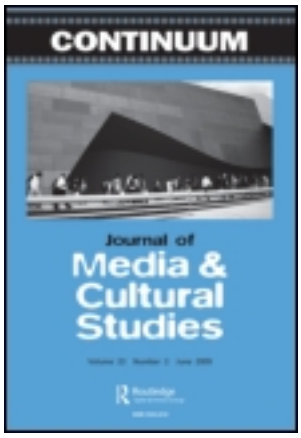

Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ccon20

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Available online: 06 Aug 2010

To cite this article: Jon Stratton (2008): The difference of Perth music: A scene in cultural and historical context, Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies, 22:5, 613-622

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304310802311634

Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies
Vol. 22, No. 5, October 2008, 613–622

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The difference of Perth music: A scene in cultural and historical context

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In the present article, I think about the importance of Perth's culture as a crucial context in which the popular music of Perth has developed. In the case examined in the present article, Perth music in the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as a scene that evolved *in situ*. Its localism was certainly not a function of any attempt to market 'Perth music'. Rather, as we shall see, the Perth music scene as I describe it has arisen in a particular geographic place with specific qualities and, as I will argue, these qualities have had identifiable effects on the music produced in Perth.

Introduction

In the present article, I think about the importance of Perth's culture as a crucial context in which the popular music of Perth has developed. In *Soundtracks*, John Connell and Chris Gibson suggest that:

> In one sense the uniqueness of local music scenes is straightforward, music is made in specific geographical, socio-economic and political contexts, and lyrics and styles are always likely to reflect the positions of writers and composers within these contexts. Recognition of this embeddedness of musical expressions in particular places was evident in the tradition of mapping regional variations in sounds and styles. (Conan and Gibson 2002, 90)

'Reflect' here is a problematic term. Music, like all cultural expression, is deeply imbricated with the social order out of which it evolves. As John Fiske told us, 'popular culture is made by the people, not imposed on them' (Fiske 1989, 25). Culture, we may say, evolves out of the everyday and the first site from which it evolves is the local.

Connell and Gibson go on to suggest that:

> The ways in which these processes occur … are complex, yet the credibility of some musical styles and genres arises from their origins, their sites of production, evident in a number of possible ways: smaller locations, places 'off the beaten track', isolation and remoteness from hearths of industrial production in working-class communities. (Connell and Gibson 2002, 93)

At the same time, echoing James Clifford's (1997) now well-known differentiation between roots and routes, Sara Cohen has sounded a word of warning about this emphasis on the local. She argues that:

> Locating rock music in this way can serve to associate it with roots as opposed to routes, and thus with local authenticity. Moreover, linking rock musicians and their products to authentic local settings has tended to suit a strategic promotion of local authenticity by music and media corporations that is designed to boost the sale of records whilst at the same time obscuring the commercial transaction involved. (Cohen 2007, 54)

Cohen's point is that the linking of a particular group, or a particular sound, with a specific place can be a deliberate form of promotion by a record company or other commercial enterprise

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ISSN 1030-4312 print/ISSN 1469-3666 online

DOI: 10.1080/10304310802311634
http://www.informaworld.com

to increase the claim on that group or sound to authenticity and, in this way, to increase sales. In the case I am examining in the present article, Perth music in the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as a scene that evolved *in situ*. Its localism was certainly not a function of any attempt to market 'Perth music'. Rather, as we shall see, the Perth music scene as I describe it has arisen in a particular geographic place with specific qualities and, as I will argue, these qualities have had identifiable effects on the music produced in Perth.

Music is embedded in place. However, the local is not just a geographic space; any particular local is also a cultural experience. Any music scene is informed by the cultural understanding of the local space in which that scene functions. Here, I want to examine how the way that Perth is understood, and how it is experienced through that understanding, has informed the local music scene that has evolved in Perth. I should add that I will not be covering all the music that has come out of Perth but, rather, my concern is to identify a few key constituting features of the Perth music scene and think about their relationship with the kinds of music preferred in Perth. Any local popular music scene evolves in the context of the local cultural understanding of place. This understanding evolves over a long period and provides a contextual continuity between scenes that may appear, at first, to have little in common. I argue that if we are to understand the Perth scene today, we need to go back to the 1960s, when modern, commercial popular music began in Perth, and think about what music was popular then and why.

