



—Soundings—

October 2004

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

—Denis Crowdy

Despite changes in most committee positions in the last couple of months, the changeover has been pretty smooth. Thanks again to the previous committee—things are looking healthy as a result of their work. Although Shane had expressed some concern over the state of our finances following two expensive conferences, Melbourne has partly come to the rescue through the return of expenses for the IASPM keynote Tan Sooi-Beng. Graham Smith has done a great job for us on the conference committee, but I would also like to thank Margaret Kartomi and other members of her team for their efficiency, collegiality and fairness.

We now have our own Internet domain and website at <http://www.iaspm.org.au>; thanks to Eve for her prompt work on this, also to Emma who kindly hosted our site at no cost to us at her own domain. I am currently fiddling with some code to organise a searchable, editable (possibly members only) bibliographic database, and will work with Eve on this in the coming months. More news as this develops will be posted to the list. We will be publishing the proceedings from Melbourne, so please send me your papers by the end of September. We are planning on both an online and printed format for this.

John is doing a great job on the money side of things; great to see the Internet banking working after Alison's advice and work on changing banks. Membership seems healthy, but we could always do with more. Roy Shuker is working on getting us all to go to Wellington in December for the 2005 conference, so hopefully our membership in NZ will rise as a result.

Finally thanks to Shelley for taking over where Sarah left off. Sounding good!

CONFERENCE REPORT: Country Music Conference, Gympie

—Denis Crowdy

Several members travelled to Gympie for the third conference on country music run in association with the Gympie Muster, and largely organised and facilitated by the energetic Geoff Walden, a champion of including as much relevant popular music material as possible into the secondary education system in Queensland.

Tim Kelly, from Sony Music, was slated as the keynote, but had to hand the job to a Brisbane underling. Tim had apparently been summoned to London—something to do with the Sony-BMG merger and the joys of oligopoly.

The Brisbane replacement gave a remarkably frank account of Sony's lack of interest in Australian country music, quoting figures, company practices, untrammelled dedication to sales above all else to explain why there were no Australian artists on their current list. Although there was nothing new in what he said, it was great to hear such material directly from an industry employee, confirming suspicions and ideas about the workings of the corporate music industry. The keynote was on the Friday night in one of the food tents, competing with various extraneous stage noise from surrounding gigs. Unfortunately neither the keynote nor his entourage bothered to attend any of the remaining conference—perhaps this is why such talks should occur on the morning of the conference proper so they might at least hear something of the research being done out of interest in music, rather than a bottom line. Perhaps most interestingly, one of the main organisers of Gympie, Gerry Crotty, introduced the keynote expressing the desire for more industry input into such conferences. Probably chose the wrong mob. Long time country music fans and business people such as Ron Adsett, pointed out that Sony really had nothing to do with the country music industry in Australia, and that it is smaller more independent labels, shops and active organisations such as the Country Music Association of Australia that really matter. Given the keynote in this case, he's probably right.

Papers included Mark Evans and I with a discussion of research-in-progress comparing charts and awards; Eve Klein on Felicity and the construction and positioning of particular aspects of gender; Guy Morrow on Lee Kernaghan and how he is marketed and branded (ouch) and sold; Bill Casey and the influence country has been on the Bee Gees; Aline Scott-Maxwell on Indonesian country; Jon Fitzgerald on Troy Cassar-Daly; Graeme Smith on Ted Egan; Geoff King on the intersection of rock and country in Melbourne in the 1970s; and John Whiteoak on the origins of country in hillbilly music in urban performance situations from the 1930s (and earlier?).

The organisers of Gympie always demonstrate their amazing hospitality and this year was no different—great wine, food, conversation, and the chance to cruise the various stages dotted around the Muster site. Too much to see—need days really—but I enjoyed Jeff Lang and Felicity in particular. Barnesy was the closing act—that pinnacle of country balladry—and took me back to sticky carpet days. No wait; even Chisel had disbanded by then. Oh well. We saw him at Brisbane airport as well—why doesn't he have his own plane? Shenanigans had Mark Evans developing an unholy obsession with the motel pond-gnomes and Bill Casey being attacked by motel geese.

The academic bottom line—good fun, Gympie hospitality, and a core of IASPM members held it all together. Mark Evans will be editing the proceedings and the Australian Institute of Country Music will be publishing it as a book so keep a look out.

