

**“Lost in the Noise”  
DIY Amateur Music  
Practice in a Digital Age**

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## **Abstract**

A fast expanding network of DIY music communities in the UK see digital technologies transforming ways in which part-time amateur musicians are able to collaborate creatively and form alliances, touring and distributing their music to an international audience and expanding the possibilities of a DIY approach to music making beyond its subcultural, micro-cultural past. Creative autonomy and control is sought to be retained and celebrated in shared non-commercial spaces run by the artists themselves.

With an interview based approach, this thesis explores the continued importance of gaining a local audience in a digital age, exploring amateur music activities in two very distinct cities. These reveal how local traditions of amateur practice continue to influence musicians and their shared venues, both in their revival and reinvention. How DIY is defined in a digital age is also explored with both observation and interview data revealing the continued legacy of Punk and how this plays a part in DIY's expanding definition. The approaches and motivations behind amateur musicians seeking out and establishing shared places for their DIY practice reveals a collective striving for creative control and the creative reimagining of disused urban spaces. Whilst there is a commitment to the upkeep of these spaces, there are also essential online activities shared by the amateur musicians that assist their own personal music promotion alongside the networking and expanding of the local DIY communities. This discussion also reveals how the musicians tackle periods of isolation from their peers, as increased opportunities to collaborate remotely with others changes the dynamics of bands and music scenes.

In a combining of interview and observational data, the thesis also explores in depth the handcrafting and DIY activities practiced and celebrated in the shared DIY spaces. There is then further discussion as to how the musicians manage their peer networks and how they stay connected to other musicians in their local areas. This reveals more relaxed, open networking tactics widely adopted by amateur musicians in a digital age. There is a continued discussion then as to how the musicians are able to sustain their DIY practices on a part-time basis, with a focus on the co-operative strategies for creating a sense of community, shared values and ambitions amongst the musicians. In conclusion, I draw upon the themes of material, digital, local and global practices, revealing how amateurs seek to protect both a micro-scale, exclusive aspect to their music and opportunities for face-to-face live performance for real engagement with their peers and audiences.

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## 1.0 Introduction

This thesis aims to address the following question:

How are amateur musicians and communities adopting DIY practices in a digital age?

Although both Sociological and HCI studies have explored the practices of amateur musicians from a plethora of subcultural communities and socio-economic backgrounds, there is still a limited understanding of the interconnecting of real world and online practices of amateur music communities in a digital age. Particularly the growing adoption of DIY practices and an expanding definition of 'DIY' music practice. For HCI, there is growing literature surrounding amateur play, DIY handcrafting and creative amateur communities.

This study seeks to further contribute to this literature by shedding light on the very distinct practices of DIY music both online and in the real-world. For Sociology, there is need for further understanding of the complexities of social interactions and music-making practices of amateur musicians, particularly as they adopt digital technologies that reshape traditions of DIY and amateur community practice. This research aims to contribute to both HCI and Sociological knowledge of the DIY musician operating in a digital age, and more broadly the complexities surrounding the practical and cultural approaches to amateur music making.

The main aims and objectives of this research are as follows. Firstly to achieve an in-depth understanding of the direct personal experiences of both local and remote amateur music practice in everyday life. The study of face-to-face and online coordination of local events will aim to provide a more accurate, up-to-date perspective of DIY amateur music practices as involving an essential interplay between local real-world and global online interactions. Through ethnographic work and in-depth interviewing I seek to explore how these coordinating and networking transformations affect creative DIY activities and relations between musicians on a local level, as well as the changing traditions of creative practices and meaning-making activities that play an integral part of amateur music identity and belonging to an amateur community.

I will now outline the contributions of this thesis to the fields of Sociology and HCI.

## **Contribution to Sociology**

### **Counteracting a 'lost in the noise experience'**

The thesis contributes to broader Sociological understandings of acts of resistance, revealing how DIY musicians collectively promote the physical exchanging and performing of music and that the activities involved can be observed as acts of 'everyday resistance' (Wooffitt, 1995). The reclaiming and reimagining of urban spaces by the DIY musicians in this study suggest an act of resistance to a sense of disconnect from the social and physical aspects of music. The spaces and events observed in our study allow for the preserving of face-to-face music practice and the crafting and sharing of material artefacts that aim to counteract a sense of lost identity and disconnect. Here the thesis also suggests an attempt by DIY musicians to protect the micro-scale and local production of amateur music and a celebrating of the ordinariness and organic aspects of amateur play and handcrafting. The findings of this thesis contribute to a Sociological observation of subcultures' acts of resistance through the appropriating of urban spaces and a desire shared amongst DIY musicians despite an embracing of open networking online to retain both a symbolic and practical value in making aspects of their DIY practice exclusive and hidden.

