



SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY

The Role of Live Music Venues in Promoting and Developing South African Artists

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South African Cultural Observatory

**The Role of Live Music Venues in
Promoting and Developing South African
Artists**

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cultural and Creative Industries have been found to contribute towards the national economy as well as the economic wellbeing of artists through providing viable alternative careers (Ambert 2003; Gibson and Homan 2007). In line with theme 4 and 5 of the SACO research agenda, this study was conceptualised against the background that live music venues contribute to the South African economy. Therefore, as a constituent of the Cultural and Creative Industries there is a need to determine the extent to which they contribute and enable the economic wellbeing of local artists. In addition, live music venues are an important aspect of the cultural and creative industry and thus it is paramount that the role they play in promoting and developing artists is appropriately mapped and put into context. This research explores the social, cultural and economic dynamics of live music venues in South Africa and how they assist in promoting and developing artists in different stages of their careers. In doing so, this research addresses the following primary questions:

1. How do live music venues help to promote and develop South African artists?
2. How have live music venues assisted artists and arts manager in promoting or developing their music?
3. What can or should be done by Live Music Venues in order to promote and develop South African Artists?

This study is located within the UNESCO's 'Performance and Celebration' cultural domain. The domain of 'Performance and Celebration' is inclusive of all expressions of live cultural events such as 'Performing Arts' of all skill levels and experience as well as festivals and any other related events. Regarding music, there is no separation between live and recorded music, all of it such as live and recorded musical performances, music composition, music recordings, digital music including music downloads and uploads, and musical instruments falls within this domain. Given that this study is in the broad music research inquiry, specifically focusing on the spaces of live music performance, it is well suited in this domain.

This research followed qualitative methodological approach. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with, among others, live music venue proprietors, music managers, promoters, artists. Further, various experts who are directly and indirectly involved in the music industry were also interviewed. In addition, secondary data was collected from the different sources that include technical reports and academic and applied research publications.

The interviews show that the live music scene in the country is not in a very good state. There are not enough live music venues that host regular live performances. The situation is worse in rural areas as there seems to be a disproportionate concentration of active venues in metro polytan provinces of Gauteng and the Western cape. In provinces such as KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape, artists are battling for spaces to perform. Data from interviews show that most of the artists perform in restaurants, bars, taverns and Jazz centres. Most of these venues are poorly equipped as they were not designed for live music performances. In addition, they do not have enough equipment such as the sound system and instruments hence artists are often

forced to bring their own equipment. The study also found that live music venues are struggling to attract the paying audience because of challenges in promotion and publicity. This limits their ability to guarantee decent returns for artists, especially those who depend on gate takings.

Considering interview data, this study recommends comprehensive support to be provided to music venues based on a clearly demonstrated model of public benefit. As suggested in the interviews the greatest challenge faced by venues is lack of funding. In order to enable live music venues to play their role in promoting and developing local artists, relevant government departments and institutions in collaboration with the private sector must create a fund to subsidise live music venues. The revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, fourth draft (27 October 2017) already lays out various funding models that can work as a springboard in finding solutions to the funding challenge faced by live music venues. The fund suggested in this report must aim to subsidise the basics such as the structural infrastructure in communally owned venues such as a proper stage, lighting, acoustics, the sound system, and the backline instruments.

1. AIM AND OBJECTIVE(S) OF REPORT

The overall goal of this research is to explore the role of live music venues in promoting and developing South African artists with specific reference to how venue proprietors, music managers and promoters leverage on a particular venue(s), with its attendant organisational, audience and financial networks, to support the artistic and commercial growth of artists. The specific objectives of the research are to:

- Explore the strategies used by live music venues, in collaboration with artists' managers and promoters, to promote South African artists
- Examine the organisational systems, processes and networks used by venue proprietors, artists' music managers and promoters to enhance musicians' artistic growth
- Assess the financial investment made by venue proprietors, artists' music managers and promoters to develop an artist's brand and associated commercial value
- Investigate strategies used by live music venues to initiate and expand an artists' audience reach
- Appraise policies and measures implemented by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture, South African Music Industry Council, Southern African Music Rights Organisation and other public and private entities in promoting and developing South African artists
- Make policy and industry specific recommendations about how South African artists can, through live music venues, be technically and materially supported for further development

2. LOCATING THE REPORT WITHIN THE UNESCO DOMAINS

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has several mandates that include encouraging collaboration in education, science and culture (UNESCO, 2015). This involves ensuring respect for diversity as well as promoting and supporting the preservation of culture and heritage in all United Nations member states (UNESCO, 2009; UNESCO 2015). In the interest of global culture and heritage, UNESCO has categorised culturally productive industries, activities and practices into various cultural domains. According to UNESCO (2009: 22), "the purpose of the cultural domains is to measure cultural activities, goods and services that are generated by industrial and non-industrial processes. Cultural goods and services encompass artistic, aesthetic, symbolic and spiritual values." Given the focus on the role of live music venues in developing artists, this study is located within the 'Performance and Celebration' domain.

Also, the Revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage fourth draft (27 October 2017) has also adopted the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics as a guide for the categorization of Cultural and Creative Industries sectors and sub-sectors. Furthermore, Cultural and Creative Industries Federation (CCIFSA), a sector-based federation that was created in 2013 to be the collective voice of the Cultural and Creative Industries adopted the UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics as a guide for their categorization of sectors and have thus elected sector representatives from all these sectors including the Performance and Celebration Sector. In 2018 SACO conducted a mapping study of the performance and celebration domain and found that the Cultural and Creative Industries that fall within this domain in South Africa constitute 20% of the total CCIs. In addition, most of them are clustered in Gauteng while in other provinces it is mainly festivals and events that dominate. This report was silent on the magnitude of permanent and semi-permanent live music venues in the country. However, it made an important contribution in mapping the performance and celebration domain as well as its economic contribution in the country's economy where an estimated 3.3 million is contributed to the GDP annually (SACO 2017; SACO 2018).

Notwithstanding all these positive developments, there has not been any visible movement towards uniting, organizing and defragmenting the live music performance sub-sector. This fragmentation of the sector has caused ineffective interventions by different government spheres and departments and has opened the live music performance industry to abuse and lack of coherent and uniform processes and practices.

