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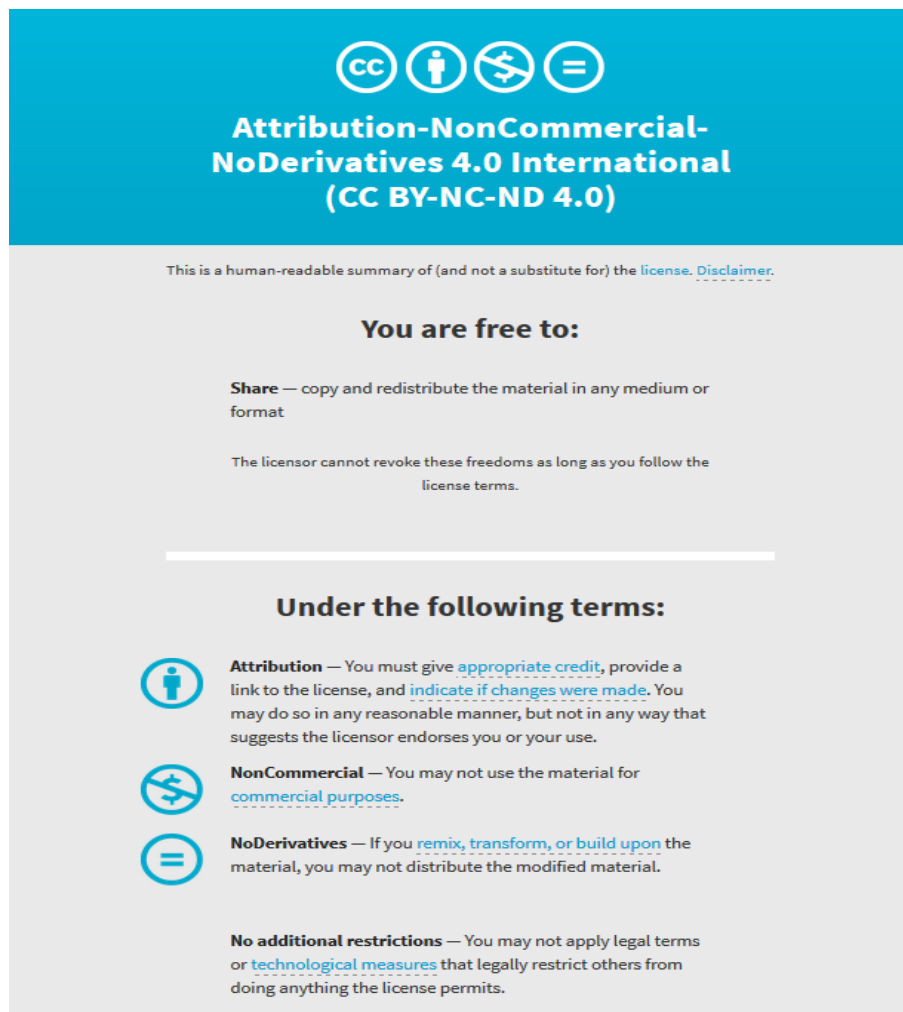
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Creating the right 'vibe':

Exploring the utilisation of space at Hip Hop concerts in Adelaide and Melbourne

Dianne Rodger

Abstract

This chapter examines how space is utilised at Hip Hop concerts to promote certain sensual experiences. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the Adelaide and Melbourne Hip Hop scenes. I explore how light, sound, venue layout and spacing are harnessed to foster specific reactions from the crowd and to create what Hip Hop fans colloquially referred to as the 'vibe'. I conclude that the practical realities of particular venue spaces (size, configuration, stage equipment and so on) can significantly influence the experiences of individuals attending Hip Hop concerts and the presence or absence of the 'vibe'.

Introduction

A successful Hip Hop concert is a dynamic event that overwhelms the senses. The music is loud enough to damage your hearing, the bass can be felt as well as heard and the whirling lights create a dramatic atmosphere. Hands are thrown in the air, heads are nodded to the beat, and people yell, clap and cheer their appreciation. Yet not all Hip Hop

concerts evoke these kinds of reactions and emotions. Hip Hop concerts can be exciting and inspiring, but they can also be tedious and tiring. In this chapter, I draw on data compiled from participation observation at various Hip Hop shows in Adelaide and Melbourne, Australia, to explore the mutually constitutive relationship between space, emotion and cultural context. I demonstrate that the senses are engaged in specific ways at Hip Hop concerts to foster certain audience reactions and to create what Hip Hoppers colloquially refer to as the 'vibe'. Creating the right vibe is an important factor that contributes to the perceived 'success' or 'failure' of Hip Hop events. Concert organisers, promoters, performers and venue staff try to control the concert space and, therefore, the emotional and sensorial experiences of the audience. In particular, they harness light, sound and venue layout to try to promote particular emotional states and bodily movements. I argue that our understanding of the relationship between musical performance and emotion can be enhanced by research that accounts for spatial and cultural context in order to consider how the nature of particular spaces can both constrain and evoke emotion.