### **Exclusivity Capital**

In aiming to contribute to a Sociological understanding of micro-cultures, neo-tribes and subcultural practices, the thesis offers a unique perspective on the ways in which two distinct DIY communities are negotiating spaces and gaps within a dominant culture. This reveals a complex and multi-layered aspect to a DIY subculture; the embracing of open networking activities online amongst the DIY musicians suggests a more relaxed defining of DIY and the rules of its community membership, but on the other hand the thesis findings reveals aspects of more tribal behaviour and the seeking to maintain an exclusive 'in the know' identity.

The thesis contributes to a Sociological analysis of cultural (Bourdieu) and subcultural (Thornton) capital, suggesting that the DIY musicians in the study seek to challenge a music throwaway culture online by instead obtaining an *exclusivity capital* through their producing of one-off tangible artefacts and music events. The reported findings in the thesis reveal a producing and a maintaining of an exclusivity capital by the DIY musicians observed and interviewed, a form of cultural capital that encapsulates aspects of both Thornton's and Bourdieu's analysis. For the DIY musicians in this study, exclusivity acts as both a practical choice for sustaining



their part-time music practice and a way of creating a link with DIY's Punk heritage.

### **Global/Local: Keeping networks at a manageable size**

Seeking to contribute to existing Sociological observations of the practices of amateur musicians networking both online and in real world settings, the thesis reveals how there continue to be barriers to gaining entry to DIY circles despite our participants engagement with a wider amateur community and an 'all-inclusive' networking identity online. There is an observing in the thesis of how many of the participants in the study chose to reject some of the more informal public networking approaches online in order to retain an exclusivity to their knowledge and their unique live performances and real world activities. This suggests that for DIY musicians practicing in a digital age there is a balance to be struck between keeping their networks open but without threatening an exclusivity or uniqueness to their music practice. Contributing to Thornton's (1995) observations of club culture, the thesis also reveals how DIY spaces have distinct demographics despite an all-inclusive appearance to the outside observer.

### **Defining DIY in a digital age**

This thesis contributes to a Sociological discussion on how a democratisation of digital technologies impacts on the identities and activities of DIY communities and more broadly a defining of DIY practice. The thesis findings suggest that DIY identity can not be easily distinguished as either political, entrepreneurial or a leisure pursuit. The thesis observes a more free and fluid movement of individuals between differing music practices, tastes, online networking and the DIY spaces themselves. Participants in the study demonstrated different levels of contribution and motivations for their DIY practice. Contributing to the work of Shields (1992), this suggests that DIY music communities are more in temporal in nature which allows for a reconstructing of identities between sites of collective expression.

Aiming also to contribute to the past Sociological observations of Punk scenes, the thesis reveals a looser defining of DIY beyond a Punk heritage and a democratising of the opportunities to take part in DIY communities. However, despite a democratisation there continues to be rules to entry and a tactical maintaining of DIY networks that suggest a questioning of more recent Sociological observations of an 'all-inclusive' and a greater transparency in the networking of communities who are networking online (Bollier, Lessig).

## **Contribution to HCI**

### **Networking in real time and live performances**

The thesis builds on a growing HCI discussion surrounding the distinct needs and approaches of DIY musicians, particularly as they seek to network with other musicians both face-to-face and online. With a focus on the real time networking activities to immediately establish connections with others and the ways in which the DIY musicians speed up the coordinating of recording sessions and impromptu gigs, this thesis contributes to Cook's (2009) observations on creative communities and their attitudes towards participation and contribution.

Contributing to a broader HCI understanding of the ways in which networking technologies are adopted to support creative activities in real-world settings, this thesis explores the ways in which DIY musicians utilise real-time online networking to immediately connect with musicians they meet at live events. The findings of this study suggests how this approach adopted by the DIY musicians aims to minimise the disrupting of their face-to-face interactions. This contributes to research concerning live performances and online communication technologies (Benford et al., 2012; Aoki, 2005) and recommends how HCI might explore further more discreet forms of online networking to support rather than replace (Dourish, 2006) the social activities at gigs and live events.

With a focus on the innovation area of online networking tools for assisting the real-world social practices of amateur musicians, the thesis provides a unique insight into the ways which DIY musicians adopt existing networking tools to support their rapport building at face-to-face gatherings.

### **Face-to-face sharing and distribution of music**

In providing an alternative view of the social value of the physical sharing of music, this thesis aims to contribute to Ahmed's (2012) observations of the social value of the tangibility of music media. Building on Ahmed's discussion, the thesis draws attention to the ways in which DIY musicians are choosing to distribute and share their music in physical format in order to meet with their audiences face-to-face at live events and encourage their audiences to attend performances and discuss music with their peers.

With a consideration of the ways in which HCI might further support handcrafting activities, through both observation and interviewing the thesis provides a detailed account of the ways in which physical

music formats and artwork hold significant social value for the DIY musicians and their audiences.