Live music venues are spaces where music which is a key constituent of culture is performed. Artists are thus central to the proliferation of cultural celebration through music and thus their development and promotion is key in cultural preservation and sharing. Cultural activities such as live music performance embody cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have and therefore, this highlights the importance venues as spaces that enable artists to freely express themselves in an enabling environment.

According to UNESCO (2009), the domain of 'Performance and Celebration' is inclusive of all expressions of live cultural events. This includes 'Performing Arts' of all skill levels and experience as well festivals and any other related events. Regarding music, there is no separation between live and recorded music, all of it such as live and recorded musical performances, music composition, music recordings, digital music including music downloads and uploads, and musical instruments falls within this domain. Given that this study is located in the broad music research inquiry, specifically focusing on the spaces of live music performance, it is well suited in the UNESCO's 'Performance and Celebration' cultural domain.

3. RATIONALE FOR PRODUCING THE REPORT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SACO RESEARCH AGENDA

In South Africa, there are limited empirical studies that focus on the role of live music venues in promoting and developing artists. In an attempt to improve understanding of the spaces of cultural proliferation and how such spaces assist in enhancing the economic

wellbeing of artists, this study cuts across various themes of the SACO research agenda. The specific themes include:

a. Theme 4: Quantifying the arts, culture, heritage and creative sectors

Under this theme, the specific focus is on determining the role of cultural and creative industries in countering de-industrialisation within the South African Spatial Economy. Live music venues are an important aspect of the cultural and creative industry and thus it is paramount that the role they play in enhancing the artist is appropriately mapped and put into context.

b. Theme 5: Economic perspective

The Cultural and Creative Industries have been found to contribute towards the national economy as well as the economic wellbeing of artists through providing viable alternative careers (Ambert 2003; Gibson and Homan 2007). In line with theme 5 of the SACO research agenda, this study was conceptualised against the background that live music venues contribute to the South African economy. Therefore, as a constituent of the Cultural and Creative Industries there is a need to determine the extent to which they contribute and enable the economic wellbeing of local artists.

4. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Live music has a social, cultural and economic value in societies and thus there is a need to assess how audiences, state institutions and private business proprietors engaged in the music industry contribute in sustaining its worth. In some countries such as Australia, popular music venues have been branded as high-risk spaces that contribute to public disorder (Homan 2010; Gallan 2012). This has created a negative perception on spaces that have been popular for supporting emerging artists that shape the popular culture particularly in urban settings (Ambert 2003; Ramana 2004; Gallan 2012). In addition, while governments have tended to cast aspersions on the worth of live music, studies have shown that this contributes significantly to national economies because it is a key niche within the tourism sector as well as a driver in employment creation (Ambert 2003; Gibson and Homan 2007). Homan (2010) argues that live music performances contributed an estimated \$405.8 million to the Australian economy in 2009 and two thirds of the population participate in live music events and this suggests that the live music scene is an important economic player that does not receive worthy attention. In South Africa, Ramana (2004) found that live music has made a significant contribution to the social and cultural wellbeing of the country as it has been an important tool that has been used to shape the social and political struggles. According to Ramana (2004), the success of artists that participate in the live music scene depends on the nature of stakeholders who have economic and political power to actively shape its overall character. One of these key stakeholders are live music proprietors and there has not been much research aimed at understanding their role in promoting and developing artists in South Africa. Therefore, this research seeks to ascertain the social, cultural and economic dynamics of live music venues in

South Africa and how they assist in promoting and developing artists in various career stages of their careers. In doing so, this research addresses the following primary questions:

- How do live music venues help to promote and develop South African artists?
- How have live music venues assisted artists and arts manager in promoting or developing their music?
- What can or should be done by Live Music Venues in order to promote and develop South African Artists?

5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Drawing from the objectives and primary research questions of this study, the primary focus of this study was to ascertain the role of live music venues in promoting and developing South African artists. In the context of this study, live music venues can be defined as any spaces where live music is performed. These spaces could be formal or informal with or without permanence. This is against the understanding that live music venues can take different forms, from spaces for busking, restaurants, bars, taverns, temporary stages for private events and festivals to formal permanent spaces dedicated to live music performances with regular programmes. Therefore, the scope of the study is limited to stakeholders who have a direct interaction with the South African live music circuit such as venue proprietors, live music appreciators, artists, promoters, music regulation bodies and policy makers. The study explores how live music venues in collaboration with all interactive stakeholders, collectively contribute in the enhancement of the creative ability, exposure and economic wellbeing of artists.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a qualitative methodological approach. This was done in order to get an insider perspective on the role played by music venues in promoting and developing artists from relevant stakeholders. Primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 32 participants. In selecting study participants, purposive sampling technique was employed to identify initial participants. These initial participants were supposed to meet some criteria that were set beforehand. To qualify as a participant, one had to be involved in the music industry in the following capacities:

- live music venue proprietors
- music managers
- promoters
- live music appreciators and collectors/experts
- artists

Subsequent participants were reached through snowball sampling wherein initial participants referred others with similar characteristics. The following table outlines the characteristics of all the study participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

| STANDING | NO | PROVINCE |
|--|----|----------------------------------|
| South African Music Industry Council (SAMIC) | 1 | Gauteng |
| Independent Record Label '999' | 1 | Gauteng |
| PE Opera House | 1 | Eastern Cape |
| Steve Biko Centre | 2 | Eastern Cape |
| Guild Theatre | 1 | Eastern Cape |
| UKZN Jazz Centre | 2 | KZN |
| Artists | 14 | KZN, Eastern Cape and Gauteng |
| Venue Proprietors | 3 | KZN, Eastern Cape and Gauteng |
| Arts activists/Music appreciators | 5 | KZN and Gauteng and Eastern Cape |
| Independent Venue owner | 1 | Gauteng |