The primary focus of the present article will be on the Perth music scene from the 1960s to the 1980s. I begin by discussing the impact of Perth people's understanding of Perth as an isolated capital on the music produced there. I go on to discuss the importance of the large British migration to the city for the kind of music preferred there and discuss the consequences for Perth music of a lack of an inner city and the related suburban-centredness of the city. Suburbia has been celebrated in post-World War II Perth as a key element in the utopian experience of the city.

Tara Brabazon's (2005) edited collection *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and Its Popular Music*, helped begin a consideration of the specificity of Perth's popular music. Brabazon (2005, 1) acknowledges the isolation of Perth and explains that this 'has consequences for literature, sport, politics and the performing arts but also for popular music'. This is so, but Brabazon is being rather literal. Although the isolation does indeed impact directly on the lives of people in Perth and the culture of Perth, we must also bear in mind that Perth culture itself makes a great deal of this isolation and that, discursively, one of the most important tropes of Perth's culture is the centrality of the claim to isolation. Brabazon then goes on immediately to write that: 'The great centres of innovation in popular music during the last fifty years have been on the periphery of global cities' (Brabazon 2005, 1). This is a very grand claim and one shot down in no uncertain terms by David Herborn in his scathing review of the book (Herborn 2006). By way of an example, Herborn lists some of the extraordinary groups that New York has produced. He goes on to note that, in many countries such as France, Japan and Germany, it is the capital cities that are the centres of music culture. Herborn's point is an important one. Nevertheless, taken more circumspectly, Brabazon's argument has merit. Certainly, marginal cities have played an important role at times in popular music innovation. Often this has had to do with the tendency of major record companies to be sited in capital cities and the inevitable conservatism of those companies when the need to continue to make a profit becomes paramount.[1] A consequence is that innovation can sometimes flower in places where such commercial pressures are more limited and where there is, at the same time, a dynamic mix of influences. Of course, this does not exclude the proliferation of possibilities for innovation in major centres. In Australia, the local arms of the major record companies, such as EMI, and the most well-capitalized local companies, such as Festival (established in 1952 in Sydney), were situated in Sydney and Melbourne. Perth, therefore, can be thought of as double marginalized – a peripheral city

in a country that has, historically, itself been marginalized by the major record companies, which are situated in Europe, including Britain, and the US.

In addition to her general argument about the importance of marginal cities in the innovation of recent popular music, Brabazon argues that:

> There are two elements that frame distinctiveness for Perth music. Extreme isolation generates insularity, protectiveness and self-satisfaction. Interweaving with this inwardness is a huge immigrant population that creates an associative web between cities, thereby encouraging extreme outwardness and interconnectedness. (Brabazon 2005, 2)

Brabazon's collection focuses on the 1990s and early 2000s. The first chapter reaches back to the Triffids, but there is little further contextualization of Perth's musical history. As Brabazon writes, 'Probably, if this book [*Liverpool of the South Seas*] has a function it is to recognise the long-term and unwritten role that Perth has played in house and drum'n'bass' (2005, 15). Although Brabazon is correct to talk about Perth's inwardness and the importance of large-scale immigration to Perth, neither of these is enough in its own right. Like other cities in Australia, Perth has evolved its own culture over the past 200 years, a culture derived from many elements, including Perth's experience of its isolation, the large number of migrants that have come to the city, especially British migrants during the 1950s and 1960s, the consequences of Perth not being an industrial city but, rather, a city built on the profits from the mining, resources and farming enterprises of its vast hinterland, and many other elements, including the importance of the beach and suburbia to Perth's sense of itself. All these things have been woven together into a cultural experience that has informed the development of the Perth music scene.

