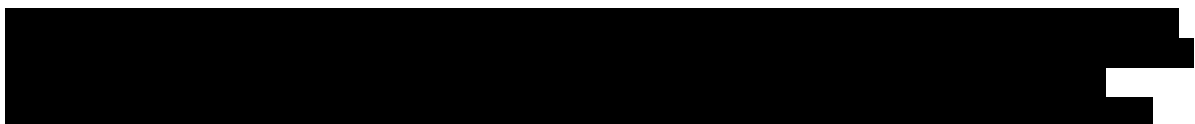


29/4/2024

Dear Committee,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am co-director of [REDACTED], a music management company based in Melbourne, Australia. [REDACTED], I oversee the careers of several Australian artists including 3-time ARIA Award winners [REDACTED] and emerging garage rock quartet [REDACTED].



I would like to focus on two separate terms of reference in this submission, although my professional experience is relevant across both areas.

1. Audience development and consumer behaviours

Post-Covid, it has become very difficult for local artists to find and develop an audience. Traditional channels of communication about the local live music scene, such as street press, community radio and Triple J (on a national level), have been supplanted by social media. Social media allows people to connect with online communities based on shared interests, but disconnects audiences from what is happening in their local community. Even for ardent music fans, it can be difficult to know what's going on. This has become a common complaint from friends and music industry colleagues, and it is as true of major concert tours as local gigs. It is particularly evident in low or sluggish ticket sales for emerging artists post-pandemic, where previously we saw consistent growth following considered touring and music release strategies.

We know that the cost of living crisis has also had a major impact. A night out seeing a band, especially where punters are gambling on a newer/unknown artist, is a social event that costs so much more than the price of a ticket. It is transport, food, alcohol, etc. When a night out seeing a band is so expensive, it is easier to gamble on a sure thing than take a chance on 'discovering' a new band. Thus at [REDACTED], we have seen great success with 'nostalgia' tours post-Covid - international bands whose peak success was 20-30 years ago. We have also seen great success with international 'TikTok' artists - those who have had a massive viral moment, equating to tens of millions of streams, which translates to modest but sustainable international live audiences. Local/Australian artists who have not had the good fortune of "going viral" are competing with these artists for limited consumer dollars in the local market.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Australia but the relatively small size of our live music industry means the impact is existential. The net effect of the above - in addition to various challenges facing live music venues and the corporate consolidation of live music globally - is a slow and painful death of Australia's live music scene. While overall the global music industry is growing, our ability to develop homegrown talent and tell uniquely Australian stories is under threat.

Short term investment in venues and artists by Federal, State and local governments in the form of grants are helpful in navigating the current cost of living crisis, but they are not impacting the underlying problem of 'discoverability' and audience engagement. I would suggest a better path would be government investment in a local live music discovery platform that is clean, comprehensive and supported by extensive marketing, speaking to a broad cross-section of music fans. The platform would require support from a broad cross-section of Australian music industry stakeholders and ongoing operational and marketing funding, including strong branding that emphasises local community and in-person experiences, and platforms Australian artists.



2. Barriers to growing the Australian industry, both domestically and internationally, including those relating to export

All of the artists that we represent have contemporary music export businesses. They are all signed to international labels and tour internationally. In the case of [REDACTED], their far-reaching international success allows them to tour overseas multiple times a year. Their last album charted in the Top 25 in multiple countries. [REDACTED] has received widespread critical acclaim from the likes of Rolling Stone, MOJO, Billboard, The Guardian, FADER and Uncut, to name just a few. [REDACTED]

Recently signed to venerated US label [REDACTED] [REDACTED] debuted at #1 on the US Alternative Radio Singles Chart, above world-renowned artists such as Vampire Weekend, Khruangbin and Warpaint. They were named by Rolling Stone as one of the 'Best of SXSW' this year and have been invited to perform live on six separate radio stations on their US debut tour, including KEXP.

I have grouped the above achievements together, however our experience is that there is a sharp dividing line between [REDACTED], who were touring and developing international markets pre-pandemic, and our "emerging" artists, who - despite their critical acclaim and demonstrated overseas interest - are struggling to follow the same path. The primary problem is the prohibitive cost of international touring, which has doubled post-pandemic. Where a month-long entry level 'export development' tour in the UK/EU/US may have cost AUD35,000 in 2018/2019, the same tour now costs AUD50,000-70,000. That first tour will generally serve as an introduction to international industry. If there is clear and demonstrated interest, an emerging artist will secure the necessary industry partners to support a return to market - an international label, live booking agent, publicist, etc. They will then embark on a second international tour, again costing AUD50,000-70,000 at minimum, with the hope that those local partners will help to amplify the artist's profile and begin to build live audiences in that market. In our experience - except where an unpredictable viral TikTok moment speeds up the process - an Australian act with demonstrated international interest will need to tour any given market at least three times before they can hope to break even on touring.

These costs represent an insurmountable barrier to entry to the international market for most Australian artists, and in the interest of promoting Australian contemporary music export, they should be underwritten by the Federal Government.

Of course there are no guarantees, even with repeated tours and investment, that a sustainable international audience will eventuate for any given artist. However it is important to understand what is at stake. While different business models certainly exist, the debased value of recorded music in the subscription streaming era has made live performance income crucial to a professional artists' financial survival. The size of the Australian market, where artists can play in just 3 major and 3 minor capital cities per tour, incurring substantial touring costs due to the relative remoteness of each city, cannot support a sustainable long-term professional music career. To truly thrive, Australian artists need to be global artists. At home, they are by-and-large hobbyists with day jobs.

The trickle-down effects of investing in music export development are widespread, including the development of world-class skills and knowledge across our music and cultural sector; amplifying through international channels the voices of Australian artists to combat the problem of 'discoverability'; and sharing Australian identity with the world.

Thank you,