Interviews were recorded after consent was sought and granted from participants. Other participants preferred to respond to questions in the interview guide via e-mails. All interviews that were recorded were transcribed verbatim and then analysed using qualitative thematic analysis. Recurrent themes that were considered important based on the study objectives and primary questions were included in the report. In order to illustrate and capture the participants' voices, verbatim quotations were included. Where participants gave consent, real names are used in reporting, otherwise all names used are fictitious to protect the identity of the participants. In addition to primary data, secondary data was collected from the various sources such as the archives of live music stakeholders such as the South African Music Rights Organisation as well as academic and applied research publications.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

7.1. The global outlook on live music

The culture and arts entertainment industry is characterised by artistic diversity ranging from theatre, film, music and poetry amongst others, as a result, it has been considered to be among the major contributors to the growth of national economies (Ambert 2003; Gibson and Homan 2007). In addition, this industry has been associated with efforts aimed at cultural preservation and thus serves as a vessel for curating national cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2009). Research and public policy have often focused attention on performing arts, such as theatre, poetry and music in general. However, there has been limited attention on live music performances globally. Most research and public policy have disproportionately focused on recorded digital music as a result the availability, accessibility and quality for live music venues remains an under-researched subject matter (Moshito and MMINO, 2010). Homan (2010) highlights the importance of live music venues in fostering social cohesion yet governments often ignore their economic and social value. This follows the protests against the branding of live music venues as sources of lawlessness and alcoholism in Melbourne, Australia in February 2010 (Homan, 2010). This has necessitated discussions around the need to balance urban policy with care to accommodate cultural, economic and regulatory needs (Homan, 2010).

In a study conducted in Liverpool, in the United Kingdom, Cohen (2012) found that live music was a crucial element in the urban environment. Patterns of circulation of ideas, emotions, sounds, cultures and experiences were formed within diverse music venues (Cohen, 2012). As a result, in mapping the live music landscape across time and space, Cohen (2012) accentuated new perspectives and insights on the role of live music in shaping dynamic urban culture and fostering social cohesion. Therefore, this highlights the importance of mapping the live music venues in order to draw much needed attention to them and thus ensure they receive the requisite support from all stakeholders. In Australia, the success of live music venues in urban centres has been found to be stifled by the practice of gatekeeping night spaces, leading to limited support (Gallan, 2012). Gallan (2012) draws attention to Oxford Tavern, a live music venue that had been the heartbeat of the live music scene in the heart of the city of Wollongong for over two decades. While in operation, the venue received minimal attention until its doors closed in 2010 (Gallan, 2012). This was the time when patrons and artists realised the important role it used to play, the venue was the only one that offered regular live music performances by local artists. According to Gallan (2012) the disharmony between proprietors and music promoters caused the abrupt closure. In addition, the aftershock from both patrons and artists who did not place much value on this venue suggests that the role it played as a cultural centre and urban arts monument was underestimated. As such, Gallan (2012) argues that the closure of Oxford Tavern was a necessary wakeup call because many local night spots now have a stage for local live music performances, though this happens less frequently.

7.2.The South African live music scene

The Music Industry Task Team report expressed concern over the status of South African artists with regards to labour legislation (DACST 2000). According to MITT report, artists are at a disadvantage because the law does not protect their rights leading to their exploitation. In order to support artists in their development and promotion, the MITT report recommended laws that protect their labour rights and an increase of the local content quota from 20% to 50%. While the MITT report was disproportionately biased towards recorded music, it also raised concerns over the state of live music in South Africa and advocated for the creation of more live music venues. This echoes the recommendations made in the 1998 Cultural Industries Growth Strategy (CIGS) report on the South African music industry report commissioned by the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and technology (DACST). The importance of live music in developing and promoting local music was noted, and also highlighting rampant exploitation of artists, lack of support for proprietors of live music venues as well as the disregard for local artists in favour of artists from Gauteng and abroad (DACST, 1998; DACST, 2000). Other, researchers have also identified the foregoing challenges in the South African live music scene, where the country has consistently failed to draw meaningful audiences for local artists but can fill stadiums for international superstars (IFPI and Music Canada, 2015). However, in acknowledging this weakness in the South African live music scene, IFPI and Canada Music (2015) note that every place has its own unique challenges such as that despite being a live music hotbed, London (UK) has struggled to prevent the loss of important music venues.

The South African live music sector has not developed as rapidly as the recording industry that is growing at a fast rate (Moshito and MMINO, 2010). Having realised the limited attention on live music in South Africa, Moshito and MMINO (2010) conducted a mapping exercise aimed at ascertaining the scale and scope of the permanent live music circuit in South Africa. The mapping exercise revealed that live music activities were disproportionately skewed in favour of Gauteng and Western Cape with provinces such as Free State and Northern Cape having the lowest activity. Similar trends were also noticed with regards to major music festivals where genres such as Rock, Jazz and Afro jazz dominate across the country (Moshito and MMINO, 2010). While the Moshito and MMINO (2010) found that there is a shortage of well-equipped medium size and large venues with a carrying capacity of between 800 and 1500 patrons, they found a satisfactory number of small venues that hosted regular live music performances. Most of these were night clubs, restaurants and taverns whose carrying capacity did not exceed 200 patrons. The size of available venues was found to be detrimental to the promotion and support of artists whose fees heavily relied on gate takings.

In 2013, Concert South Africa (CSA) conducted a mapping exercise building up on the Moshito and MMINO (2010) study. The study sought to find ways of “providing practical stimulus for the development of music performance circuits in South Africa, as part of CSA’s broader objectives related to identifying and activating a live music circuit and developing and supporting live music venues” (CSA, 2013: 6). Similarly, CSA (2013) found a vibrant live music landscape in the country particularly dominated by small unconventional venues like restaurants and bars as well as arts centres. Almost half of them had been in existence for over

10 years. However, 60% of the venues did not offer rehearsal space for artists while only 27% offered guaranteed payment (CSA, 2013). These are some of the constraints that venues have to remedy in order to provide adequate support to artists. Contrary to the Moshito and MMINO (2010), the CSA (2013) study found that 32% of the venues offered backline, PA and sound engineering services to performing artists. Where such equipment and services were unavailable, some venues hired in order to make life easy for the artists. In addition, CSA (2013) found that there were improvements in operations since 2010, where more venues accepted card payments (76%) and venues acquired liquor licences (78%) and host regular weekly and monthly performances (59%). All these are important for building audiences and ensuring that artists who depend on gate takings are able to earn decent incomes. Therefore, basing on the findings of CSA (2013) it could be argued that live music venues made positive efforts aimed at supporting and developing artists.