Thinking of Perth as isolated

As I have already noted Brabazon suggesting, Perth people consider their city to be very isolated. With jumbo jets and the web this is, in actuality, not so true today as it was even as late as the 1970s. Nevertheless, the idea that Perth is isolated is a key ingredient in Perth culture. Kim Salmon, who we shall meet again as one of the pioneers of the Perth sound and founder of the Scientists, writes in the booklet accompanying the re-release of the Scientists' first album, known on release in 1981 as the *Pink Album*, that:

> Perth, being the most isolated capital city in the world, does harbour some parochialism. My main memory of it features a huge inferiority complex about what was referred to as the 'Eastern States', i.e. not some hierarchy of levels of enlightenment but all that was to the east – in fact everywhere in Australia! Getting to the Eastern States meant a three day drive across the desert or forking out for an airfare comparable to an overseas flight – and that was just to get to Adelaide!

The understanding of Perth's remoteness is based in the knowledge that the city is well over 2000 kilometres from any other major city. Furthermore, there is a desert between Perth and the nearest large Australian city, Adelaide. As a consequence, Perth's experience of isolation has been compounded by the difficulties of land transport. The first railway to connect Western Australia with the eastern states was opened in 1917. The first road across the Nullarbor was built during the World War II, in 1941, but wasn't sealed until 1975. The naturalization of this sense of isolation has meant that Perth people have always considered themselves to be distinct from other Australians. It is worth remembering that, in 1933, 68% of Western Australians voted for Western Australia to secede from the Federation and become an autonomous state.

Perth people have a very strong feeling of remoteness, manifested in a sense of the emptiness of the space between the Perth–Fremantle conurbation and the rest of Australia. In the 1930s, Australians in the eastern states were known as 't'othersiders'. These days, Western Australians

talk about 'over east'. At the same time, even today Perth people feel that the city has an uncertain existence. In 1990, the literary critic Delys Bird wrote that:

> Even today in the West there is a sense that life has only a tenuous hold in these landscapes lodged between the desert and the sea, that European settlement here is vulnerable, chancy and could easily disappear. This sense of the omnipresence of the natural world is characterised, remarked on by literary commentators as one of the major elements of West Australian writing. (Bird 1998, 284)

It is the desert that is important here. In a comparison of the experience, and cultural interpretation, of the Perth wetlands area with the English fens, the poet and cultural commentator John Kinsella writes that:

> What is doubly fascinating is how in an environment like Perth's, which is extremely vulnerable to drought, where water restrictions during the summer, and even winter are far from unusual, where people describe themselves as living on the edge of the desert – there is a desire to preserve a notion of the well-watered and yet sensibly engineered lushness of England.

Underlying the preoccupation with verdant suburban gardens is the sense of isolation and the empty space, signified in the desert that separates Perth from the rest of Australia. Dave McComb and his group the Triffids, who released five studio albums and numerous shorter works during the 1980s, had a very strong sense of this distinctive Perth experience.[2] One song of theirs that has become an Australian classic is 'Wide Open Road'. The lyrics are about the emptiness the singer feels after the break-up of his relationship. This emptiness, and loneliness, is played out in the extended metaphor of driving along an endless, deserted road. The lyrics come out of, and speak to, Perth people's cultural understanding of their remoteness and the conjunct knowledge that, to travel to another city, one has to drive across a thousand kilometres of unwelcoming, arid scrub. The power of the lyrics is rooted in the way Perth people experience the situation of their city. As Felicity Cull writes, since the Triffids' song, 'The metaphor of a wide open road is now established and well used as a particularly Western Australian way to describe emotional desolation' (Cull 2005, 23).

The desire for lushness is an important manifestation of a nostalgia for England. It can be read as an anxious rejection of the desert, which is thought of as running so close to the city. The literary critic Veronica Brady argues that, 'There has always been an Arcadian strain in Western Australian writing – not surprisingly, in a society founded by English gentlefolk in a search of the "good old days" which, it seemed, would not come again in England' (Brady 1982, 107). It is to this yearning for a lost Arcadia that Brady attributes the nostalgia so evident in Western Australian literature. To this yearning, also, we can add the preoccupation with lush, well-watered lawns in utopian suburbia to which Kinsella adverts. They not only keep the idea of the desert at bay, they also offer a memory of a lost English homeliness. Nostalgia is a key element in how Perth people think about their city. Things were always better in the past. This comes through in many songs written in Perth. Again, though, the song that I want to use to illustrate this is by the Triffids. It is the final track off their last album, *The Black Swan* (1989), 'Fairy Tale Love'. The song's love affair is set 'In an earlier time', a time when there was 'a green land above/By the mill and the willows we made fairytale love'. Very briefly, then, we have both nostalgia for a lost arcadia and a sense, given by the willows, and perhaps the mill, that this arcadia is, in fact, English.

