



## TRANSCRIPT

2018 Melbourne Insights

### PANEL DISCUSSION: LIVE MUSIC

#### Speaker Key:

- JG Jane Gazzo (host)
- AS Alice Skye, musician
- LB Linda Bosidis, Head of A&S, Mushroom Records
- KD Kate Duncan, CEO, The Push
- AM Audience Member

JG Well, I guess I'll just thank you so much for your time. I guess I'd like to ask the question, what live music in other cities around the world has suffered from the digitalisation of music? And by that we mean streaming, etc. Because of this Melbourne's live music scene continues to thrive even though we have digitalisation and we have so many, I mean, kids nowadays have iPads and iPhones and so many other, I guess, distractions, but we still continue to thrive. We still are the live music capital of Australia. Is this an accurate statement? Are we still, you know, despite the distractions, how are we doing this? How are we, how is this happening?

KD I would like to think that advancements in technology are, I mean, as Jane said, I work for The Push, we're a youth music organisation, and I see more and young people creating music now and being able to translate that into a live context. I think it's just that we need to put supports in place to allow them to translate from, particularly, like, we're seeing more and more young people creating music as electronic, as electronic music producers in their bedrooms and, which is great, because of this technology. You know, it's broken down all of those barriers that you once, maybe, you know, you had to get into a studio or had to have access to particular musical equipment. But nowadays, those barriers are just not there. So I think that what Melbourne and Victoria has been great is really fostering and supporting, yes, breaking down those barriers to allow new artists, emerging artists, to go through onto a live context. Would you agree with that?

LB I mean, I work in music publishing so it is quite different to the live perspective. So I thought I'd probably bring a different approach to this, not to throw a spanner in the works too early. But...

JG It's okay, you can.

LB Yes, good. I mean, Melbourne is an incredible live city, but I think, you know, social media's definitely an asset when it comes to live shows. But where we suffer in the music industry is the sale of music, the sale of music and how it's digested. So that, to me, is a big issue, you know, people wanting music for free. It's very much a take situation. It's just not how Mother Nature expected it to be. It's give and take. So that is where, you know, income is a real problem and it's particularly about the artists. So if we want a thriving, you know, industry, which means, you

know, artists being able to do this as a living and live, and Alice can talk about this further as well, but even, you know, even playing live, the up and coming artists and, certainly, you know, bands playing live, there's not a great deal of income in there if people are not also purchasing your music. So, by the time you pay the mixer, or costs, you know, your mixer probably gets three times more than what you're getting for that live performance. So I think that's also a big reality.

JG Would you agree with that, Alice? How do you survive being an up and coming artist in Melbourne?

AS Yes, it can be a challenge, especially when I started out. I mean, I've been maybe performing properly for two years and at the beginning it was really hard because fees were really low, you might just break even with what you're getting, and that doesn't take into account, like, the time that you're putting in to get there and travel and rehearse. So that can be hard. But, in terms of, like, your live music, yes, I guess because I spend a lot of my time around other people that are making music and going to see shows that's not something that I notice a lack in.

But definitely with music sales, it's like, it's such a challenge when people do have these services where you can access them for free and it's not the same as, I suppose, it used to be and, because I've only been in the industry for two years, that's how I've come into it. So I don't have a comparison. But I know that it's, yeah, it's not filling my bank account.

JG Well, Kate, a question for you. How does Melbourne support upcoming artists like Alice?

KD Yes, I think we've been really lucky, particularly with the investment from the state government over the last three to four years through the Music Works package. So that was over \$22 million that was invested into the contemporary music sector and, at The Push, we have been responsible for delivering a series of professional development programmes, along with Music Victoria, around really, you know, supporting through mentoring programmes and through song writing programmes and industry seminars and workshops that have allowed emerging artists to network.

I think, like what I touched on before about we're seeing more and more young artists making music in isolation. I think that's all the more reason why we need to be supporting artists to come together and meet like-minded people and collaborate and to really, you know, foster that community, a physical community which can sometimes be lost in an online space. But also, from that Music Works package, we've been seeing a number of grants that have gone out to artists and I was just chatting with Alice before, who I think may have received a quick response grant, so there's been a whole, you know, that stimulus is, I don't think that we can downplay the importance that that has had in building and supporting our sector.