Music, emotion and methodology

The study of music and emotion is a multidisciplinary field that is characterised by diverse approaches. Theorists from psychology, anthropology, philosophy, musicology and biology have all explored how, when and why music evokes emotion. The variety of methodologies employed to study music and emotion is reflected in the content of the edited volume *Music and Emotion* (Juslin & Slobada 2001a). This collection features a broad range of perspectives from authors in disciplines such as neuropsychology (Peretz 2001), philosophy (Davies 2001) and music therapy (Bunt & Pavlicevic 2001). In the introduction to this book, Juslin and Sloboda (2001b:4) note that the field of music and emotion has been neglected in comparison to other domains of musical science because 'emotional reactions to music ... are difficult to observe under laboratory conditions'. Whether or not emotional responses to music can adequately be examined in a laboratory setting is an issue which is addressed in several of the chapters in their volume. Becker (2001:135-6) is critical of laboratory studies that involve people listening to a piece of music and communicating their emotions to a researcher. She demonstrates that this approach is grounded in 'Western' assumptions about how people listen to music that are not universal.

Becker argues that anthropology and ethnomusicology have contributed to the study of music and emotion by illustrating the 'degree to which emotional responses to musical events [are] culturally inflected' (136). Similarly, Sloboda and O'Neil state that

music is always heard in a social context, in a particular place and time, with or without other individuals being present, and with other activities taking place which have their own complex sources of meaning and emotion. (2001:415)

As such, they note that the methodologies commonly utilised by laboratory researchers to study emotional responses to music do not account for 'everyday experience' (416) because they are not carried out in 'everyday contexts' (417). In order to address this weakness, Sloboda and O'Neil designed a study that used a pager system to prompt participants to fill out a response booklet about their most recent musical experience. This method allowed them to gather information about a broad range of everyday music-listening practices and their emotional effects.

Unlike Sloboda and O'Neil's work, my research was not designed to monitor how a cohort of individuals engaged with different music in diverse spaces.¹ Thus, while I support their argument that music may have different emotional functions in different contexts (cf. Becker 2001), my findings are based on an in-depth investigation of one cultural group, Hip Hoppers living in Adelaide and Melbourne, in one type of setting, Hip Hop concerts. This focus allows me to discuss in detail how the emotions and senses are engaged at a specific kind of musical event. This is important because when people listen to music they are always situated in a particular cultural context: 'every hearer occupies a position in a cultural field' (Becker 2001:136). Throughout my time in the field, I did observe people consuming and producing Hip Hop music outside of concerts, including in their own homes and cars; however, these practices are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Other theorists have examined the relationship between space, music and emotion by analysing a specific musical event or festival such as the Top Half Folk Festival (Duffy 2000), the West Coast Blues and Roots Festival (Jennings 2010), the Wangaratta Jazz Festival (Curtis 2010), the Swiss-Italian Festa Parade (Duffy, Waitt, Gorman-Murray & Gibson 2011), or the ChillOut Parade (Duffy et al. 2011). However, my research is not based on the analysis of a single event.² I conducted participant observation at several Hip Hop events over a sixteen-month period from September 2006 to January 2008.³ Attending multiple Hip Hop events means that I am able to compare and contrast different concerts in order to evaluate how and why some events and not others were viewed as successful or as having the right vibe. In this chapter, I use the terms *Hip Hop concert*, *Hip Hop show* and *Hip Hop event* interchangeably to refer to live performances that featured Hip Hop music. I recognise that classifying musical genres and defining Hip Hop music can be a complex and divisive process. For this reason, I attended events that were advertised in media channels that targeted Hip Hop enthusiasts, such as the *Upcoming Oz Hip Hop Shows and Events* thread on the

1 For example, their participants reported listening to music in diverse settings and during activities such as having a bath, exercising, doing housework and doing deskwork (Sloboda & O'Neil 2001:420).

2 Jennings (2010) attended the same festival over a three-year period.

3 For further information about my (unpublished) fieldwork, see Rodger (2012).

Australian Hip Hop forum, Oz Hip Hop forum (n.d.), or events that people whom I interviewed were performing at or told me about.

The size, scale and set-up of the events that I attended varied; however, they were usually held in licensed premises, on a Friday or Saturday night.⁴ Events commonly began at 9 pm or later and generally finished after 12 am. Timing was dependent on several factors including legal restrictions, the venue, the event organisers and the enthusiasm of the crowd. The vast majority of events that I attended throughout my fieldwork were held at in-door venues. This is significant because it enabled the event promoters, artists and venue owners to control aspects of the event space (such as temperature and lighting) with much greater predictability than they could at outdoor events, which must contend with the weather and natural light. These brief summative details demonstrate that Hip Hop concerts are primarily spaces of leisure that are organised around the model of the five-day working week. As I will argue later in this chapter, the assumption that Hip Hop concerts are spaces of leisure plays an important role in determining how people behave at these events and the kinds of emotional experiences that are privileged. All of the events that I refer to in this chapter had an entry fee (from under A\$10 to over A\$80) and all were advertised, although the format and the scale of these advertisements varied. My research has an urban bias: nearly all of the events that I attended were held in the central business district [CBD] of Adelaide or the inner suburbs of Melbourne.