This sense of geographic isolation from the rest of Australia means that when Perth people do look outwards, they tend to look towards where so many Perth migrants have relatively recently come from, namely Britain. One reason for this is the large-scale immigration to Perth of people from Britain, and particularly England. In the 1970s, over 17% of Perth's population had been born in Britain. This compared with approximately 15% for Adelaide and between 8%

and 9% for Sydney and Melbourne. Brabazon notes the importance of this migration as a crucial element in the acid house connections between Manchester and Perth:

> When acid house 'hit' Manchester in 1987, Perth DJs picked up the swirling keyboards and divaesque vocals. Dancers raised their hands in the air. Family, friends and records flowed between the two cities. (Brabazon 2005, 180)

This global flow was possible because of relatively cheap long-haul flights, because of direct-dial international phone links and, in the 1990s, the appearance of the web and email.

However, the situation in the 1960s was very different. At this time, most migrants still came by boat, contact with Britain was expensive and, if using the postal service, very slow compared with the 1980s. At the same time, the impact of British migration on the Perth music scene can be easily demonstrated. Martin Clarke set up the first recording studio in Perth in 1962 and the first record label, Clarion, in 1966. In an interview, Clarke has said that: 'There was actually an Australian made professional tape machine from a Melbourne company called Byer, and I was the only person to have one in Western Australia'.[3] For the first time in Perth, local music could be produced locally on a local label. Clarke gained national distribution for Clarion through a deal with Festival. Many of the early artists that Clarke recorded were English migrants, like Robbie Snowden. Snowden's best-known recording is 'No One Really Loves A Clown', which was originally recorded by the American Johnny Crawford in 1962. However, Snowden's version sounds more like an English recording from the early 1960s, like something that, perhaps, Joe Meek may have put out before the Beatles and the Beat Boom, even though it was recorded after the popularity of the new group sound had become established. One thing we can note here is the impact of the delays that were a consequence of communication systems at that time. Another thing is the way influences are picked up and reworked. Snowden was very popular in Perth and, to a lesser extent, across Australia. The most well-known artist to have come out of Perth during this era was another solo male singer – the type that had been displaced in Britain by the beat group sound – Johnny Young.[4]

English influences

In the Australian Beat Boom era, groups across Australia looked to England for their influences. The most well-known example from Perth is the Valentines, with a young Bon Scott, whose family had migrated from Scotland to Melbourne when he was six in 1952, and then moved to Fremantle in 1956. The group brought together members of the Spektors and the Winztones, sometimes also known as the Winstons. The Valentines recorded for Clarion. They, too, were very influenced by English music. For example, they covered the Small Faces' 'I Can't Dance With You'. Even with Bon Scott, later of AC/DC, in their recording, the Valentines sound less excited and have less attack than the Small Faces do in their version of the song. This lack can be understood as an expression of the general conservatism of the Perth popular music tradition. In 1967, the Valentines relocated to Melbourne. Reflecting the experience of living in a peripheral city, Perth artists looking for a bigger audience have typically moved to either Sydney or Melbourne. Historically, artists from these cities have moved to London (rather than New York). The Triffids are a classic example in that they moved from Perth to Melbourne and then from Melbourne to London, moving ever-closer to what was perceived as the heart of the music industry. In Melbourne, rather than becoming a harder rhythm and blues band, the Valentines became a briefly successful bubblegum group appealing to adolescent girls.

It is important that we do not think about the Perth music scene of the time as being simply derivative of what was going on in England. Rather, we should understand it as developing out of a melange of English influences that came from different periods. Thus, Snowden, recording

in the later 1960s, was influenced by pre-Beat Boom music. The Times, a beat band recording for Clarion in 1966/7, had a skiffle influence and the Valentines, recording around the same time, were more influenced by the English mod sound and early English psychedelia. One origin of the Perth popular music scene, then, can be found in the mixing of these elements. The sound that was evolving came from what, from an English perspective, would be perceived as an anachronistic concatenation of musical developments. In Perth, these influences were part of the raw material out of which the local music scene evolved.