JG It's interesting to note that a lot of musicians move to Melbourne to further their career and someone who went through The Push in its alumni is Courtney Barnett who's certainly not from Melbourne but decided that she needed to move to Melbourne in order to further her career and now she's got the worldwide stage. I think she's a fantastic success story. But why, what is it about Melbourne that makes them want to move here? Is it the live music venues? Is it the sense of music community? Is it more? Linda? What do you think?

LB I think it's, like, the connection, there's a community here. So it's really just as basic as that. It's supported in all those ways that Kate has mentioned but at its core there's a real connection with other musicians, sharing information, playing several different people's bands or writing with others. But I think that that's what it is you're merging with other artists.

KD And I think more than ever we're seeing greater representation across our community. It's not just, you know, like, I remember in the '90s when I was going to underage gigs and stuff, the

people on the stages all pretty much looked like same kinds of people in the same bands and now, more than ever, our stages are really reflective of the true Melbourne and Victorian community that is so diverse here and that's through the support of individual collectives, there's Hysterical Records and they support female and gender non-binary people in creating music.

And, Girls Rock! have been really important in creating safe spaces for young women to learn instruments and I think all of those kinds of projects that foster that community of different people and then being on our stages, that is what leads to the vibrancy of a live music scene that is, you know, you go and you look in your audiences and you look on your stages, it's all different people going to shows now. And I think that's what's integral in long term sustainability for our sector so that it's not just one group of middle-aged white dudes playing guitars.

JG Well, I think, The Push, Live at the Steps is a great example of an all-ages show put together, drug and alcohol free event and you, how, what was the figures for that?

KD Yes, we had 10,000 young people come to our show in the Treasury Gardens last year and I think that that proves that, more than ever, there is a future live music audience there. We just need to be providing opportunities for younger people of all backgrounds to be coming together and having a live music experience.

JG Well, another challenge shared by most global cities has been the need to respond to a worldwide emphasis on creating those safer environments in 24-hour cities in ways which ensure amenity for residents and patrons while at same time ensuring viability of creative spaces. Those creative spaces are, should they just be live music venues or should they be, you know, a small, little factory, creative space, workspace? I mean, what do those spaces look like or should they look like in the future down the track? Because, are we shifting away from pubs and clubs, our traditional live music venues?

KD What kinds of places have you been playing? Like, where have you been seeing more younger, you know, interesting audiences hanging out?

AS My brain is a little bit all over the place in thinking about what I've done in the last month even. But I do like it when you play in spaces that you don't expect to be a venue and they've turned it into one. I really can't think of one off the top of my head, which is terrible.

LB Like warehouse and parlour gigs.

AS Yes, yes.

LB Yes, that's what I was thinking before too, yes.

AS Yes, I've played on, like, what are they called? Like a, like I've played on roofs, like, that are, like, sort of, facing out on to Swanston Street which was interesting and different and fun. I do like those unconventional spaces. But I think it's more just about, doesn't really matter what this space is so much, but it's about, sort of, like, this safety net that's provided for you in those spaces. Especially, for me, I'm a first nation's person so stepping into venue environments aren't always easy for me, because they're not always catered to me. So I find that, so one of the most important thing is just, like, what they're actually giving you as support, not so much what they're giving you, you know, physical space.

JG And does Melbourne provide that for you, do you find?

AS It can, not always though.

JG Okay, so what can we do better?

AS I mean, that's such a long, like, long conversation and such a big question and definitely not one that I can speak for everybody because I'm just one and I'm also not a traditional person from Melbourne. But I think just continuing the conversations with the people that are the traditional landowners here in this city, and just giving, like, empowering them, because I think, you know, there's definitely been power that's been lost over the years. So I think that's really important and I think, because I'm from regional Victoria, it is a lot better here in Melbourne.

You know, you hear people doing acknowledgements of country and welcome to countries which instantly, for me, makes me feel more welcome because I know that they're paying those respects. But you go into the country and that's not really language that's there. So I think that's something that Melbourne has that really attracted me to living here, and I've been here for maybe five years and I thought that would be my expiration date, but now I find it so hard to leave because it does give you so many opportunities and connections if you're in the music industry, and there are, yes, a lot more safe spaces for women and people of colour here, which I think is great.

JG And I have to, I've got Paddy from, the CEO of Music Victoria is here and I, just at the Music Victoria awards this year there was a real, I mean, spike in indigenous artists performing. I mean, Baker Boy, you know, cleaned up the night, you know, another indigenous artist who's made Melbourne home and has really thrived here. That was wonderful to see. And Mojo Juju doing so well and performing live and, I guess, just even the voting criteria this year for Music Victoria awards was you had to have a certain percentage of females. You know, so you, whatever band or artist you were nominating, you know, you had to count the gender.