CONFERENCE REPORT: SIMS 2004, Melbourne

'Live from the Swamp'—Liz Giuffre

IASPM's collaboration with the International Musicological Society for SIMS in Melbourne was an interesting and worthwhile experiment. While there were unexpected lessons learned (including 1- mini bar drinks are expensive and 2- Melbourne trams aren't as easy to work out as they seem on *Secret Life*), a good time was had by all.

Following a pre-conference reception on the Sunday, Monday we got right into the papers. For mine the talk of the day was Bruce Johnson's discussion of "Diaspora and the politics of authenticity", initiating what would be a theme over the next few days. Highlights of Monday were also the pre-lunch percussion panel by guests John Varney, Elsa Lee and Menaka Pp Bora (in which we took a rhythmic journey half way across the globe), and in the evening Eve Klein's exploration of Maltese-Australian music traditions. Oh yes, and of course the Keynote, Bruno Nettl's exploration of Song Ownership and Blackfoot Indian Culture was also most interesting—if only for making the link between *Tea for Two* and *The Man I Love* (can't hear either of those separately again....).

Tuesday morning saw another excellent IASPM panel, with Guy Morrow, Barry Hill and Sarah Baker approaching the Oz Music industry from three very different but equally important angles. In the afternoon, Music in Social Context by IMS members Pauline Griffiths and Peter Tregear was a fascinating, particularly Griffiths' examination of Chamber Music audiences (whose findings could prove very relevant for similar popular music studies). A noticed a few 'popular music impostors' in the audience who were graciously received!

Onto hump day Wednesday, or should I say, hangover Wednesday. After the conference reception the night before, making the 9am start was difficult, but worthwhile. Nothing like a little Prog Rock, thanks David Nicholls, Nicholas Cook and Sarah Hill. A few coffees later, the next IASPM panel, "Film and Music", was very stimulating with again, three very different examples of films and music from Peter Doyle, Mark Evans and Tony Mitchell. Where else would you get Elvis, Chopper Reed and Clara Law in the same room? After this was straight to the classics, *The Blues* with John Scannell's examination of James Brown's possible idiot status (a paper which very deservedly won the 2004 IASPM postgrad award), and then onto Rock and Pop, Ian Chapman's examination of Ziggy Stardust and Kenneth Gloag's look at rock and pop nostalgia via Elton John. Sing-a-long time as the headache finally subsided.

Thursday saw another killer morning panel, with "Place and Identity" examinations across the Popular/musicological studies divide. The mixed audience certainly benefited from the specialties of Shane Homan, Daniel Grimley and Linda Kouvaras (who made me particularly happy by playing Alice Cooper on a grand piano! How cool!). After morning tea another IASPM panel of Musical Practices and Commodification, with much kudos to Mel

Campbell (who bravely tackled the rise of the Hollywood Hobby band), and Joanne Cummings (whose ethnographic study of Indie music festivals not only provided great information and research, but IASPM's first animated mosh pit!). Closely following was the IASPM keynote, Tan Sooi Beng who gave a very inspiring, if somewhat more traditional paper. What a lovely speaker. After lunch a more grass roots approach was in order, with Robin Ryan's examination of local Aboriginal music (and a special gumleaf demonstration) an absolute highlight, as was the Ethnographic Studies panel by Denis Crowdy and Eckart Rahn.

While I was regretfully unable to attend the last day of the conference, from all reports this was as successful as the days previous. In addition to the great papers, over the week there was a fair bit of sight seeing done, least of all in the local watering holes. Thursday night's conference dinner was particularly memorial (I think I remember it anyway), so thanks to all for your company, good humour and conversation. In particular, to those that came, saw and survived the Macquarie swamp, well done. My liver will hopefully be back to 100% by Auckland!

CONFERENCE REPORT: SIMS 2004, Melbourne

—Mel Campbell

Just last week I was in a café and heard some steel drum music, and was able to offer a potted history of Trinidad's unofficial national instrument. "How do you know this?" said my awestruck friend. "Why, the SIMS conference!" I replied in a voice of triumphant thunder. Kenneth Broadway's paper on the development and cultural significance of the steel drum band, which I attended in the very first session on Monday, kicked off the conference with great promise, as did Alexandra Williams' paper in the same session, on the commodification of the recorder in England during the 1930s.