### **Remote DIY recording activities**

The thesis contributes to current HCI research exploring the interplay of online with real-world interactions by looking further at the more subtle distinctions of these in DIY music practice. Exploring the complexities of these varied settings and social practices, this thesis aims to contribute to a growing HCI discussions surrounding leadership, balanced effort, status and transitioning roles of successful online collaborations (Settles, 2013; Bryant, 2005; Burke, 2011; Luther et al., 2010, 2013). The thesis also aims to contribute to McGrath's (2016) study of the distinct practices of amateur and pro-am music production, providing an insight into the ways in which DIY musicians are adopting social media alongside cloud sharing tools to replicate some of the interactions that frame face-to-face music production.

### **Amateur play and local music activities**

Outlining potential innovation areas to contribute to future HCI design, the thesis offers a detailed account of the nuances of local DIY music practice and suggests how HCI might further aid the preserving and maintaining of these nuances and ways in which amateur musicians are able to produce their music on a micro-scale. Offering a key example of a 'Modern DIY community', the thesis also aims to contribute to the observations of Kuznetsov and Paulo (2010) by detailing the ways in which DIY musicians establish shared creative spaces for creative rather than monetary gain.

With an aim to contribute to a growing HCI understanding of play (Benford, 2016; Hoare, 2014; Huizinga, 1955), this thesis explores how DIY musicians seek technologies that support the opportunity to produce unique impromptu performances and the creation of new styles of amateur play. Offering a detailed observation of the distinct practices of a group of DIY musicians, the thesis aims to contribute to a HCI understanding of creative improvisation, creative and hacker communities (Kuznetsov, 2010; Miller, 2007; Roibas, 2007; Rosner, 2009).

The following sections will provide an introduction to the key themes of the thesis.

## **Amateur music practice beyond the local**

With the aid of online music platforms and social media, amateur musicians are now able to quickly engage with a wider community of musicians beyond their local area. This has stimulated the growth of a network of amateur musicians seeking to establish local performance and recording spaces for amateur musicians with limited funds but the ambition to produce and distribute their music to a professional standard. In addition, as venues for live performance, these spaces form a network of interconnected venues for like-minded part-time musicians to perform at and establish connections with others, allowing artists to assist each other in tapping into international audiences without the aid of, or commitment to, a formal record contract.

Where once the part-time amateur musician might be limited to local collaborations with other musicians on a regular basis, digital technologies are enabling creative projects to be set-up online and contributed to asynchronously. As the online and offline practices of maker and DIY communities continue to expand the possibilities for creative amateurs, the study uncovers the unique activities of amateur musicians exchanging skills and resources to maintain diversity in local music scenes as well as expand their own creative scope. Online sharing means that the once hidden and underground DIY music practices and communities are more publicly visible. Collaborations are celebrated online, with the distributing of their music through music platforms and social media. For example, the setting up of DIY labels and split records showcasing two bands from different cities, released online with limited edition packages are some of the activities resulting from the networking between amateur musicians locally and then shared with a global audience.

## **Maintaining local ties whilst networking with a global amateur community**

Online connections forged between amateur musicians practicing in DIY recording studios and venues are also assisting a creative diversity in local music scenes. Online promotion and a digital presence not only widen the amateur musician's creative network and audience but also help to foster local face-to-face collaborations between bands and artists whilst promoting their local gigs and venues. In the case of the latter, the musicians attached to local DIY communities are keen to maintain direct contact with their audience, arranging tours across the world through their network of musicians and DIY venues.

Whilst the mainstream music industry considers new business models in a world of free music sharing, amateur musicians' adopting of free and accessible promotion and distribution channels online and democratised technologies can be seen to be assisting a decentralised model for music production and distribution. A promoting of music diversity and local identity is a shared pursuit amongst the amateur musicians within these DIY music networks, and now that local amateur music-making has a global audience, the autonomous DIY spaces run by amateur musicians aim to celebrate their distinct localities through the performance and recording techniques unique to their area. Our study considers how perhaps a focus on the organising of real-world events by the amateur musicians reflects how more than ever before there is a desire to ground their practices in physical objects and live events.

With the continued growth and accessibility of creative digital technologies, our study of a network of DIY communities reveals how amateur musicians are experimenting with the boundaries of micro-scale local music-making and expanding the scope of DIY. Seeking to gain international audiences whilst preserving a local identity in their live performance and recording techniques, these DIY networks exhibit a unique approach to music practices in a digital age.

## **Publications of this thesis**

The following publications have been accepted by peer-review and are closely related to the Data chapters of this thesis:

Hoare, M., Benford, S. & Jones, R., 2014. Coming in from the Margins : Amateur Musicians in the Online Age. Proc. CHI 2013.

Hoare, M., Benford, S., Greenhalgh, C. & Chamberlain, A., (2014) Doing it for themselves: the practices of amateur musicians and DIY music networks in a digital age. DMRN+9: Digital Music Research Network (EPSRC), December 2014, London.

## **Thesis reading guide**

As a guide to reading the thesis, Chapter Two provides a background to existing literature and Chapter Three outlines my chosen methodology. Chapters Four to Twelve are the data chapters exploring the central themes of the interviews with the amateur musicians. Acting as a conclusion to the thesis, Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen then draw upon all of the data themes discussed in both data chapters.