As I have argued elsewhere, the English groups that were most popular in Perth were those that could be classified as entertainers, such as Billy J. Kramer with the Dakotas, who reached number 3 on the Perth singles chart in 1964 with 'Little Children', but only number 10 nationally, and Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, whose 'Do You Love Me' reached number 2 in Perth in 1963 but only number 19 nationally, a discrepancy typical of all the group's releases.[5] We can draw a connection here with Perth's middle-classness. Being built on farming, mining and the resources industries, Perth had little in the way of a working class. The British migrants who came to the city were absorbed into the middle-class suburban lifestyle. Consequently, the music that was popular was what could be experienced as light entertainment rather than music that could, in any way, be considered challenging to the morals and decency of the Perth way of life. Thus, for example, the English rhythm and blues groups, such as the Animals and the Pretty Things, whose personal presentation often included long hair and informal clothes and who played in a rowdy musical style, often championing African American artists, were much less popular in Perth than other Australian cities.

By the late 1970s, when groups in inner city Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane started listening to American groups, Perth artists continued to be influenced by English music. Perth had two linked characteristics in the 1970s that no other Australian city had. First, it had no inner city and it was in the inner city that the more challenging, more avant-garde Alternative Rock evolved. Second, Perth was the most unrelentingly suburban of Australian cities. Unlike the other cities, Perth's population expanded slowly until the 1920s. The consequence of this is that Perth has very few of the 19th century terraces, corner shops and small local pubs that characterise the inner city areas of cities where there was an earlier increase in population (Howe 1994). In Perth, the area that most closely resembled that kind of inner city area was what was then known as 'north of the line'. This area, which was renamed 'Northbridge' in 1981, was where the brothels were, where there were illegal gaming clubs and ethnic restaurants and where many of the non-English-speaking migrants first settled when they got to Perth. It is also where one of the most important venues for the Perth music scene was – The Governor Broome. 'North of the line' was a colourful place but, in the 1970s, at the hands of Charles Court, the Liberal premier of Western Australia, it underwent massive urban renewal to become the restaurant and recreation suburb. The Governor Broome was knocked down. With the destruction of 'north of the line', the possibility for the development of a vibrant inner-city music culture was lost.

Jenny Gregory, who has written the history of Perth, writes that 'Perth's suburbs developed rapidly in the 1920s fed by immigration from Britain and natural population growth' (Gregory 2003, 7). The musician who best expressed this lack of an inner city was Dave Warner. Warner's first serious band was called Pus. Warner formed this band around 1972/3. His main influence at this time was the American group the Fugs. Warner formed Dave Warner's From The Suburbs after returning from London in 1976. Warner's lyrics reflect a preoccupation with, and ambivalence towards, the suburbs that is not present in the music of the inner-city Alternative Rock bands in the other cities. As early as 1974, Warner had written both 'Campus Days' and 'Suburban Boy'. These songs, like 'Mug's Game', acknowledge the ordinariness of suburban life compared with the possible excitements, and sophistication, of inner-city life. Graeme Turner has argued that 'What Warner offered was a new fantasy, one that allowed the fans to stay

in suburbia, instead of projecting themselves into some mythologized subcultural location – the New York ghetto, the LA street gang, or even inner Sydney' (Turner 1992, 23). The recognition of the importance of suburbia in the Perth musical experience runs through later groups, including, for example, the Triffids, and can be found most obviously in the work of Kevin Mitchell, the lead singer and composer behind Jebediah – especially in his other musical persona as Bob Evans. In 2003, for example, Evans released the album *Suburban Kid*.