Live music venues are not doing enough with regards to disseminating information about the performances that they host (CSA,2016). This often works against their ability to attract patrons to their venues. O'Connor (2015) found that the information gap discouraged potential patrons, who argued that venues only mentioned functions without outlining the profiles and other key information about artists. The CSA (2016) also found that many live music venues did not have an online presence and often depended on poorly managed facebook pages with very few having websites. This information gap makes it difficult to promote and develop artists as the marketing of events often squarely become the responsibility of artists some of whom are resource constrained as they are in the emerging stages of their careers. CSA (2016) encourages increased investment in live music that aims at growing audiences that will make it possible for promoters and artists to make living out of live music. As such, CSA (2016) stresses improvements in regulation, skills development and marketing. In addition, the creation of innovative institutions has been identified as a strong starting point in fostering local and viably live music hubs that attract a diverse audience and ensure support for local artists.

8. RESULTS

8.1.The nature of venues

Live music venues are mainly classified into three categories namely, Theatres, Multipurpose centers, Hospitality establishments and Jazz Clubs.

Theatres

Theatres are venues that are designed for live performances. In South Africa, there is a quality disparity in infrastructure and programmes between theatres located in declared cultural institutions and other venues across the country.

Section 3(1) of the Cultural Institutions Act, 1998 (Act No. 119 of 1998), the Minister of Arts and Culture is given power to declare already existing cultural institutions and to provide for the establishment of certain institutions as declared cultural institutions under the control of councils. This declaration by the minister becomes a commitment by the ministry to provide

for the payment of subsidies to those cultural institutions. Theatres that have been declared under the Act are:

1. State Theatre in Pretoria
2. Playhouse Company in Durban
3. Artscape in Cape Town
4. Market Theatre in Johannesburg
5. Performing Arts Centre of the Free State in Bloemfontein; and the
6. Windybrow Centre for the Arts Theatre in Johannesburg, being the last to be declared in terms of the Act. The Declaration for Windybrow Centre for the Arts Theatre was done in April 2005

According to the National Treasury in the financial year 2019/20, these declared cultural institutions received over R270 million Rand excluding additional capital works. The support for these declared cultural institutions is detailed in all the Annual Reports of the Department of Arts and Culture. The rest of the theatres in other provinces do not receive support, thus denying the artists, promoters and arts administrators that operate and participate in the value chain of live music performance, the access to quality spaces and programming. Subsidized theatres often have permanent features and events. They commission productions and book musicians, rather than waiting for artists and other people to book their venues as it is the case with non-subsidized theatres. Unsubsidized theatres depend on the income that is gained from the hiring of venues. This makes it hard for musicians and promoters to properly plan their live events as they compete with church events, corporate events, private parties, weddings and recreational activities for the same venues. This makes it difficult for live music productions to do proper preparations such as rehearsals, and preproduction, which in turn, affects the quality of the production.

Multipurpose centres

Multipurpose centres are venues that are aimed at accommodating indoor sports, recreation activities, arts, cultural activities, community events and government functions. These halls are designed with mostly indoor sports in mind and without any involvement of, or consultation with any arts and or music industry stakeholders. These venues do not have proper acoustics, technical requirements, and the layout necessary to produce good sound. These multipurpose venues are mostly available in rural areas, townships and in more affluent areas. These centres are the most accessible to musicians due to their close proximity to both the audience and the artists. Notwithstanding their better accessibility compared to other forms of music venues, they are more expensive to use because musicians have to hire all the equipment.

Hospitality establishments, taverns and Jazz clubs

These establishments cater for live music that happens during night time and most live music takes place in these establishments more than any other live music venues. These establishments usually do not have a permanent infrastructure for live music, and they operate loosely and are flexible in terms of artists contracting. Most do not have proper infrastructure that is already available to cater the ideal needs of performing artists. Also, unlike other music venues, artists that are performing in these venues get remunerated by the venue management

to entertain patrons unlike in multipurpose centres and theatres where artists are usually the ones who pay for costs of the performances with an intention to make income from door takings from fans and supporters that artists would have attracted.

8.2.The availability of music venues

This study found that there are limited live music venues that host regular live music performances. As a result, artists have to compete for the few venues that are available. What makes the situation even more complex is the fact that some venues are specific to certain genres thus many artists whose music is not catered for find it difficult to find spaces where they can express their talents. As a result, artists' working days are limited and this affects their income earning potential and the quality of their craft.

“There are not many Live Music Venues in our township and rural areas. The small music groups have to find their way into nearby towns to access the spaces to perform... If live music industry venues are properly supported, they are platforms that can keep musicians working daily thereby earning a living out of gigs from live music venues. Young musicians also get to sharpen their craft and grow their brands in these spaces. They are critical to the development, success and sustainability of artists careers... these are places that are regularly visited by locals and tourists and a perfect platform that can be used to promote our artists” (Lesiba Mothoa- Arts activist and former live music venue owner).

The majority of the venues only host live performances once or twice a week because of lack of adequate support. As such, study participants reiterated that artists have to compete for the space to perform and promote their music.

“In Durban artists are battling to find venues and spaces to showcase at. I think the government department of arts and culture plays a role in terms of designing space. Space in Durban is underutilized. Remember as an artist, for one to be known they need plug and play sessions for exposure called busking, so if there are no spaces for busking then people will not follow because by the time an artist is busking they get chance to be exposed and therefore move along to getting booked however in Durban there are no spaces for busking. Some try to play at airports, but the marketing of artists is lacking because for the artists to benefit they ought to play their part as well and present a win - win situation” (Dumisani Gininda-Jazz Collector).