## **2.0 - Literature Review**

This chapter of the thesis outlines the theoretical treatment of the empirical phenomenon detailed in the data chapters - the impact of online digital technologies on DIY music, alternative approaches to music sharing and distribution, amateur musicians' approaches to adopting technologies, amateur music making and cultural identity, authenticity and celebrating the ordinary and creative entrepreneurialism.

## **3.0 - Methodology**

This chapter of the thesis provides an account of the reasoning behind the choice of ethnographic observation and interview methods and their relevance to the research question. The practicalities of the research are also detailed including the study settings, ethical consideration and data gathering strategies.

## **4.0 - Getting a local audience in a digital age**

This chapter of the thesis explores how the participants in our study were keen to discuss their everyday interactions with other amateur musicians on a local-level: continued face-to-face importance.

## **5.0 - What is DIY? Punk Traditions**

This chapter aims to provide historical background to the term DIY in music and its connection to a Punk heritage, ethos and value standpoint.

## **6.0 - Establishing a space**

This chapter deals with the face-to-face activities of the musicians and how these are fundamental to micro-scale music making.

## **7.0 - Getting online: Digital assisting the local**

This chapter covers the online promoting and distributing strategies of amateurs

## **8.0 - Tackling isolation**

Coordinating alongside other interests and identities was a topic highlighted during interviews, unknown before data collection. This chapter of the thesis explores further how amateur musicians are balancing their real-world and online activities and how this influences their creative practices.

## **9.0 - Activities in the space: Materiality values**

This chapter focuses on how whilst an embracing of the mainstream channels and formats of sharing their music and promoting may be seen as a contradiction of the DIY ethos, our participants revealed ways in which they combine elements of these tools with their own activities in DIY spaces to encourage their audiences and fellow musicians to collectively engage with music in live settings.

## **10.0 - Managing your network: staying connected to musicians locally**

This chapter reflects on the participant's revealing of their efforts to stay connected to musicians locally and the benefits and value of this.

## **11.0 - Open networks**

This chapter explores how the amateur musicians in our study adopt a more relaxed approach to networking through online activity. How a culture of sharing and openness amongst the amateur musicians is allowing for the continuing growth of a DIY community and the creative opportunities for those practicing DIY part-time.

## **12.0 Sustaining the space and DIY activity**

By drawing together the various aspects of DIY practice explored in the thesis, this chapter explores the amateur musicians' key motivations and challenges they face when seeking to sustain their part-time music practice whilst maintaining traditions of micro-scale music making.

## **13.0 Results and Contributions**

This chapter details the contributions to both Sociology and Computer Science, reflecting on the key themes and findings detailed in the data chapters.

## **14.0 Conclusion**

This chapter details the key outcomes of the research for both Sociology and Computer Science. There is also a consideration of the limitations of the thesis work and future challenges.

## **15.0 Appendix**

## **2.0 Literature Review: Making music in a digital age**

This chapter of the thesis outlines the theoretical treatment of the empirical phenomenon detailed in the data chapters. The 'Changing music industries' section explores current understandings of the impact of online digital technologies on DIY music and amateur music making, framing the discussion of the adopting of online tools in data chapters 7.0, 8.0, 9.0 and 10.0. The 'Alternative Economies' section looks at theoretical understandings of alternative approaches to music sharing and distribution, which is explored in data chapters 9.0 and 11.0. The 'Adopting Technologies' section explores existing understandings of amateur musicians' approaches to adopting technologies, supporting the data chapters dealing with the DIY musicians' approach to music-making and sharing their music with their audiences (data chapters 4.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0 and 12.0). The 'In search of the symbolic neighbourhood' section focuses on amateur music making in relation to cultural identity, framing the discussion of establishing spaces and in data chapters 4.0, 5.0 and 6.0. The concluding sections of this chapter explore authenticity, celebrating the ordinary and broader observations of creative entrepreneurialism, which are empirical phenomenon explored throughout the data chapters.

### **Changing music industries**

With the internet and global digital communication comes a new immediacy in music consumption and production, and arguably there is a new intensification of the relationship between musicians and their audience focusing, as Breen (2004) observes, on the musical and cultural needs rather than the orders of an 'advertising central'. As Williamson and Cloonan (2007) stress, the important question to be considered today is 'what it means to be creative in a capitalist economy' and explore further the lived experiences of musicians in this new digital economic climate. In addition to an emphasis on the 'social' in music promotion, production and consumption, technologies are also allowing for the cheap production and commercialising of art forms such as film and music, thus 'opening the door for local and regional artists' (Attali, 2009). Digital distribution is revolutionising the music industry, eliciting a new freedom for artists to achieve a global audience without needing to be chained to a label's remit and promotion team, to publish their work whenever they choose (rather than the standard, one single, album, another single, a tour etc.). This arguably takes music production back to its roots; a post-pop industry creation of music that is integral to the artist's expression and unfettered by a consumer-driven artificial simulation of a live sound or a desired