The field notes that I wrote from 'scratch' notes after these events were a valuable resource that provided 'thick' descriptions (Geertz 2000 [1973]) of my own visceral, emotional responses to these concerts. These notes also described the layout of venues and the activities of concert attendees (that is, ebbs and flows in patron numbers, reactions and movement of the crowd, and so on). That said, it should be noted that at the time of my fieldwork, the relationship between space and emotion was not a central focus of my research. Although my field notes included detailed descriptions of Hip Hop events with a strong emphasis on emotional experiences and spatial geography, I did not employ methodologies which could have further elucidated the interrelationship between space and emotion such as Duffy et al.'s (2011) extension of Lefebvre's (2004) 'rhythmanalysis'. In their research, they utilised their bodies as 'research tools' to gather data about their own bodily rhythms (heart beat, breathing, pulse, movement and so on). They used this information in order to explore how these rhythms were triggered by sound in two different festival spaces. This approach is influenced by Probyn (2005) and by Wood, Duffy and Smith's auto-ethnography (2007).

4 Exceptions included events held on public holidays or when an international artist was touring. It is quite common for international acts to tour Adelaide mid-week as they perform to larger audiences on Friday or Saturday night interstate. This fact is resented by Adelaide fans.

Although I documented my own emotions and bodily responses in my field notes, I did not consistently record micro-details such as my pulse or breathing rate. While I support Duffy et al.'s (2011) argument that the body has been marginalised from geographical research (see also Driver 2011 for an account of how the body has been neglected in subcultural research), my analysis of Hip Hop concerts is not a 'rhythmanalysis' and does not centre on my own bodily responses to Hip Hop events. Rather, I use this information in conjunction with my observations of Hip Hop audiences and their own descriptions and analyses of their actions and emotions. Duffy et al. (2011:20) argue that interviews with participants at events or after events offer limited insight because they can only elucidate what 'festival goers think, and not how meaning is produced moment-by-moment'. Unlike Duffy et al., who used interviews as 'background' (20), I suggest that it is important to engage with festival and concert-goers in order to build holistic accounts of how different people respond to the same musical performance. For this reason, in addition to conducting participant observation at these events, I also carried out informal interviews with concert attendees during events and more formal, semi-structured interviews with Hip Hop fans and artists outside the concert setting. While I recognise that people may not always be able to articulate their emotions or reflect on how meaning is produced 'moment-by-moment', relegating the thoughts of participants to the 'background' may result in an over-emphasis on the emotional and bodily experiences of the researcher, which may not be universal.

Defining the 'vibe'

Earlier, I noted that Hip Hop events are spaces of leisure for the majority of people who occupy them. Exceptions include performing artists, promoters and venue staff, such as lighting and sound technicians and bar staff. Because Hip Hop concerts are viewed as leisure spaces, people expect that they will experience particular emotions or a vibe when they inhabit them. They enter these spaces with the expectation that they will be entertained and that the concert will be an enjoyable experience. In his account of electronic dance music culture and religion, St John (2006:10) states that 'vibe' is insider slang that 'most commonly denotes a successful or optimum social dance experience'. Australian Hip Hoppers typically used the term 'vibe' to describe the atmosphere or the energy that they felt at Hip Hop shows. A show with a good vibe was 'electric', 'thrilling' and 'inspiring'. Conversely, a show with a bad vibe or, indeed with no vibe at all, was 'flat', 'dull' and 'tedious'.

It was much more common for people to use the term 'vibe' to refer to a positive Hip Hop show. When the term 'vibe' was used to describe a Hip Hop concert that was viewed as a failure or disappointment, an adjective was added to 'vibe' to qualify it, as in the above 'bad vibe' or, as another example, 'aggressive vibe'. Likewise, the absence

of a vibe was typically understood as a negative quality. An event that did not have a vibe was defined as lacking certain elements; it did not evoke the positive emotions that audience members were anticipating. Hip Hoppers spoke about the vibe as an intangible but distinct feeling: as an almost magical aura. As such, it would be easy to assume that a vibe is invisible, unquantifiable and mysterious. However, as I will discuss, such an understanding overlooks both the cultural work that is required to create a particular vibe and the contextually specific nature of the vibe.