I must agree with Liz Giuffre's assessment of the best papers, although she modestly neglects to mention her own provocative study of cover songs through the generations, which lodged "Lime in the Coconut" firmly in my head for the remainder of the conference. Many of the papers had a lot to offer a popular music scholar, and I was particularly taken with the implications for the music industry of Bruno Nettl's discussion of musical 'ownership'. The styles in which papers were written and delivered also varied wildly from completely anecdotal and apparently improvised yarns to highly technical discussions of musical form and notation. At best, this was inspiring; at worst alienating.

The sheer number of papers also meant there was more than the usual ghettoisation (by period, style or geographic location). This was a shame, considering the opportunity the conference posed to familiarise ourselves with topics outside our general interest. A great number of papers were particularly specialist in focus and inaccessible to anyone outside that field. There were, for example, entire panels dedicated to Oswaldo de Souza and Maja Trochimczyk-Lutoslawski, neither of whom I've ever heard of. As we heard at the IASPM AGM, the conference organisers appeared actively to resent any input from IASPM vis-a-vis scheduling.

I feel strongly that for the amount of money we were asked to pay, the conference catering and functions were absolutely abysmal. The first day, Sunday, was a complete waste of time, and was wisely avoided by almost all IASPM delegates. The main conference proceedings took place at the Victorian College of the Arts in central Melbourne, but because SIMS was hosted by Monash University, we were driven by bus at 9:30am to Monash's windswept suburban campus, where we promptly registered and then spent much of the day sitting around drinking polystyrene cups of tea and eating the dubious contents of bain-maries, trapped until the buses returned at 5pm. The opening ceremony consisted of an endless parade of speakers, including IASPM's then-Head Honcho, Shane Homan, who managed a dig at the expense of Federal Arts Minister, Rod Kemp. Also very entertaining was the Occasional Address by Larry Sitsky, who valiantly resisted attempts to lionize his work by systematically insulting the music academy, industry and the government.

I can also barely contain my outrage that the conference did not provide lunch for such a long conference, and that there was no proper morning tea and coffee. I've been to conferences with pastries and brewed coffee, sandwiches and fruit platters, juice and three different sorts of tea. So it was a rude shock to be greeted, at an international conference that takes place every four years, with International Roast coffee powder, Liptons teabags in polystyrene cups, and Arnotts biscuits in individual plastic packets like you get in hospital. And as any VCA student can tell you, the university caf isn't so much a lunch provider as an apology.

As for the social events, apart from the reception at University House, Melbourne University, there were none. So we had to make our own fun. The pub dinner organized by Alison Huber in Fitzroy was wonderful, as were the 'party shirts' worn optimistically by several male IASPM members, and the plentiful alcohol drunk by those used to ordinary IASPM conferences. For me, the best part of the conference was meeting (and renewing acquaintance with) my pop-musical colleagues. It was a shame that the structure and organization of the conference deterred the making of new connections.

IASPM-ANZ POSTGRADUATE PRIZE: SIMS 2004

—Shane Homan

Judges: Peter Doyle, Sarah Baker, Tony Mitchell and Shane Homan

This year's collection of candidates provided a diverse range of interesting topics and approaches that bode well for IASPM. All performed well, given the often-daunting auditoriums and audiences they had to confront. Mel Campbell drew from celebrity and popular culture studies to explore one particular notion of stardom: the film star as wanna-be rock god. Mel used a wealth of Russell Crowe interview material to good effect in juxtaposing the older Oz Rock ethic with Hollywood fantasies. Liz Giuffre ('Covers and kids ...') offered interesting personal experiences to explain how rock / pop canons are learned early in life, and from unexpected sources. Liz's own take on cover versions helped in re-evaluating the different motives behind covers, and how audiences understand them in competition with other strands of fandom. Guy Morrow ('Engine Room') presented a local take on the changes in multinational recording company practices with his examination of Australian company Engine Room. Guy described the new company goals of 'weightlessness' in establishing

corporate brands without the more traditional finance, distribution and marketing responsibilities of global organisations.