standardized 'clean' soundscape (See Lessig, 2008). Forde and Breen (2004) argue that the struggle over music industry technology will inevitably be about winning a battle over the high returns on distribution that have acted as the main profit base for the major companies. With DIY practice comes the opportunity for the democratisation of music distribution processes. Distribution has often been considered a primary reason for artists' decision to work for an established label (Dunn, 2012), giving the mainstream music industry an advantage for signing upcoming talent. In seeking a more diverse ecology of the musical economy (Leyshon, 2005), new music must be created and encouraged in a digital music network rather than purely a distribution of existing music. The internet can thus act as a medium in which a space for a democratised music industry can be founded and protected by both DIY musicians and their audiences (Leyshon, 2009).

Williamson and Cloonan (2007) put forward the argument that the term 'music industries' rather than 'the music industry' which implies a single homogenous unit is a more appropriate term to describe a thriving global music economy which demands new policies for artists and a redefining of existing notions of 'the music industry' which are now outdated (See Toynbee, 2000). Their research conducted in Scotland (Williamson et al, 2003) (Cloonan et al, 2004) explored the heterogeneous nature of music business and cultural production, touching on the issue of piracy as a key campaign currently pursued by 'single interest/industry representative organisations' which suggest that they are representing 'the music industry' to generate public and political support when in fact this campaign may only be in the interest of sections of the industries rather than the industries as a whole. They observed in Scotland how a perceived 'piracy epidemic' through online file sharing is not actually preventing the live music sector or reducing the value of music copyright ownership; rather it is a single sector of the music industries which is 'struggling to come to terms with the new business environment which has been created by technological and communications advances' (Williamson/Cloonan, 2007: 309). By considering the work of DIY collectives as representing a separate sector of the music industries, it is perhaps this battle to work under the constraints of an outdated view of a single 'music industry' (a collective mass) which is stimulating alternative forms of music business and creative control separate to a corporate profit-driven industry. These smaller industries are able to earn money through various activities; some areas of earnings might be recording, publishing, performing musical instruments and musical theatre as suggested by the British Invisibles report (See Overseas Earnings of the Music Industry report, 1995). It is the adoption of digital technologies to stimulate new ways of earning for semi-professional

musicians which perhaps elicits an opportunity for successful alternative forms of music business.

As the mainstream and independent music industries react to the shifting climate of music creation and consumption, observed in this reaction is an essential dichotomic relationship between fixity and fluidity as the culture industries consider the reshaping of their business ecologies, modes of distribution and production (Seely Brown, 2000). This is a revolution which not only influences the workings of the major record companies but also the cultural production carried out by semi-professional musicians on a local level. In an economy of fluid practices, not fixed products (Seely Brown, 2000), artists must increasingly turn to live performance as a main income earner (Barlow, 1994). Not only does this change the ways in which local subcultures and music scenes ensure their continual influence and existence but it also changes the relationship between the musician and their audience. With a move towards less tangible media (Jones, 2012) and a focus on the 'live' aspect of music consumption, the ways in which music tools and activities are adopted in a context by both DIY musicians and their audiences may shed light on the everyday interactions with this new media experience. Alongside live performance, Kibby observes how online chat forums and interactive media sharing sites enable a direct link between fans and performers, benefiting not only the fans but also the performer and the record company, 'in that it provides a connection to a central focus of the performer and the producer, the marketplace' (Kibby, 2000: 91). Opportunity for the fostering and supporting of taste communities through online networking highlights the interactive and hybrid nature of a digital music industry which can give DIY musicians and communities a platform for development (Benford, 2012).

Where the 'music industry' once reacted to the alternative forms of cultural production practiced by subcultures in the UK on a local scale, there is now an equal reaction between the two; digital technology (social media, online recording) has challenged the once hegemonic barrier which dictated the communications between small-scale music performance and major labels' signing of artists to ensure global distribution, international promotion and record sales. It is arguably no longer necessary for an artist to be signed to a major label to achieve international success and audience expansion; these are things that can be achieved with accessible do-it-yourself technologies. This encourages the adoption of fluid practices of distribution and promotion of music by both semi-professional musicians and the large record corporations; with there no longer being a focus on the commodification of music and the selling of records (fixed products) like cans of soup there is an acquired freedom for the artist. Beer (2008) comments on the decentralized

distribution observed in the crowd-sourced material on YouTube and other websites, and the democratization of music distribution toward decentralized models 'where anyone can be heard' (Beer, 2008: 223). Reflecting on the use of media interfaces as tools of experience intensification, Stage (2012) observes how videos recorded by audience members represent Jenkin's (2007) "participatory culture", in which non-professional individuals are able to produce media and move it between varied media and media platforms. As Jones (2012) points out, the industry has 'its own vernacular accounts of fan, market and audience', and as new media influences a more fragmented audience it is the practices of DIY music on a local level which might give a once faceless, often hidden (Finnegan, 2007) music practice in the eyes of mainstream industry a stronger voice in a virtual music market. As Florida and Jackson (2009) have suggested, the major record labels whilst having scale and scope advantages have also suffered from 'inertia and inability to respond to new genres and sounds', thus leading to smaller organisations like DIY having a strategic advantage (Florida/Jackson, 2009: 319) as we will explore further in this study.