This chapter is informed by the work of authors who have examined the culturally constructed nature of taste distinctions like 'good' and 'bad' (Bourdieu 1984; Thornton 1996; Washburne & Derno 2004; Hibbett 2005). From this perspective, it is clear that the good vibe of a successful Hip Hop concert may have very different characteristics than those of a successful heavy metal show or other musical performance. This point is clearly articulated by Becker (2001; 2004) in her discussion of cross-cultural 'modes of listening' (2004:70):

What is appropriate to say about musical affect, what is *not* appropriate to say, what one feels and what one does *not* feel may reveal underlying assumptions surrounding musical listening. What is *not* assumed in one mode (such as bodily movement in Western classical listening) may become central in another mode ... [T]o sit quietly focused on musical structure at a salsa concert is as inappropriate as break dancing to a Schubert quintet. (Becker 2004:70, italics in the original text)

Becker argues that these 'modes of listening' are naturalised or taken for granted, and it is these taken-for-granted norms that I examine in this chapter. In the following section, I define the characteristics of what I call the 'Hip Hop mode of listening' — that is, the culturally appropriate and desired mode of listening at Hip Hop concerts in Adelaide and Melbourne. I then expand this discussion to explore how the practical realities of different Hip Hop venues constrained or enhanced this 'mode of listening' and, therefore, the vibe.

Creating the vibe: A Hip Hop mode of listening

The date is the 12th of May 2007 and 7200 people are gathered in the Adelaide Entertainment Centre to see Adelaide Hip Hop group the Hilltop Hoods perform with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra. The show is the album launch for 'The Hard Road: Restrung' a re-working of the Hilltop Hoods 2006 album 'The Hard Road' with orchestral backing. After the support acts have played⁵ the lights are lowered, leaving the crowd murmuring in the darkness as the expectant atmosphere builds. Finally, a red curtain swings back to reveal the three members of the Hilltop

5 Support acts and guest artists who performed at this show were Adelaide locals *DJ Shep* and *DJ Reflex*, Melbourne group *Muph and Plutonic* with *DJ Slap 618*, British MC *Mystro* and American MC *Okwerdz*.

Hoods; DJ Debris, MC Suffa and MC Pressure. Debris is at the decks⁶ on a raised platform and the 31 piece Adelaide Symphony Orchestra are seated behind him.

What follows is a whirlwind of sound and light. The orchestra adds a new dimension to the usual high energy of a Hip Hop show. Lyrics are yelled in unison as the crowd sings along to the unique combination of live strings, brass, woodwind, percussion, scratching, samples and rapping. After several tracks are performed the show comes to an end when the Hoods and the orchestra perform the album title track 'The Hard Road'. The crowd continues to applaud and stamp their feet after the Hilltop Hoods have left the stage. Eventually all the lights come back on and we re-adjust to our surroundings. Slowly we make our way out of the venue and into the cold night air, eagerly discussing the night's proceedings. (Field notes, 13 May 2007)

The Hilltop Hoods and Adelaide Symphony Orchestra Show [HTH/ASO Show] is an interesting case study because it featured the unusual combination of Hip Hop and a symphony orchestra. The majority of people that I spoke to about this show viewed it as an extremely positive event; it could be said that the show was the epitome of a concert with a good vibe. Below, I use the case study of the HTH/ASO Show and examples from other Hip Hop gigs to unpack the features of the Hip Hop mode of listening. I identify several factors (lighting, sight and venue layout, spacing, and sound) which play central roles in the evocation of the vibe. I argue that by exploring commonalities in the way that light, venue layout, spacing and sound are employed at Hip Hop concerts we can better understand the particularities of the Hip Hop mode of listening, a mode that privileges particular orientations and sensibilities. For ease of reading and analytical clarity, I have chosen to separate the key factors that contribute to the positive vibe of successful Hip Hop events. In practice, however, these factors are interrelated and intertwined.

Lighting

The transformative and affective capacities of light have been highlighted by scholars examining the relationship between 'light, material culture and social experience' (Bille & Sorensen 2007:263) and the role that both light and darkness play in the production of atmospheric effects (Edensor 2015). In his study of festival installations and musical performances which utilise both light and the absence of light, Edensor concludes that light and darkness are 'essential components in the formation and emergence of atmospheres of varying intensity' (332). The event organisers and/or artists at the HTH/ASO Show cleverly utilised stage lighting to create a range of sensory experiences and to encourage particular emotional responses. A blackout was used before the headlining act appeared on stage, in order to promote a sense of anticipation and heighten the sense of shock and awe facilitated by the pyrotechnics that followed.

6 Slang for turntables.

Throughout the entire performance, multicoloured lights created drama as they twirled around the Adelaide Entertainment Centre. While this show had a much larger budget than many events that I attended and utilised light in some novel ways that were not used at other venues, it also shared many commonalities with other Hip Hop performances. Most notably, the stage was always more heavily lit than the audience, a lighting set-up that was standard at every Hip Hop show that I attended and which meant that the audience was typically in semi-darkness.⁷ This created opportunities for lights to cut through the darkness, temporarily highlighting the throng of the audience members, with arms outstretched and heads nodding to the beat.

