section on mental health (Music Managers Forum, 2017).

Music therapist and music support agencies have also draw on this research to inform how they support their clients in the music industry. I have given talks around the world at music industries conferences and academic conferences about our work. From USA at South By Southwest, Tallinn Music Week in Estonia, Support Act in Australia, to events in Portugal, Belgium, France, Austria, Germany, Ukraine, Budapest, and Norway.

Can Music Make You Sick has also opened up new debate in other fields of the creative industries from drama to fine arts. In 2019 I was invited to give a keynote at an NHS senior management and consultants conference about the importance of breaking taboos, using our research to explain how working in hyper competitive environments impacts mental health (Kaleidoscope Health and Care, 2020). In the same year we were invited by the British Psychological Society to present our work on wellbeing and mental health in the gig economy.

In December 2022 George Musgrave and I were commissioned by the Partnership for Sustainable Development in Music that is funded by the performing rights society of Denmark KODA. The aim of this research is to develop new guidelines and recommendations to help improve the life of Danish musicians and music workforce (Partnership on Sustainable Development in Music, 2023). This research started in February 2023 and will end in February 2024.

Conclusion

The original aim of this work was to examine how the paradoxes and contradictions of working in the music industries play out in the lives of the work force. These industries demand that workers demonstrate a commitment to their work on an emotional and thus embodied level. The research uncovered a real desire from this group of workers to speak up and speak out about their working conditions. This model of work they felt was damaging to their mental health. The research findings caused headlines and help amplify the voices of these workers. In doing so it helped to open up conversations between different sectors of the industry and within academia in such a way that was beyond any initial expectations I may have had.

One of the things that is certainly visible is a notable shift in the way in which different stakeholders across the music ecosphere have come together to collaborate on projects under the umbrella of mental health and inclusivity and diversity. This is clear for example when we look at the PRS foundation working with the IVORS Academy who in turn are now receiving funding from Help Musicians UK. The music managers forum is now working with the woman led organisation Women In CTRL to encourage and accelerate the inclusion of women music managers within the industry (Paine, 2022). There has also been a growth of new organisations that look specifically at the interests of black British music and artists, all of whom include policies that highlight mental health awareness.

At the start of this work, it was difficult to imagine what impact it might have. There were definitely times when I doubted whether it was worth taking this approach mostly because from the outset so many people, I spoke to were concerned that the work might be seen as negative. However, this was never the case when I spoke to musician themselves, which always gave me the incentive to continue. Being an industry “insider” was definitely a big advantage. This informed the methodology - the question design and when interviewing musicians and industry experts- as well as communicating the findings and when seeking to implement practical outcomes. I do think this is one of the real strengths of the work. It has been very encouraging to see how the work has been taken on and used by different people in different

sectors. The idea that music's societal value might return to its earlier position as part of rituals of healing and celebrations is also very interesting. There are so many different areas that have opened up for new music practises even if it is still clear that artists and musicians are not in the most powerful positions. It is reassuring to see that change can happen and that the idea of tackling creative justice is now very much part of the conversation both in the classroom and across the participatory social media forums which we have often found so troubling. There are also encouraging signs that record companies are finally addressing some of the discrepancies that remain with historic contracts that do not recognise digital income streams. The work presented in this portfolio has contributed to these developments –none of which would have happened without the interventions of 2020. The business of music has always recognised the importance of timing and this time I might well have been in the right place at the right time, asking awkward questions.

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