Live music venues give us that platform and the stage to actually do the live performances, so they really help to promote us and to develop us as South African artists. (Siseko Pame-Artist)

Live music venues are spaces that afford artists the opportunity to showcase their craft to audiences who are potential buyers of their recorded music. For any artist to be known they need adequate exposure and live music venues' role is to create the space to promote their music through engagement with audiences. In the absence of sufficient performance venues, the interviews suggest that local governments must avail spaces for busking. The culture of busking is not yet prominent in South Africa as musicians who do it are often looked down upon and local government by laws restrict the practice. Owing to this, the few formally organised venues are the only available option to artists. The limited availability of live music

venues has thus created an impression among music appreciators that the live music scene is fast losing its vibrancy.

8.3. Accessibility to venues

The interviews suggest that artists find it difficult to access live music venues for different reasons such as the spatial location of the venues and lack of finance to hire the venues as well as gate keeping.

“Venue owners can’t afford to pay bands on a daily basis and thus end up not booking or opening opportunities for artists to perform at these venues” (Lesiba Mothoa- Arts activist and former live music venue owner).

“At first it is hard to access these venues especially if you are an unknown artist or if you do not someone from the venue. The venues tend to have their own favourite bands which they want to give gigs to all the time” (Joliza-Arts Manager).

Most venues operate as businesses, as a result, access is usually granted to artists that are popular or ones willing to be paid low performance fees. Venues, such as night clubs and taverns prioritise artists that command a large following in order to boost their beverage sales. Hence, emerging artists that still need to build a following often find it difficult to access these venues. In addition, others have argued that some artists fail to secure bookings in live music venues because of lack of preparedness.

“It is largely the issue of bookings that is a challenge for artists, but also when you listen closely to the dialogue you get the picture that a lot of artists are not prepared enough for example one wants to book a venue but they don’t even have a band hence it is merely an idea and they view themselves as deserving to have access to these places...The idea is that they can put together three or four guys, work through the routine and then move on to the event but what the owner on the other hand is thinking about is their audience, the sound and the artist’s samples of which in many cases most the artists do not have samples and they won’t highlight that in the conversation but only limit to saying there is prevalence of challenges in regard to getting the bookings” (Eric-Ghanian music expert at UKZN Jazz Centre).

The above interview excerpt highlights the need for artists’ agency in order to enhance their chances of gaining access to live music venues. Some of the venues are catering for specific audiences who expect a certain standard of performance. Therefore, prior to giving space to an artist to perform they make sure that all the standards are met. Hence, artists who fail to produce convincing catalogues and music samples are often overlooked.

“It should be considered every time that the venue owner is concerned with whether your craft fits the venue therefore I think that is where there is that disconnection is between owner and artist because they simply can’t book an artist whose craft does not fit the venue” (Eric-Ghanian music expert at UKZN Jazz Centre).

In addition, access to venues is also limited by the fact that most venues are genre specific. For example, in Durban, venues like the Jazz Rainbow and the Chairman are only interested in artists who play Jazz. Hence emerging artists who are coming up with new innovative variants of Jazz or other genres find it difficult to be given space to perform in these venues that have audiences that expect nothing but Jazz.

“True fact of the matter is you can’t be continuing to play the same sound that our fore fathers listened to. Jazz has evolved and maybe it is time the new generation offered something different” (Dumisani Gininda-Jazz Collector)

Participants in this study highlighted that it is a challenge to access structured venues such as the KZN art gallery and the Jazz centres. Emerging artists can be denied access because their craft falls short of the class associated with such venues. Therefore, in places like the Playhouse and the KZN art gallery the artists have to possess self-driven motivation and an extra push to land that desired booking and hopefully exposure. However, as highlighted by Dumisani Gininda, there is a need for venues to embrace plurality and accept that music has evolved and open space for artists who present different variants of music genres.

8.4.Strategies of building audiences

What makes live music venues important is their ability to give exposure to artists. However, without a regular audience there is very little contribution that they can put towards the promotion and development of local artists. Therefore, to be able to fulfil this mandate live music venue managers and proprietors must commit to growing their audience.

“First you need to work on your audience, you want to develop a culture of listening so that that people pay attention to the art that is being presented” (Mamsie Ntshangase-Jazz appreciator).

Building an audience takes dedication and innovation. Therefore, live music venues are supposed to invest time and resources in identifying innovative strategies to attract the paying audience so that they can be in a position to pay artists decent performance fees. The following sections explore some of the strategies that can be employed.

Structural design

The interviews show that in enhancing the development and promotion of artists, the physical structure of music venues is very important. The architectural design, the interior decorations and arrangement of seats in the music venue has an impact in attracting the audience.

“Design of the spaces is crucial in terms of audience development for instance the ‘Chairman’ the moment you enter the place; it communicates to you as an art lover in general. The owner himself is an architect and a jazz collector himself and is able to capture the right audience because the design is very crucial in attracting the correct audience” (Dumisani Gininda-Jazz Collector).

Avenue can attract a particular regular audience using its structure or design. An attractive design can communicate a message about the venue. For example, patrons can find it as a venue

of choice for dining and relaxing with music coming as a bonus. The interviews show that innovation in design can help to attract the paying audience that most venues are failing to attract. As such, venue owners must make an effort to understand their niche markets and design their venues appropriately.

Venues that are more food or drink orientated generally have live musicians to deliver an ambiance or mood whilst guests or attendees mingle, eat and enjoy their evening without the need for a pronounced appreciating of the live musician as many guests have not gone to the venue to see a particular artist. These venues could however be known for their musician rosters which range from providing light background music to loud hard partying which would be seen more in pubs or bars. Venues that are more live music performance orientated generally have live musical acts that perform either their own works or specific tribute acts in which people buy tickets to see them perform. These venues usually focus on a listening environment (depending on the act) which is known sometimes as a music “appreciation” venue (Aston Wylie-Artist).

Hospitality

People who attend live music performances, expect proper treatment in order for them to return when there are other performances in future. This study found that audiences are discouraged from frequenting some venues because of poor hospitality. In order to build a loyal audience, venues are expected to offer services that give a satisfactory return on investment.