Helen O'Shea ('When Irish eyes are fearful ...') presented an impressive sweep of European history in exploring the effects of diaspora upon Irish music sensibilities. Helen questioned the foundations of music stereotypes, and the gendered differences of Irish music, and how they come to stand in for 'nation'. Jane Hammond ('Bjork: composition Post-style') revealed the complex styles and personalities behind the 'innocence' of Bjork. Jane employed a combination of textual analysis, social context and individual background to question existing understandings about Bjork as a contemporary recording star. The enduring fascination with scenes and tribes remained through Joanne Cummings' paper ('Sold Out ...') that looked at Australian events such as the Big Day Out as contemporary 'indie' rock structures that straddle both commercial and organic sentiments. Joanne presented a brief excursion through sociological analysis on tribes and their usefulness as a tool in explaining contemporary patterns of fandom and belonging. Katelyn Barney ('Crossing borders ...') provided a useful mix of interviews of indigenous women performers to discuss the continuing barriers placed before aboriginal and Torres Strait islander musicians. Her work revealed the tensions between industry, fans and performers in the perpetuation of the 'exotic' black woman performer.

The judges unanimously agreed that this year's winner was John Scannell ('James Brown: contemporary music's most influential idiot?'). John provided an entertaining and innovative revision of the James Brown legacy drawing on Deleuzian theory ('as was the fashion of the time', to quote Grampa Simpson). The rhythmic innovations of James Brown were placed within the broader contexts of interactions with his band, and Brown's personal experiences and limited music training.

The judges sought the best presentation that most effectively reconciled theory with practice. Presentation methods were, of course, important, and like the 2003 judging panel, would like to stress again the need for appropriate additional resources (films, television, slides etc) that can assist audiences that are not familiar with the topic. However, glossy show-and-tell styles cannot act as a substitute for substance. The universal problem of weighing the amount of content for maximum impact requires careful thought, not made any easier by the difficulties of judging just how much your audience knows about your topic and its theoretical platforms (particularly given this conference's audience). From my point of view, the papers discussed above all reached a benchmark of clarity and energy that was not matched by some eminent scholars that I witnessed at the SIMS conference, many who have passed into their anecdote. It was refreshing to observe a bunch of researchers that do not rely upon reputation, and who are willing to take their intellectual debates onto the stage and dance floor.

IASPM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: 2005, Rome Italy

The deadline for abstracts has come and gone for the 'Making Music, Making Meaning', the 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music. I hope everyone managed to successfully submit in lieu of the difficulties associated with the email address! Notifications of acceptance will be made in early 2005.

BOOK REVIEW: 'Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places'

—Sarah Baker

Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places is a new publication from UNSW Press (July 2004). The authors, Peter Dunbar-Hall and Chris Gibson, have done a superb job mapping contemporary Aboriginal music in Australia. Bringing together their respective backgrounds of ethnomusicology and geography they document the sites, texts and development of contemporary Aboriginal music. While some parts draw on their previously published journal articles, much of the content is original material. The result is a comprehensive book covering a range of musical texts, styles and Indigenous artists and the socio-political contexts of the music's production and consumption.

The first two chapters provide a comprehensive and clear overview of the development of contemporary Aboriginal music; its geography, performance, song text, and its relationship with the Australian music industry. The remaining chapters contain detailed case studies of: Aboriginal country music (Chapter 3); hip-hop and R&B (Chapter 4); place in the music of the Warumpi Band (Chapter 5); Djabugay cultural identities (Chapter 6); the recording of Indigenous music in central Australia (Chapter 7); the music of Aboriginal rock bands in the Top End (Chapter 8); a close reading of Blekbala Mujik's song 'Nitmiluk!' (Chapter 9); and music and regionalism in the Kimberley (Chapter 10). The final chapter pulls together a number of issues that run through the book concerning land rights struggles and claims for country.

The authors state that the 'book is intended to provide an introduction to many Aboriginal artists, songs and recordings of which much of the general public will not be aware' (p. 21). Each chapter begins with a list of suggested listening and readers are urged 'to see this book as a companion to recordings of Aboriginal music that are commercially available' (p. 21). While much of the music referred to in the book may be available commercially, it would have been a wonderful addition to the publication if it had been accompanied by a companion CD featuring examples of music by the main artists in the case studies. That way the reader could have been sure of having Herbie Laughton's 'Ghan to the Alice', Shakaya's 'Stop Calling Me', Blekbala Mujik's 'Nitmiluk!', the Warumpi Band's 'Warumpinya' and the Wilcannia Mob's 'Down River' at hand while reading the related sections – what a great CD that would have been!