The two once contradictory music producers are now reading off the same page and can perhaps discuss the future of the music industry productively as a more collaborative effort. Where the major record companies are turning their effort towards digital distribution services and forming alliances with other large companies in the process (Hesmondhalgh, 2002), micro-scale DIY collectives are finding creative ways in which the free streaming and peer-to-peer music sharing sites and services can assist the growth of niche taste communities and scenes.

Within the music industries digital technologies are shaping both local and global processes of production and distribution, and with the global trading of ideas and communications between both producers and consumers the former is often converted into the latter. This can now be observed on a micro-cultural production scale as alternative and niche forms of music style and production practiced in towns and cities across the UK are instantly sharing their music with a wider (global) audience by streaming their music online.

As both audiences and artists take on mutual roles as both consumers and producers, it is the digital world of music sharing, communication and distribution which is arguably allowing for this public re-evaluation of a music industry that recognises local level DIY collective practice. Moore (2007) suggests how a do-it-yourself ethic evident in Punk and alternative Rock scenes can allow resistance and empowerment to create a unique form of 'public sphere' (Calhoun, 1992; Habermas, 1991) where individuals are able to organise themselves and express rebellious perspectives about

key social issues (Gelder, 2007: 97). McKay explores how DIY can combine party and protest, with DIY protest movements such as Reclaim the Streets, 'breaking down the barriers between art and protest' and creating new forms of creative resistance (McKay, 1998: 129).

Past sociological literature has observed DIY music such as the Punk scene of the 1970s as a working-class rebellion and a subcultural community with a political message, when in fact further research such as Frith and Horne's (1987) study revealed the naivety of these assumptions (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Although some of these varied understandings may appear outdated today, there may still be elements of the kinds of subcultural resistance or counter-hegemony observed in the past evident in the practices of DIY musicians and groups as we will explore. However the current democratisation of a music industry does not necessarily mean a disinterest in profit amongst DIY musicians as previously observed particularly in past DIY Punk labels in the UK (See Dunn, 2012).

With DIY perhaps challenging the generalised and outdated use of the term 'music industry' and allowing for micro-scale, profit-making cultural production, digital technologies are allowing for a more democratised form of music consumption which gives both the artist and their audience a voice in *how* music is consumed. Stating that, 'it is not what you say, but how you say it' in arguing that a progressive cultural politics is achieved via position rather than content, Benjamin (1999) argued that a progressive cultural product is one which helps transform consumers into producers, or 'collaborators'. Doing things on your own terms, once championed by the Punk and Indie movements of the late 20th Century has now progressed in the digital age (Savage, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2008).

## **Alternative economies**

This networking activity pursued by DIY groups and artists can be related back to the ideas of the 'Network Society' theorized by Castells (2011); observed in the practices of resistance groups there is an underlying challenging of the structures of capitalism, and a desire to connect with other resistance groups by having a common goal for their cause. This for example can be observed the growing anti-globalisation and Occupy movements. Through DIY networking activity, there is a breakdown of an 'us' and 'them' distinction between the artist and their audience which has arguably dictated the functioning of the mainstream music industry over the last century (a more fragmented music industry has led to a questioning of this dichotomy by audiences, labels and artists). This can be observed as a collective value and goal to encourage increased transparency in

music production and its industries as DIY groups choose to publicly share aspects of their networking activities and the ways in which they sustain their practices. A recent widely reported example of this would be the decision made by female artist, Zoe Keating to share her revenue model online. This is an example of perhaps an attempt by DIY collectives as well as individual artists to make the industry more transparent and democratic, wishing to share more with fans and other artists. In addition as this study will explore there is a communal sharing of resources, events organisation and digital visual/audio distributions is an attempt to create a network of DIY communities and artists across the UK, drawing links between multiple genres and music scenes practicing across the UK.

With a '*capitalist urbanisation*' of city areas, Harvey (2012), Hardt and Negri (2000) argue that it is a cultural commons of shared social practices and modes of sociality which is threatened. The reclaiming of urban spaces by groups of individuals aims to reverse or challenge a process of commoditisation which excludes marginalised social groups from taking part and contributing to cultural practices and political forums. Whilst providing a platform for their own part-time music as Finnegan (2007) observed, the DIY spaces also offer creative resources and a non-commercial hangout for the public to meet, discuss local issues and network in a space that is not defined by profit gain. This encourages a participatory culture and a breaking down of the boundaries that typically define the roles of producer, entertainer and customer in a commercial venue context;

*'For businesses operating on open networks, it is a mistake to regard people merely as customers; they are collaborators and even co-investors. As more companies learn to interact closely with their customers, it is only natural that conversations about the product or service become more intimate and collaborative. The roles of the "consumer" and "producer" are starting to blur, leading to what some business analysts call the "prosumer" and the "decentralized co-creation of value' (Bollier, 2009: 247)*

Attempts to encourage members of the community to take part in the activities within the space (with the lack of a defined stage area, for example, opening up interpretation of the space for those entering it) can be compared to the defining of a commons by Bollier et al. as a 'social analogue'; centred around a system of acts of reciprocity, gift exchange and perhaps also creating a shared sense of ownership by getting both audiences and visiting musicians to share a sense of responsibility to protect the space and its moral principles. This creates a 'community of trust and common purpose' (Bollier, 2009: 140).