“You know some venue owners are very stubborn human beings, one of the reason people don’t like going to their venues is that when you are at a venue you will expect some kind of comfort. It must be cool enough, you must be comfortable, the temperature must be fine, the air-conditioning, the lighting, must meet the standards because we are there to relax and enjoy whatever performance is being presented. Where there is a bar you expect a variety of drinks that will cater for all tastes and preferences. If you are a venue owner, you must try and as much as possible cater for those needs. Of course, you will never be 100%, but just try as much as possible to have things that will make people want to come back. Some venues don’t even sell snacks, I am not sure whether it’s a licensing issue, you can’t even nibble on something” (Music Appreciator-Durban)

In response to the above concerns relating to failure to meet the needs of the audience, there is a new culture that is developing in South Africa where music lovers organise listening sessions in their backyards. In Durban, there is an initiative by Jazz appreciator and collector, Dumisani Gininda, where artists are hosted for impromptu sessions. These types of arrangements aimed at enjoying live music in comfortable spaces are fast gaining appreciation from music lovers. In addition to enjoying their collections as music appreciators and jazz collectors, the live performance attracts a greater crowd even those who are not a jazz collectors begin to have an appreciation of the music upon watching live performances. Jazz venues in Durban are battling to attract the paying audience hence you find them now resorting to digital music or other genres in process losing a loyal audience. These can be averted by improving their hospitality and giving patrons value for money.

Promotion and publicity innovativeness

Promotion and publicity are essential to increase awareness and attract audiences to live music performances in venues. This study found that both artists and live music venues have a role to play in ensuring adequate and effective promotion and publicity of the live performances. Despite this, it emerged that live music venues did not put adequate effort in marketing as there was a general feeling that this was the primary responsibility of artists themselves.

“In Durban some venues will just say this Friday, so and so is performing, just a one liner on that flyer that was prepared by the artist, the artist goes through the process of getting a graphic design and give digital information that must go onto social media and posters. There is not a lot of effort from venues to distribute those flyers and they find also that the Municipality charges to put poster up on those polls to advertise your gig, I learnt the hard way...Venues need to put an effort in marketing and promoting artists who will be performing at their venues and not to make it the onus to be that of the performing artist to market their show, of course artists should also promote their own work because they have their own following and should cultivate their own fan base” (Mamsie Ntshangase-Jazz appreciator).

The interviews show that venues are not doing enough to attract audiences because most of them do not invest in promotion of either the venue of the events they host. In many cases they lacked in innovative marketing strategies such as fully utilising the social media space. While a few venues have website, many have a glaring online absence. Even those with website, they do not provide adequate information about themselves as well as the events they feature. Interviews also show that traditional methods of using flyers and posters are affected by local government by laws that restrict putting up of posters in certain areas. There are also fees that must be paid to local government if one puts up their posters. Hence most venues leave the responsibility of promotion and publicity on artists.

“Artists must definitely take charge of their careers and that is the one thing I see a lot of artists not doing. Conceptualizing performance as an artist is important so that they prepare themselves though it may take up to a year and there has to be a plan so that they rehearse the concept well enough however when most do not do this it becomes difficult to break through but you will be amazed to find new bands moving from one place to the other” (Eric-Ghanian music expert at UKZN Jazz Centre).

“I believe it’s going well for artists who are professional, know how to read a crowd and take music seriously...Ballito Lifestyle centre is a prime example of a venue that has truly made an impact on musicians giving them well paid gigs...It is not necessarily the live music venues’ responsibility to promote the artist if they are paying them...It is up to the artist to work on his marketing skills or get someone to help them promote their gigs. You have to approach the venue or call them and email them your professional biography so that they can have enough to sell you...Every venue is unique and has a certain clientele for different genres. So, it’s up to the musician to find venues that support their style and to support their fellow musicians. if every artist supported each other, then people would be more successful at their events” (Gavin Ferguson-Artist)

Interviews have shown that it is crucial for venues to raise awareness about their events using all delivery platforms from posters around the local live music venue, to in-store promotions in venues, advertisements on radio, print media, television, social media and social networks. However, artists must not relax because building a career out of music remains their responsibility. Therefore, interviews show that artists have to take charge as avoid being overly dependent on the venues for drumming up publicity for their performances. They must also be innovative in using available tools to draw audiences to their performances especially in events where their payment is dependent on gate takings.

On promotion and publicity, overall, his study highlights that strong promotion is a key part of attracting people and corporations to the live music sector and ensuring that there is sufficient revenue to sustain the live music industry as a whole. There is generally inadequate promotion and publicity of live music events in the country. In most cases, artists are burdened with the responsibility to independently market their live performances while most live music venues merely post on social networks without a systematic attempt to significantly help the event to be a success. Costs for promoting an event can run to huge amounts that ordinary artists cannot normally afford. Even with the advent of digitalization, some communities rely on physical posters to be aware of live events to come. Besides the costly expense of making, printing and distribute posters, some cities have strict by laws that prohibit artists to put up posters where they will be visible to their target market.

8.5. Availability of relevant equipment in venues

Musical instruments are very expensive, and most artists are not able to afford most of the equipment needed to produce quality live performances. Providing adequate equipment for live performance is an important way that live music venues can use to promote and develop artists. The interviews show that most live music venues are not well equipped. The most established venues like Port Elizabeth Opera House and venues within universities like the UKZN Centre for Jazz had good equipment and acoustics. However, interviews show that venues such as community halls had no equipment and at times did not even have a stage.

We merely need new Sound System with audio visual permanent equipment, Deaf Compatible technology. Our acoustics are phenomenal...they are only negatively affected by the little time to prepare for the show (Monde Ngonyama-Manager, Port Elizabeth Opera House)

Because of crime prevalent in the country, venues have found it hard to keep all these expensive instruments because of breaks ins and all. It has become easier for artists to bring their own instruments and equipment and the only standard instrument we may keep are the drums and the sound PA system (Dumisani Gininda-Jazz Collector).

The interviews show that small to medium venues were deterred from keeping expensive equipment because of the high rates of criminal break ins. As a result, most venues either had a simple backline and the sound system, hence artists were compelled to bring their own instruments. This poses a serious cost and logistical challenge for artists as they must hire instruments and transportation. Hence, instead of spending more time rehearsing their acts,

artists spend time dealing with logistical issues which affects their final performance. The unavailability of equipment in venues also means that artists will not get an opportunity to rehearse their performance in the venue to familiarise themselves with the acoustics and other surrounding external factors.