Alan Howard, in his biography of Dave Warner, published in 1981, has described the popular music situation in Perth in the early 1970s, before the impact of punk:

> The Perth music scene seemed to be completely geared towards commercialism with very few bands offering any alternative music or 'scene'. Bakery still stood alone in this field and even they were turning their attention to the Eastern States, with a tour lined up in the coming months. All the work was going to bands like Mark IV, Troupadores, Clockwork Orange and others, who churned out Top 40 staples like Creedence Clearwater and Doobie Bros songs to appreciative, dancing crowds. They played a circuit called 'Swan Hotels', a chain of hotels operated in part by the Swan Brewery. (Howard 1981, 41)

Bakery had formed in 1970. Their music can best be described as a fusion of hard rock and jazz. Howard went to school with Warner and they played together in a couple of bands. As Howard intimates, at this time in the early 1970s, the mainstream Perth music scene was predominantly composed of cover bands. There was also a small alternative blues scene that produced the Beaten Tracks who, having moved to Melbourne in 1968, morphed into Chain – perhaps the best of the Australian blues groups. Their first single, 'Black and Blue,' reached number 10 nationally in 1971.

During the 1970s, Perth continued to look to England as its most important musical influence. It is worth noting that three of the four members of Supernaut, the glam rock group who came out of Perth in 1974, moved to Melbourne and had a number 1 hit in 1976 with 'I Like It Both Ways', were English migrants. This continuing English influence meant that, in the punk era of the late 1970s, whereas in other Australian cities the primary influences on the bands of the inner cities were American proto-punk groups like the Velvet Underground, the MC5, Iggy and the Stooges and the New York Dolls, in Perth one of the most significant influences was the English suburban garage band the Troggs – although this is not to discount the influence of the American bands, especially the trash aesthetic of the New York Dolls. Along with the Mersey beat bands and the other pop groups that had been so popular in Perth in the 1960s, with tracks such as 'Wild Thing' and 'I Can't Control Myself', the Troggs had played an important role in the development of power pop in England.[6] Wikipedia has a useful description of power pop: 'It typically incorporates a combination of musical devices such as strong melodies, crisp vocal harmonies, economical arrangements, and prominent guitar riffs' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Power_pop). In the same Wikipedia article, it is claimed that Pete Townshend of the Who first used the term in 1967 about the Who's own music, and it is certainly possible to see the origins of the genre in the combination of melody and a hard beat that characterised some of the productions of Beat Boom groups, such as the Beatles and the Searchers. Its generic attributes label power pop as, typically, a white music.

It was the power pop of English punk era groups like the Buzzcocks, the Vibrators and the Clash that was critical to the evolution of the kind of music that the early Perth punk groups produced. On *Suburbs in the '70s*, Warner's band covers both a Troggs track and a Velvet Underground track. This Troggs/power pop influence can be heard in the first incarnation of Kim Salmon's group the Scientists – whose name, it is said, came about as an ironic revision of the Troggs (short for 'troglodytes') name. Salmon's group serves as a very good illustration of the way the Perth music scene evolved divergently from those in the other major Australian cities. The Scientists' first album, released in 1981 and known as the *Pink Album*, was

a masterpiece of power pop. However, Salmon felt that he could not evolve as a musician were he to stay in Perth, so he moved to Sydney. The reformed Scientists then became a minimalist noise/funk band, a group that fitted in well with the Alternative Rock scene in Sydney and Melbourne.[7] Indeed, the group with which the Scientists of this era were most often compared was Nick Cave's group, based in Melbourne, the Birthday Party.

The Perth punk scene was small. Another important Perth band from this time was the Manikins who, at one time, included Dave Faulkner, who went on to be a founding member of the Hoodoo Gurus, who also show an English power pop influence. The Manikins formed out of the break up of the Cheap Nasties, who had been Salmon's first band. Faulkner had been a member of the other most well-known Perth punk group called the Victims. The Victims had a residency at Hernando's Hideaway, in East Perth, which, consequently, became a key venue in the Perth punk scene. We can appreciate how small this scene was by looking at who played at the Leederville Punk Festival, held at the Leederville Town Hall on 21 April 1978. We can get an idea of the time lag between punk in Perth and punk in London by remembering that the notorious 2-day, 100 Club Punk Festival, which was the model for the Leederville Punk Festival, had been held 18 months earlier on 21–22 September 1976.[8] The Leederville Punk Festival was an important moment in Perth's punk history. At this gig, the first group on the bill was Blok Music, an early incarnation of the Triffids, followed by the Orphans, a band formed out of the remains of The Geeks. Then there was a one-off group called Sad Sack and the Bags, followed by the Exterminators, which was formed by Mark Demetrius, who had put together Sad Sack and the Bags and who had been introduced to punk in London in 1976, and Rod Radalj, who went on to be a member of the Scientists and then the Hoodoo Gurus, with the Victims being the headlining group.[9] The drummer for the Victims, James Baker, who, legendarily, had seen the Sex Pistols and the Clash in England, had been in the Geeks, then joined the Victims and, after that, the Scientists. Baker was a strong supporter of the Troggs. Later, he played with the Hoodoo Gurus until 1984. Although Perth's punk scene could have blossomed into a version of an avant-garde, inner-city Alternative Rock scene, such as existed in Australia's other major cities, the destruction of Perth's small inner-city environment ensured that this did not happen. Instead, many of the scene's most innovative artists, including Radalj, Faulkner, Baker, Salmon and the Triffids, among others, moved to Sydney and Melbourne to continue their careers.