I argue that this use of light is designed both to focus the audience's attention on the performance and to direct attention away from the everyday minutia of the venue. Edensor (2015) discusses how parks and everyday spaces can be transformed by light installations that are designed to foster a sense of unreality, unfamiliarity and amazement. Unlike art installations deployed in public spaces like parks, Hip Hop events are normally held in generalised venues designed for musical performances. While these spaces are often nondescript and fairly uninspiring when a performance is not occurring, during a performance Hip Hoppers can perceive them as places of enchantment. They are usually entered with the expectation of entertainment, excitement and good vibes. Lighting plays a key role in meeting these expectations by creating a sense of drama and shifting people's focus away from potential distractions. The effect of this is powerful enough to cause a sense of disorientation and a 'return to reality' when the performance is finished and the venue becomes fully lit by a bright, harsh light.

Being shrouded in semi-darkness also helps people to forget any bodily discomfort they may be experiencing. This is important because attending a Hip Hop concert can be a physically demanding and uncomfortable experience that typically requires standing for a long period of time in a confined space. As such, Hip Hop promoters and artists attempt to maximise the venue layout in order to draw people's attention away from these discomforts and onto the performance. Thus, at a Hip Hop event with a vibe, people are not looking at the empty drink cups lying crushed all over the floor or thinking about what that mysterious stain on the well-worn carpet is. Rather, lighting is used to focus on particular elements — most notably, the performers on stage. This focusing away from the individual self and onto one's position as a member of an audience has been argued to result in feelings of communal belonging or equality (Jennings 2010). In his account of a performance by Don McLean at the 2008 West Coast Blues and Roots Festival, Jennings (2010:80) describes how he entered a 'trance-like state' where some of his senses were heightened while others were bypassed.

7 One exception were events held outdoors during daylight hours. However, these events were rare, with most events being held after dark in venues with no natural light.

In this state he did not care about other sensations that he was also experiencing, like how much his feet hurt or what he looked like (80-1). What he experienced was a feeling of 'community' or 'togetherness' described by Turner (1969) as *communitas*, a concept Jennings applies to the study of musical concerts. However, Jennings also notes that people have critiqued Turner's account of *communitas*, arguing that it is utopian. He goes on to question whether or not the feeling of *communitas* that he experienced had any lasting ramifications beyond the event itself: 'What happens when the music dies?' (Jennings 2010:81).

Gerard (2004) is also critical of scholars who draw on Turner's theories or a more generalised account of 'ritual' to describe musical events like raves without adequately describing their structure. My own research suggests that we must be careful not to overstate the sense of unity that can be experienced by crowd members at musical performances. Indeed, the HTH/ASO Show was an event that divided many Hip Hoppers, some of whom felt that the Hilltop Hoods had 'sold out' by performing the show, or were alarmed by the number of newer fans who attended it who were not, in the eyes of the longer-term fans, 'authentic'. This was information that I was not aware of in 'the moment' (Duffy et al. 2011) at the HTH/ASO show itself because it did not manifest in any behaviours that I observed. However, at other events, the diverse motivations of audience members were clearly visible and at one event these differences erupted into physical violence. Thus while my research illustrates that lighting is used at Hip Hop concerts in specific ways to engender emotional reactions and to enhance the sensations felt by Hip Hoppers, further research is needed to explore whether *communitas* is produced at Hip Hop concerts and, if so, what the ramifications of this might be. My findings suggest that light is primarily deployed to focus attention on the stage, highlighting the significant interplay between hearing and sight in the Hip Hop mode of listening.

Sight and venue layout

Visual elements play a central role in the evocation of emotion at Hip Hop shows. Unlike other musical fans, who sometimes close their eyes in order to achieve a different sensorial appreciation of the music, Hip Hoppers' complaints about concerts frequently centred on the inability of audience members to adequately see the performance. While watching the performing artist is not always important in other musical genres such as electronic dance music (Haslam 1997; Fraser 2012), being able to see the performer was highly valued by Hip Hop fans. The significance placed on visually engaging with the performing artist/s was exemplified by the frequent use of projectors that displayed live stream shots of the performance to the crowd. Although these technologies were not typically used at smaller-scale shows where local acts were performing, they were a defining feature of larger events, in particular international

DJ acts. It was very common for a DJ set to include numerous shots of the DJ on different screens, including a close-up camera angle of the performer's hands. When these technologies were not used and/or the venue did not include a raised stage, it was difficult for the audience to view performers, and this caused frustration.