8.6. Venues as spaces for building business networks

This study found that the new culture of bringing live music into unconventional venues like homes that is being initiated by music appreciators like the Jazz Expression in Durban is promoting artists through forging business networks. Traditionally, artists perform in venues where they are treated as VIPs with lots of security that limits their interactions with the audience. In the intimate live music sessions, artists can interact freely with the audience allowing them the opportunity to build business networks.

“What we do is that we do not have VIP and VVIP sections and here everyone is the same, we engage with artists face to face and they explain their artwork be it visuals or music. If you are a musician, we do not expect you to bring bouncers however we urge our artists to engage with the audience...I think artists’ social life is limited and that also limits understanding of business in sense of what the business requires to be appreciated. It is not always the case where the artist must be paid though I am not saying they shouldn’t be paid either but I’m simply outlining that sometimes the artist needs to expose themselves or rather sell themselves to the audience and create a long-lasting brand that will in turn be worth a lot more afterwards. Artists should grab opportunities that arise for them to showcase their craft by both hands when they do” (Dumisani Gininda-Jazz Collector).

Platforms such as the Jazz expression have approached art holistically, while enjoying live music performances they also have visual artists showcasing their work. In some cases, live music performers do collaborative work with visual artists through networks created through this initiative. By increasing interactions with the audience, artists can build long lasting business networks that land them bookings in the corporate sector and expand the market for their recorded music.

The interviews show that for artists to understand that their music is business, some entrepreneurship development program is required. Also, they need to understand that their partnership with music venues be it direct or indirect is a business one. All parties must play their part. The bottom line is that all parties involve benefit as such one party cannot expect another to do everything alone.

8.7. Support needed by venues

This study found that live music venues are not performing to the best of their ability in promoting and developing local artist because they do not have funding. Interviews show that financial support is only extended to theatres and other prominent venues that are declared as cultural institutions. As a result, the majority of small to medium venues that operate as businesses such as night clubs, jazz clubs and restaurant fail to provide the necessary physical

environment, and equipment needed to adequately promote and develop local artists as they must prioritise their survival as businesses.

Live music venues need funding. The biggest challenge is to change the perception that they are drinking holes and thus can't be funded, yet there is more music, comedy etc happening in these spaces than in theatres around the country. There are more live music venues than government funded theatres. This means that if the owners are allocated a budget by government to pay for performers, buy the right equipment to enable good performances then we are creating more platforms for musicians to work (Lesiba Mothoa-Arts activist and former live music venue owner).

The interviews show that many venues are prejudiced because they focus is selling alcohol. As such, the approach taken by the authorities excludes them from fully participating in developing and promoting the arts. Therefore, the interviews suggest that government funding must not discriminate based on the spatial location of the venue as well as its perceived primary focus.

In addition, this study found that some of the venues face operational challenges because of licencing difficulties. As a result, they are unable to cater effectively for the needs of their clients because they do not have enough information about licencing requirements. Hence many operate without licenses.

The main problem we have in South Africa is that most venues are not licensed, and they are training unlicensed. Most venues require liquor license and it's not east to obtain since there are lot of obligations around it. As a result, some venues are running at a loss (Sduduzo Myeni-Artist Manager).

The interviews suggest that live music venue proprietors and managers do not have adequate information about the licencing processes. In addition to licencing the venue, there are additional licenses such as a liquor licence which are very difficult to acquire. As a result, they fail to meet the expectations of their audiences leading to the failure of their businesses. This affects efforts aimed at building loyal paying audiences.

9. CONCLUSIONS

Access

Live music venues in South Africa are generally struggling to attract the paying audience. As a result, it is difficult for them to adequately play their role in promoting and developing local artists. Many of the active live music venues are in the urban areas and within the urban areas they are concentrated in the city centres. However, most people who can potentially be part of the audience have no convenient transport to access the venues during the night. The South African transport infrastructure and service caters for conventional economic and social daytime activities such as going to and from work, shopping, schools and other activities that form part of the working hours' routines. Also, the public transport service and infrastructure is designed to transport people travelling from cities to townships or rural areas. There are also

few routes that cater for traveling in between rural areas or in between townships. Most of these routes close during the hours when night activities that involve live music happen in the night economy. In some cases, transport costs are more than the price of a ticket for a potential live music audience. The current South African public transport service and transport infrastructure contribute to poor turnout of audiences in shows that musicians organize.

The night time economy has audiences that include tourists and other strategically placed people who sometimes offer better opportunities for artists performing in establishment that are in cities, and those establishments usually offer better remuneration for live performances than those in townships and rural areas. This makes it necessary for most live performing artists to want to perform in cities more than in their own localities. The unavailability of night-time public transport system to cities is not only a disadvantage to audiences that reside in locations and rural areas, but it is also a disadvantage to artists from those locations because artists end up hiring vehicles for exorbitant costs.

Most venues with adequate infrastructure already have their own programmes lined up for the year, making it difficult for live performing artists to make proper planning for their events. In the venues in townships and rural areas, artists compete with churches that do not have their own venues but hire a space in venues that are also meant for live performances. Most church activities happen on the artists' preferred days for their live performances. In some areas, churches have taken note of this competition with artists, and have been booking all the weekends for themselves to ensure that there are no disturbances in their own programmes. Artists also compete with people who host parties, funerals and other social events, in accessing live performance venues and this makes access to live music venues a rigorous, costly and frustrating process to ordinary live performing artists.

Digitalization of music and how it affects live performance income

Digital distribution has not only threatened many businesses in the music industry value chain but has also contributed to the closure of many physical CD and DVD retail stores and serve as an alternative to attending live performances. Among the categories of music consumers, there is a section that still believes in owning a physical CD or DVD. That section includes most jazz collectors and appreciators, maskhandi followers, and traditional gospel lovers. This section of music products consumers now primarily relies on live performances to buy physical copies. However, artists are denied income because they are unable to host regular live shows because of limited accessibility to live music venues.