## Adopting technologies

Technology can have an impact on both audiences' and producers' perceptions of musical authenticity and what can be considered as a legitimate method for both creative expression and production. Born's (1995) study of IRCAM highlights the relationship between music and science in the experimentation with technology in music production which has historically been considered 'modernist avant-garde', observing its failure to shake off its elitist high-culture audience and identity. This study draws attention to a crucial relationship between technology and music in the practice and values of musicians and the 'music industry' as a whole. Recent HCI interaction research has considered how the use and appropriation of technologies can be seen as shaped by locality and users' social identity (See Foster et al, 2012), influencing the study of collective musical performances to inform interface design processes for music instruments and performance tools (See Muller- Rakow, NIME 2012). It is the norms and values attached to established methods of social interaction and cultural production which can influence how and when a technology is accepted by a community. However, as Becker (1982) reflects on the conventions which can govern an 'art world', technologies go through a period of review by the people producing art, and it is their use of earlier agreements and conventions which can then 'limit the choices an artist can make even before the artist has thought of making any choices. They make certain materials available and outlaw certain practices.' (Cluley, 2012: 203). It is these conventions which ultimately shape the 'art world', but which can make any challenging of its practices a difficult task. DIY musicians in a digital world are confronted with existing norms of production established by the mainstream music industries and an evolving socio-technological climate for the music consumer which has already questioned in particular the validity of existing commodity exchange conventions.

As audiences become more dispersed and diversify, pinning down the qualities of a music fan and their consumer activity becomes an increasingly arduous but crucial task for both an individual musician practicing in DIY and the larger companies which dominate the music industry. The recent expansion of the live music industry has forced musicians and record labels to reconsider the consumer patterns of the average music fan as the physical product may no longer be a main source of income for artists. In an increasingly globalised and uncertain world, it can be argued that when people go to gigs they want to experience direct connection with artists and other fans and to be introduced to the musician's world. This then makes music consumption and experience feel more authentic to the audience member, with songs performed then acting as a musical map for

musicians to evoke the places in which their own inspirations and aspirations have derived. This live performance communication with the artist is an investment made by the audience; to understand that artist's voice and message in its natural state. With the introduction of crowd-sourced data and the sharing of live experience through social media (YouTube etc.), the consumer is now also the producer. Where the music industry once sold a lifestyle to consumers, the DIY movement instead promotes a more diverse appreciation of music as a social commodity but it also adopts some of the traditional mainstream music industry functions of supply and demand and tangible nostalgic experience (limited edition CD's and vinyl etc.). The distinctions once observed between the producers of culture and their consumers is becoming a contested practice as consumers play an increasing role in the production side of music promotion and broadcasting and puts musicians in direct contact with their fans (see Leadbeater, Miller, 2004). This transformation enabled by the advancement of digital technologies can be viewed as a democratisation of the music industry; no longer constrained by the conventions of record production defined by the mainstream record labels (Hesmondhalgh, 2008; Savage, 2005) musicians are able to control and adapt their own approaches to performance, production and distribution to suit their audience.

Describing digital musical instruments as hybrid devices, Theberge (1997) argues that;

'...popular musicians who use new technologies are not simply the producers of pre-recorded patterns of sound (music) consumed by particular audiences; they, too, are *consumers* – consumers of technology, consumers of pre-recorded sounds and patterns of sounds that they rework, transform, and arrange into new patterns' (Theberge, 1997: 3).

Theberge notes that innovations in musical technology not only alter the structure of musical practice and concepts of what music is and can be, but they also give musicians and musical practices a new relationship with consumer practices and consumer society as a whole. Alongside this there is the current digital economy driven concept of consumers turning into producers which can also be considered as a contributor to the current pursued democratisation of music through both live and digital practices. No longer can the roles and identities of consumers and producers be so clearly defined and separated in the processes of cultural production (Leadbeater/Miller, 2004).

Toynbee challenges Williams' (1996/83) focus on technology as a matter of function, claiming that, 'technology and the social and cultural are always imbricated' (Toynbee, 2000: 99). Toynbee adds

that as a discursive formation, it has often been the case that new forms of technology within music have been validated within a specific, and normally a genre-based music makers' culture. These processes can often produce counter-discourses of technology ('fooling with the knobs') and this is how musicians can collectively in their music activity imagine technologies into existence. This is perhaps all too evident in the current practices in DIY, where semi-professional or aspiring musicians are gaining both influence and autonomy through the increasing accessibility of DIY digital recording technologies and services (Brooker et. al, 2016; McGrath, 2016).