For example, I recorded in my field notes that I was extremely disappointed when I attended a Hip Hop concert that also featured a breakdancing or B-Boy/Girl battle. This battle was held in the middle of a large hall and a circle of audience members quickly formed around the breakers. This meant that only the audience members who made up the first and innermost circle of the crowd could properly view the event.⁸ This problem was avoided at the HTH/ASO show because the stage was high and very large, and because the performance was being filmed and broadcast on large screens. This contributed to the vibe of the event because people were not craning to see the performance, or pushing and prodding other people to try to get a better view. This suggests that both the location and visibility of the stage, venue size and layout play a key role in the creation of the vibe. It is also important to note that the visibility of the performers facilitates communication between the audience and the Hip Hop act (facial gestures, smiling, laughing, instructions to the crowd, reaching out to audience members, and so on), and this also contributes to the production of emotion.

In his analysis of a musical concert conducted in total darkness as part of the Manchester International Festival, Edensor (2015:344-7) indicates that while the darkness did intensify the experience of the music, it also made audience members uncomfortable and stifled typical performer/audience interactions, which led to an absence of bonding. A musical concert conducted in total darkness is a fruitful event to analyse because it defies cultural expectations regarding appropriate modes of listening, and, in doing so, helps to reveal taken-for-granted listening behaviours. While it might seem self-evident that Hip Hop audience members place importance on having a clear view of the stage, it is worth remembering that attitudes towards the consumption and production of music are not universal and that culturally appropriate listening behaviours need to be investigated, not assumed.

For example, Overell's (2010:91) detailed ethnographic account of 'brutal belonging' in the Melbourne Grindcore scene found that participants preferred venues with low or no stages which allowed close bodily proximity between audience members and performers. In this scene, the facilitation of intermingling between the crowd and performers is highly valued (91). Like the participants in Overell's study, the Hip Hop fans and artists whom I engaged with had preferences for particular venues, and the Hip Hop mode of listening led Hip Hop promoters and artists to seek

8 Several other attendees and I tried to overcome this problem by standing on some tables that lined the outer edge of the hall and were probably used for other kinds of functions held in the space. However, we were promptly asked by Security to get down. This highlights how appropriate and inappropriate modes of listening can be dictated by authority figures.

out venue spaces that would best facilitate the emotional engagement of Hip Hop fans. As I discuss below, Hip Hop promoters, artists and venue owners clearly have a vested interest in ensuring that everyone who attends one of their events is feeling the vibe. Although they are often constrained by economic and other limitations, they do not leave these matters to chance, and they actively pursue venues that best suit Hip Hop events. As I discuss in the following section, spacing is a key concern that promoters consider when booking venues for Hip Hop performances.

Spacing

Venue size and layout are important considerations for Hip Hop promoters because these factors structure how people move through the venue space and therefore how their senses are engaged. The relationship between venue layout and the production, performance and experience of music has been explored by scholars like Nowotny, Fackler, Muschi, Vargas, Wilson and Kotarba (2010), who examined four Latino music scenes (conjunto, mariachi, salsa and Latin jazz) in Houston, Texas. Their account of these scenes demonstrates that different listening modes are facilitated by different venue layouts. For example, salsa venues take two forms in Houston: dance clubs and Latin restaurants (41). While both of these venue types feature salsa music, their layouts are designed to enable different forms of social interaction and to emphasise particular forms of movement (that is, dancing or dining).

The relationship between the physical space of a music venue and the movements of individuals has also been considered by scholars researching club culture in the United Kingdom (Malbon 1999; Wall 2006). Malbon (1999) examines the importance of spacing on the dance floor, arguing that the density of the crowd and the proximity of individual dancers contribute to the evocation of particular sensations. Wall (2006) draws on Malbon's work to explore how members of the British Northern Soul scene, a 'dance-based music culture' (Wall 2006:431), move within the space of a Northern Soul event. Both of these authors demonstrate that dancers make judgements about how dance venues should be organised and how people should move within those spaces. Hip Hoppers did not often dance but they did privilege other forms of bodily movement that centred on their relationship to the stage.

At every Hip Hop show that I attended, the performance took place on a stage, or in a demarcated area that the audience members orientated themselves toward. I say that the audience members orientated themselves, because there is generally no seating or very little seating at Hip Hop events. Unlike a typical classical music concert where everyone sits in ordered rows, the majority of audience members at a Hip Hop show stand. Because they are standing, they can choose to face in any direction, but the vast majority of audience members will face the stage for most of the event. Indeed, the assumption that crowd members will stand and not sit means that if you choose

to sit down at a Hip Hop concert it can be almost impossible to find a seat. On one occasion when I was tired and decided to sit down at a Hip Hop show held at Earth nightclub in Adelaide, I managed to find one of three or four seats provided near the bar. Shortly after I sat down, I was approached by a man who was shocked that I was sitting down and asked me why I was not 'having fun'. Even though I was still enjoying the performance from my seat, my actions were contrary to the Hip Hop mode of listening which involves standing, usually as close to the stage as possible. Because I was not standing, I was perceived to be bored with the performance.