And that, I mean, that's something we'd not, we've not seen before and we haven't had to think about before, and we also need to think about, I guess, our indigenous representation as well and that could be, perhaps, something we think about in the future. I do want to ask, does anyone have any questions thus far, for any of our panel? Who are all amazing women, I must say, which, you know, we're seeing the shift. You know, we're getting there. Would someone like to comment on the seeming, the shifting tide of female equality and what this might mean for the music industry? Linda? I think you're quite qualified to speak about this.

LB Well, I started working in the music industry in 1990, so I've, yes, I have a few decades, a couple of decades I'd like to say but it's a few decades. Look, it's very simple to me. This means equality. It doesn't really mean that things are going to get any better or worse having more women. It really is just about equality and I think people get it very confused. I think it becomes very messy and, you know, there is misconception and misunderstanding about it. I really think it's important to keep that conversation very simple and, by having that equality and diversity, surely it's going to bring interesting conversation. It's not going to be one-sided.

JG And as a CEO yourself, Kate, how are you finding it?

KD I think it's important but, you know, not just in a venue context, not just in an artist booking context, but in everything that we do in our work, in positions of power, that we are supporting women and people of colour and gender non-binary people to really be represented in the work that we do, in the staff that we employ. And I think, from doing that, that's just instantly how then you see the trickledown effect into everything that's made up in our music community and it is at the forefront of everyone's minds right now.

It's not like something that, you know, and I think social media has really supported that in calling out line-ups, in calling out appointments to roles in all kinds of things. And, yes, I think, you know, being appointed as a young CEO female, you know, of a state-wide organisation, I hope that it says to lots of other young women that, hey this is totally possible and, I think it's a really exciting time and there is a great amount of support for people like me and people like all of us right now in our industry and it is a real community and, yes, it's a good time.

- JG Excellent. Does anyone have any questions? Yes.
- AM Is commercial radio, like your station, is it playing indigenous and non-binary artists?
- JG We do. Well I can only speak from Triple M's point of view. I don't know what other commercial radio stations do. But purely from my perspective, as far as indigenous artists, our proud Yorta Yorta man, now Scott Darlow, has been an addition to our playlist in the last couple of years, both with his version of the Goanna song, Solid Rock, and also he released a song under the name Drought Breakers, for the Buy A Bale campaign. He's someone that we've got very, a very close relationship. We could always do better, absolutely.
- AM Say, for example the [unclear], commercial road [unclear].
- JG If you want to get in that, get that commercial radio versus ABC debate it's a long debate.
- AM [Unclear], you know, the Triple R and the Triple J will be [unclear] local artists. But [unclear].
- JG I can only speak from my perspective as a presenter on Triple M. I present the Home Grown show every Sunday night at 8 p.m., whereby I try and play three unsigned artists every week and they can be from anywhere. They can be unsigned, I always try for an unsigned artist wherever I can and, look, I get submissions from all over Australia.
- I can only do so much on a commercial radio station but, you know, and, yes, we could probably do better but, once you enter that, commercial radio argue that they're there, they are a commercial radio station and they see the music industry as an affiliate but they're not part of the music industry. So it's a really long, drawn out conversation. But, look, personally, me, I'm trying to do what I can with only two hours a week to do it, so. I'm trying, but we can always do better.
- KD Can I just jump in on the radio thing for a minute? I think it's really important to recognise the role that Triple J has played in supporting young artists and really developing their careers, and I know, Alice, you won a competition through them last year and Baker Boy as well. Like, there's so many incredible young artists whose careers are just sky-rocketing now across Australia and internationally because of the support and I think that there's really been a shift there, in Triple J as well, in terms of ensuring that they have representation across the artists that they're playing and supporting into opportunities at various festival slots and stuff.
- And I think they're really leading the way there and we really are, and this is outside of Victoria, but we really are lucky to have a national youth broadcaster like them who is still, despite, like, looking internationally at the way in which young people consume music, the fact that they are still a credibly relevant brand for young people across Australia is really powerful and something that we should all be, you know, really recognising.
- JG Are there any other questions? In that case, I would love to thank Alice Skye, Linda Bosidis and Kate Duncan for your time this morning here at Insights 2018.
- AS Thank you.
- KD Thank you Jane.