Spatial disparities

Key in the issue of access to quality industry venues and spatial disparities is the issue of investment by government to the live performance venues. The transformation of the Cultural and Creative Industries and the delivery of Arts, Culture and Heritage services to all are inseparably linked to government's transformation agenda. The transformation agenda of government is intended to reverse past imbalances and to build an equitable, fair and inclusive society.

The inequitable resources distribution and access to quality infrastructure is visible when comparing the nationally subsidized theatres in the Western Cape, Gauteng, Kwazulu Natal and Free State, against others located in the other 5 provinces that do not have nationally subsidized theatres. The ones that are nationally subsidized do have the adequate resources and their infrastructure designs do conform to necessary live performance standards. The non-funded theatres are however of generally low standards and seem not to have to be designed with live music performance in mind, but to be multi-purpose centres. Equally, when comparing the quality of infrastructure of live venues in the cities, against that of townships and rural areas, you find that cities generally have venues with better infrastructure. There are more stages and theatres for artists to perform in cities than in rural areas where most artists leave, making it difficult for artists to rehearse and develop their skills.

Promotion and publicity

Promotion and publicity are essential to ensure consumer awareness regarding live music performances in venues. It is therefore crucial that this awareness be carried across all delivery platforms from posters around the local live music venue, to in-store promotions in venues, advertisements on radio, print media, television, social media and social networks. Promotion is essential for building the brands of live performers and attracts new audiences and markets for live performing artists. Therefore, strong promotion is a key part of attracting people and corporations to the live music sector and ensuring that there is enough revenue to sustain the live music industry. There is generally inadequate promotion and publicity of live music events. In most cases, artists are burdened with the responsibility to independently market their live performances while most live music venues merely post on social networks without a systematic attempt to significantly help the event to be a success. Costs for promoting an event can run to huge amounts that ordinary artists cannot normally afford. Even with the advent of digitalization, some communities rely on physical posters to be aware of live events to come. Besides the costly expense of making, printing and distribute posters, some cities have strict by laws that prohibit artists to put up posters where they will be visible to their target market.

Cost of live performances

A considerable number of the artists have concerns about the high costs involved in organizing and hosting their own live performances. Opportunities presented by live music initiatives such as the Mobility Fund of Concerts SA only caters for a small portion of the population of live performers. In most cases, the costs for independently organizing and hosting a live performance is more than the returns from ticket sales due to, among others, costs that are paid to cater for their technical requirements that are not already available in most venues.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1. Develop a comprehensive funding structure for live music venues in line with the revised White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, fourth draft (27 October 2017). The white paper already lays out various funding models that can serve as a point of reference in coming up with solutions to ease financial constraints that limit live music venues' capacity to provide adequate support to artists.

- In order to enable live music venues to play their role in promoting and developing local artists, relevant government departments and institutions in collaboration with the private sector must subsidise live music venues whose business model demonstrates a community cultural and creative benefit.
- The subsidy must also cover the basics such as the structural infrastructure in a venue such as a proper stage, lighting, acoustics, the sound system, and the backline instruments in communally owned venues such as community halls in township and rural settings.
- The subsidy can also support promotional costs to raise awareness about performances of upcoming artists and those from a disadvantaged background. This will go a long way in ensuring that artists realise decent incomes where compensation for performance is exclusively dependent on gate taking as is the case in many venues where artists retain approximately 80% of the revenue. While some venues provide space, they often do not have capacity to promote shows and this affects the artists' returns.
- This fund can also be used to expand the National DSRAC subsidized theatre to all nine provinces.
- The subsidy can be used to renovate unused infrastructure, especially in townships and rural areas to cater for live music performances
- There should be at least one deliberately funded live music venue in each of the nine provinces whether through the National Arts Council or the Mzansi Golden Economy.
- A percentage of grants allocated by the Mzansi Golden Economy and / or the National Arts Council must be dedicated to projects that seek to support and develop artists through live performances.

10.2. Recognise the role of night clubs, taverns and other such entities in developing artists

- Most of the live music performances are taking places in places like bars, pubs and restaurants. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders and authorities must recognise their important role in providing spaces for artists to showcase their music and subsidise their cultural and creative inclined activities that clearly demonstrate the benefit of upcoming artists. For example, such business ventures are covering the gap by providing space for performing which is scarce, especially for upcoming artists. These businesses could be given incentives i.e. tax incentives. Hence such entities will be encouraged to make live music one of their core business focus in order to create more spaces for live music performance given the limited live music venues in the country.

10.3. Revisit local government by laws that are restrictive to the development of artists

- Local governments must consider availing spaces for busking, this will allow artists to better promote their music and expand their exposure. Through busking, they can be identified by potential clients who might book them to perform in corporate events.
- Local government must avail more spaces where musicians and live music venues can put up their posters in public spaces where they can have a wider reach. This will assist in building audiences for live performances.

10.4. Consolidate and ease the licensing process

- The music industry needs to establish a regulatory body that will ensure, among others, the creation of uniform standards, and to monitor adherence to legislation.
- Information on licencing music must be made easily available, authorities must host workshops for owners of live music venues and artists as well as promoters to conscientize all stakeholders on the licencing process.
- There must be efforts aimed at ensuring that the process of applying for licenses is less cumbersome. In addition, venues must be allowed to apply for one license that covers all licenses required, i.e. liquor license, license to sell food.
- Ensure every live music venue is licenced and have a transparent process and administration for live performing artists to receive royalties for the performances of their original compositions.
- Allow live music venues to act as music retailers by having an in-house store to sell music even when there are no performances.

10.5. Transport and tourism

- Expand the transport network and system to cater for night life and night-time economy. The live music performances are an important part of the of the night-time economy and hence for this to thrive, there must be requisite infrastructure that supports audiences such as a safe and functional transport system. Given that as things stand, most of the live music performances are taking place in urban centres there is need for affordable and safe transport from the peri-urban and townships to the urban centres during the night.
- Create or support a Live venues circuit that will also have touring ventures among venues across all provinces
- Align live performance venues with tourism and list them as tourism destinations

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