The association between sitting down and boredom or disengagement is illustrative of a mode of listening that privileges being able to stand and to perform movements like nodding your head, cheering and waving your arms. Many Hip Hoppers viewed sitting down as a constraint that limited their ability to express and to experience the vibe. For example, at the HTH/ASO Show there were two types of tickets: general admittance [GA], which gained people entrance to the central open space where the bulk of the audience stood, and reserved seating, which gained people entrance to an allocated seat in the tiers of seating that circled the stage. While it could be assumed that people would prefer allocated seating, GA tickets sold out first, and many Hip Hoppers who missed out on GA tickets and had to purchase allocated seating in order to attend the show were disappointed. People I spoke to who sat in an allocated seat reported feeling that they were somewhat disconnected from the performance and unable to fully express their emotional state through their bodily movements. Standing up was understood to be conducive to the sensation of particular emotions. Conversely, sitting down was often experienced as curtailing those senses and restricting bodily movements that contributed to emotions like joy and freedom.

This sense of frustration and restriction was not limited to Hip Hoppers who were unable to stand, however. Indeed, it was most frequently expressed by people who attended events that they thought were overcrowded. My research demonstrates that when people feel cramped and uncomfortable they are much less likely to enjoy themselves. I attended one show that was held in an oddly shaped and very small venue. The event had sold out and the space was packed with bodies. The people I interviewed thought that the promoter should have sold fewer tickets to the event, thus limiting the number of people in the space. Alternatively, they suggested that the promoter should have found a larger venue that could accommodate the audience without cramping them.

However, it should be noted that a tightly packed crowd is not always viewed negatively. It is only when the spacing of the crowd begins both to influence the ability of people to move and to limit their field of vision that they become frustrated. A dense crowd is also preferable to a very loosely spaced crowd or a largely empty space. This poses a significant dilemma for Hip Hop promoters who need to find the optimum-sized venue for their event. This decision is commonly made with an

estimate for ticket sales that will not always be accurate. If the promoters hire a large venue and do not sell a high number of tickets, then the emptiness of the space can negatively affect the vibe. Similarly, if they hold a popular event in a small venue the audience can feel confined.

These concerns are illustrated in the following excerpt from an interview I conducted with a Hip Hop promoter who had organised several local Adelaide Hip Hop shows. In this interview, the promoter discussed how he planned events, noting that the size of the Adelaide Hip Hop scene was a factor that influenced which venues he booked. He had hosted several recent shows at the same venue, which he described as being a 'big venue to fill'. He explained that he purposely spaced these events out to ensure that people would not become 'sick' of the venue and the event would be close to capacity:

With the size of [venue name] it just wouldn't work [holding events more regularly], because it can mean a lot, like you might have a big venue but if there's only a hundred people there it'll just ... the vibe is just crap. But if you've got a room that just fits a hundred people, it'll be an awesome night. (Interview with Adelaide promoter, 17 July 2007)

Here the promoter notes that venue size plays a key role in the creation of the vibe — so much so, that the same hundred people could go from experiencing a 'crap' vibe to an 'awesome' night, dependent on whether they were completely filling a small venue or were somewhat lost in a larger space. Choosing the best space for a Hip Hop event is a difficult task that involves making decisions about the best venue layout and size for the event. This choice is usually restricted by economic factors because the ideal venue for an event may be beyond the promoter's budget. While some spaces are viewed as being better suited to Hip Hop events than others, a broad range of factors influence venue choice, including venue availability and competition with other Hip Hop events.

Sound

Thus far I have demonstrated that concert organisers and performers utilise lighting and venue layout to try and create a particular vibe or emotional experience. Yet given that Hip Hop concerts are musical events, one of the most important factors in the evocation of a vibe is sound. When Hip Hoppers discuss the success or failure of a Hip Hop event, they commonly talk about the sound quality. Many Hip Hoppers believe that some venues are well configured neither for the loud bass that typically characterises Hip Hop music nor for the unique way that Hip Hoppers use microphones. Because Hip Hoppers rap rather than sing, the way that their music is mixed by a sound engineer or technician can be very different than at a rock show or other musical event, and it requires different skills. These differences were not always accounted for, and Hip

Hoppers told me that some sound desk operators were less able to successfully mix the sound at a Hip Hop show. Even when the sound engineers/technicians were proficient, unexpected problems or faulty equipment could result in inconsistent sound levels, failing microphones and other technical sound problems such as feedback, all of which were detrimental to the vibe.

At the HTH/ASO show, and indeed at every show that I attended, many people rapped along to the lyrics of the performing artist. Shouting lyrics in unison or yelling out a 'punch line' was a very enjoyable experience for Hip Hoppers. When the sound levels were unbalanced, people struggled to hear the performer's lyrics and to connect with the performance. The stop-and-start nature of events with sound problems was also discussed by Hip Hoppers as a disruption that stopped the vibe from developing. Throughout my time in the field, I observed that Hip Hop shows were much more likely to be viewed as successful if there were no delays or interruptions that distracted attendees from becoming immersed and engaged in the performance.