Even without such a CD the lists of suggested listening are a great feature of the book. So are the many illustrations that are littered throughout; from photos of artists to reproductions of album covers, posters and other documents. The book also contains a wonderful Discography listing over 200 recordings by the artists referred to in the book.

Deadly Sounds, Deadly Places should be essential reading in popular music courses nationally and internationally. The book takes its title from the Aboriginal English interpretation of 'deadly' meaning 'fantastic, good, terrific'. Like the music and places it describes this book is also 'deadly' – a must read by students and scholars alike.

POSTGRADUATE COMPLETIONS

Lorena Gibson has recently completed her MA thesis in social anthropology at Massey University, titled "Versioning for the love of it: Hip-Hop Culture in Aotearoa". Her supervisors were Dr Sita Venkateswar and Dr Roy Shuker until his appointment to Victoria University. You can download a PDF copy of the thesis from her website; www.lorenagibson.com

MUSIC RECORDINGS

Karl Neuenfeldt, Constance Saveka and Nigel Pegrum have completed a CD for the Centenary of St Pauls Community on Moa Island, Torres Strait. St Pauls was settled by South Sea Islander maritime workers exempt from the repatriation provisions of the White Australia policy of 1901. Many had families with Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal women. The CD features traditional and contemporary songs, including religious songs known as kores. For information contact Karl Neuenfeldt [k.neuenfeldt@cqu.edu.au].

FORTHCOMING...

Linda Kouvaras co-edited (with Graham Hair and Ruth Lee Martin) *Loose Canons: Papers from the 2001 National Festival of Women's Music*. Canberra: Southern Voices (in-press) (2004), which includes her paper, 'Taking Her Breath Away: A Study of Two Popsongs (Little Water Song by Nick Cave and Happy Holiday by Rachel Portman)'.

Also in-press is her "When the String Snaps: Two Domestic Prison Scenarios" (which looks at Siouxsie and the Banshees' *Suburban Relapse* and Andrée Greenwell and Kathleen Mary Fallon's *Everywherething I Touchwalk* [sic]), *Music Research: New Directions for a New Century*. Ewans, M. et al. Eds. Amersham, Buckinghamshire: Cambridge Scholars Press (2004).

GRANTS/AWARDS

Dr Linda Kouvaras (Univ of Melb, Fac of Music) (with Dr David Bennett from the English Dept) has been awarded a Faculty of Arts Seeding Grant to research postmodernism in contemporary Australian art-music (2003–04). She presented findings from their research in a co-authored paper at SIMS (the Symposium for the International Musicological Society) in July in Melbourne in a paper entitled, "Modernist vs. Postmodernist Aesthetics: Contemporary Music Criticism and the Case of Matthew Hindson" (which looked at the influence of techno music on Hindson's compositions and their reception), at which she also presented her paper, "Only Women Bleed": Representations of (Extreme States of) Male Identity in two popular songs: *Only Women Bleed* (by Alice Cooper / Dick Wager) and *The Mercy Seat* (by Nick Cave).'

FUNDING

Music And Youth Project.

A fellowship for on site German-Australian collaboration to research the everyday music practices of marginalised youth as pathways to socio-economic inclusion was successfully funded in the current ARC round.

Investigators: Dr G F Bloustien (UNISA); Dr B M Cohen (Humboldt UNI, Berlin) ; Dr M P Peters (UNISA) ; Dr S Homan (Newcastle) ; Dr S Baker (UNISA) ; Dr A Bennett (SURREY) ; Prof H G Jenkins (MIT); A/Prof DeFrantz (MIT); Prof H Haeussermann (Humboldt, UNI< Berlin). Collaborating countries: Germany, United Kingdom, United States

This project aims to deepen our successful multi-sited collaborative project, *Playing for Life*. Popular music is widely recognised as affectively and culturally central to marginalised youth, often providing strategic pathways to employment and socio-economic inclusion. This project is the first comparative international project to explore how marginalised youth engage with popular music in post-industrial societies, and how they develop their music and technological skills by using local cultural resources that exist outside of formal schooling. Located in community-based organisations, the study will identify processes of learning and agency from the perspectives of young people themselves. The findings will enrich current social theory on youth, policy and program development of youth services. Adherence to common research aims and objectives and cross-cultural benchmarking will significantly enhance Australian leadership in international best practice in youth policy implementations and development programs. The project is situated at the Hawke Research Institute for Sustainable Societies.