Listening to the recordings of the Victims, the Manikins and the first version of the Scientists, it is possible to hear the influence of power pop I mentioned earlier. There is a demo tape of the Cheap Nasties from around 1977 on which the songs, although owing much to Iggy and the Stooges, also show a power pop influence. In Perth, the importance of power pop runs through the next 20 years; it shows up, for example, in the work of the Stems, the Chevelles and, again, in the music of Jebediah. Indeed, Jebediah pay homage to the Troggs on 'Invaders' on the group's first album *Slightly Odway*, released in 1997, in which the chorus of the Troggs' song 'I Can't Control Myself' is reprised. Today, it is present in the so-called jangly guitar sound of the Sleepy Jackson and the Panics among others.

What I have wanted to do here, albeit rather sketchily, is to outline the development of the Perth music scene as a historical entity. I have wanted to show the specificity of this local scene. Central to this scene was, first, the cultural understanding that meant that Perth was experienced as a small, remote city that saw itself as qualitatively different from the other cities in Australia, those 'over east'. Moreover, Perth's remoteness was coupled with a sense of nostalgia for a lost Arcadian past that was the product of a wave of British, primarily English, migrants. At the same time, Perth's overwhelming middle-classness and suburbanism was experienced, positively, as a kind of utopian existence. For this population, in the great explosion of popular music in the 1960s, the music of choice was the poppy beat sound of groups like Gerry and the Pacemakers, and Brian Poole and the Tremeloes. Understandably, then, the most famous Perth musical

exports of that time were the Valentines and the solo singer and entertainer Johnny Young. In the 1970s, the scene continued to have a strong English and suburban emphasis, transforming the white beat pop of the 1960s into the punk power pop of the 1970s and 1980s – a much less confrontational sound than the aggressive beat of MC5 and Iggy and the Stooges, or the noise music of Melbourne's the Birthday Party and, indeed, the minimalist aesthetic of the Scientists after they had left Perth. As I have suggested, this musical heritage continues to be a key part of the Perth music scene in the early 2000s – as does the ideology of isolation, the importance of suburban living and the tendency for Perth musicians to look to Britain rather than the US for their influences.

Notes

1. See, for example, Keith Negus' (1992) discussion.
2. For further discussion on the Triffids, see Stratton (2007a, 2008).
3. Quoted here from the Various Artists the Clarion Call liner notes compiled by Alec Palao.
4. On Johnny Young's later career, see David Nichols (2006).
5. See Stratton (2007b and Forthcoming).
6. The best critical commentary on the Troggs, albeit from an American perspective, remains that by Lester Bangs (1988).
7. A good history of the Scientists can be found on the web, on the Noise for Heroes website (http://www.nkvdrecords.com/kimsalmon.htm).
8. The 100 Club Punk Festival, at the 100 Club in Oxford Street, had a line up that included the Sex Pistols, the Clash, Siouxsie and the Banshees, the Vibrators and the Buzzcocks.
9. One history of the Leederville Punk Festival can be found at: Ross Buncle's site for the Orphans on his Perth punk site (http://www.perthpunk.com/orphans_story.htm). Buncle's site also contains reminiscences by a number of the contributors to the Perth punk scene and is an important source for understanding the history of that period.

Notes on contributor

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