When Hip Hop fans are disgruntled and, indeed, when they are enjoying a performance, they also produce sounds that contribute to the vibe. Edensor (2015:333) notes that the atmosphere created at events should not be understood as 'conditions into which people are simply plunged and to which they passively respond'. Concert-goers are keen to ensure that they experience the right vibe, utilising measures such as cheering or clapping loudly both to show their appreciation for a performing artist and to contribute to an event's ambience. Thus, while audiences at musical performances are often depicted as merely receiving sound, it is important to note that they also create it. These sounds can play a critical role in the success or failure of a Hip Hop show. An audience that is loudly booing or is deathly quiet is a clear indicator of a bad vibe. Thus, as Edensor (2015:333) discusses, atmospheres (or, in this chapter, vibes) are shaped by numerous factors, including the current mood of audience members and their prior experiences, which can then 'feed back' into the vibe. For this reason, I want to be careful not to overstate my argument.

In this chapter, I have illustrated that the physical geography of Hip Hop venues plays a role in determining whether or not a Hip Hop event will be experienced as a success with the right vibe or as a failure with a bad vibe or no vibe. Details including the venue size, shape and layout, the number of attendees, and the spacing of the attendees in the venue, all influence how, and indeed if, the right vibe is felt. In particular, light and sound are harnessed to foster specific reactions from the crowd. The practical constraints of certain spaces influence the sensory and emotional experiences of the individuals at Hip Hop events and can inhibit the sensation of positive emotions. Nonetheless, a skilled performer can overcome all of these factors and can create an environment where aching feet, craned necks or that beer someone spilt down your back no longer matter. Artists often use humour to make light of any venue limitations

or their own technical errors, and the way that they react to these situations has a definitive impact on the crowd's emotional engagement.

For example, well before I began my fieldwork, I went to a Hip Hop event that was held in a small venue and was not well attended. One of the performing rappers was clearly disappointed and actually said to the crowd, 'You are making me tired'. This did nothing to enhance the vibe of the event and it had an extremely negative impact on my own attitude towards this artist and the event itself. It is difficult to feel a vibe when the performing artist is so clearly disgruntled.

Conversely, during my fieldwork there were times when the vibe of an event appeared to be in jeopardy but the artist managed to prevent themselves from losing the engagement of the crowd — such as when technical difficulties threatened to derail the performance of MC Mystro, who was supported on the decks by DJ Reflux from the Adelaide group the Funkoars. During their set, Reflux appeared to cue and repeat the wrong track or to be having trouble with a skipping record that led to the repetition of a section of music and then sudden silence.⁹ In order to fill the subsequent lull that occurred while DJ Reflux figured out the problem, MC Pressure from the Hilltop Hoods got on the microphone and said that while he didn't usually perform Funkoars material, he was going to make an exception. He then led the crowd in a chant by prompting them to yell 'Fuck Reflex'. This chant referenced the fact that the Funkoars often use the audience call and response 'Say, fuck the Funkoars/Fuck the Funkoars' during their performances. The chant occupied and amused the crowd, who may have otherwise begun to lose interest. In this case, the enthusiasm and skill of the performers kept the vibe 'alive'. Therefore, it is important to note that while concert organisers and performing artists try to control the concert space and thus the senses and emotions of attendees, many factors are often outside of their control or extremely unpredictable. Although some spaces are more conducive to the creation of a vibe than others, this does not mean that the vibe is never felt at an event that is not ideally suited to the Hip Hop 'mode of listening'. It may be more difficult to create a vibe in these circumstances, but it is certainly not impossible and indeed this is the joy of a great performance.

In this chapter, I have attempted to bring together a vast range of literature to examine the relationship between space, emotion and the production and consumption of music in specific cultural settings. The study of music and emotion is a multidisciplinary field that is characterised by diversity, both in terms of methodological approaches and the types of case studies examined. This contributes to a lack of consensus regarding key terms, which poses challenges when searching for relevant sources and can lead to missed opportunities for productive dialogue. Furthermore, each of the components of the vibe that I have investigated in this chapter, in particular

9 I was not close enough to the stage to see the precise cause.

light and sound, could be the focus of a stand-alone chapter drawing on a rich pool of studies from anthropology, geography and other disciplines that I have been unable to engage with here. I have chosen to examine these components together because I believe it is important to consider how these elements work in tandem to foster or constrain particular emotional experiences. I contend that future studies of emotion and music must attend to the particularities of space. By examining culturally inflected 'modes of listening' (Becker 2001; 2004), we are better able to understand the cultural norms and values that inform listening practices. In particular, I suggest that ethnographic accounts of musical performances enable us to move beyond abstractions and generalisations to consider how, when and why music stirs emotion in specific cultural contexts.

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