Investigating the Dance music scene in the UK in the late 1980s, Hesmondhalgh (1998) discusses the appropriation of Do-It-Yourself inexpensive digital technology which enabled British musicians to promote new genres of Dance and form the basis of an 'independent' sector of British Dance music industry. This leads to an observation of post-house Dance music as linked to a 'politics of production'. Production costs for Dance music were low, encouraging the creation of local Dance scenes and the ability for musicians with a 'special subcultural credibility' to tap into a particularly active audience who are 'hungry for product and prepared to seek out information about new styles, performers and record labels' (Hesmondhalgh, 1998: 237). A subcultural capital achieved through a decentralized local music scene can thus be converted into economic capital (Thornton, 1995).

## **In search of the symbolic neighbourhood**

Reflecting on the social construction of the sacred, Lynch (2012) observes the 'allure' of social institutions as key social structures and spaces but that these do not solely produce a central value system. There is an idealistic 'sacred centre' to a value system consisting of charismatic movements and individuals who aim to challenge when elites and institutions make mistakes and disrupt certain institutional conventions. Lynch observes how these idealistic values tend to suggest a 'utopian potentiality'. This is perhaps currently observable in the activities of DIY, maker and hacker communities who question the dominance of professional industries and their monopoly over creative and economic practices (Hoare, 2014).

In the case of DIY spaces alongside hacker and maker ones, there is a preoccupation to create free communities and public spaces that are not 'occupied by the interests of the dominant elites and their networks', and importantly as Castells argues make their practices visible in places of social life rather than being limited to the internet (Castells, 2015);



‘Often, buildings are occupied either for their symbolism or to affirm the right of public use of idle, speculative property...The control of space symbolizes the control over people’s lives...In our society, the public space of the social movements is constructed as a hybrid space between the Internet social networks and the occupied urban space: connecting cyberspace and urban space in relentless interaction, constituting, technologically and culturally, instant communities of transformative practice’. (Castells, 2015: 11)

This can be related to the observations of working-class subcultures by Hall et al. (Gelder, 2007) and how they ‘*win space for the young*’ where social rituals are collectively practiced to form a shared identity.

In these spaces there is the ability to influence the ways in which technology can be manipulated to suit particular needs of communities, their uses and how they may be further developed (Baym). As Baym (2010: 45) suggests, it is the ways in which both the possibilities and constraints that technologies create and how these are then ‘taken up, rejected, and reworked in everyday life’ which must be explored and which this study has attempted to shed light on in the case of amateur musicians.

‘Small-scale or restricted production if described as having a relatively high degree of autonomy, but never full autonomy; mass production is ‘heteronomous’ - subject to outside rule - but never fully so.’ (Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 214).

Reflecting on Bourdieu (1983, 1984), Hesmondhalgh (2006) reflects on how he often observes in his writings of small-scale production as oriented towards the production of ‘pure’ artistic products, whereas mass productions is oriented towards the making of ‘commercial’ cultural goods. But most importantly for the analysis of DIY musician practice, it is Bourdieu’s discussion of small-scale production as ‘production for producers’. By rejecting the market, artists are able to obtain a degree of autonomy with potentially positive results providing the pre-conditions for a ‘full creative process...and ultimately resistance to the “symbolic violence” exerted by the dominant system of hierarchization’ (Benson, 1999: 465). Small-scale production perhaps observed still in the DIY scene dependent on a local following and affordable performance space, involves as Hesmondhalgh (2006) observes, ‘very low levels of economic capital, and very high levels of field-specific symbolic capital’(Hesmondhalgh, 2006: 215). This is how past DIY activities amongst distinct music subcultures in the UK have been understood as possessing the opposite qualities discovered in the mass cultural production carried out by the mainstream music industry. For example, Toynbee explores the alternative network practices within the Dance music

subculture, and the identity and image of Dance labels as an aspect of a 'signal system' (Williams, 1981) enabling subcultural recognition and linking Dance music producers 'under one banner for common aesthetic ends' (Toynbee, 2000: 171). Here, symbolic capital is favoured over economic capital as a cultural commodity which can determine the authentic quality of a local-level music scene and its practice.

Bourdieu (1983, 1984) defined three types of capital; economic which comprises an individual's sources of income, cultural which is obtained through education, knowledge of the arts and access/possession of cultural objects, and social capital which is defined by both the quantity and quality of social networks and relationships. Blasius and Friedrichs (2008) argue that central to Bourdieu's theory of these forms of capital is the forming and maintenance of a 'social space, which typically has two dimensions, described either as "economic capital" and "cultural capital" or as "composition of economic and cultural capital" and "capital volume"' (Blasius/Friedrichs, 2008: 27) (Bourdieu, 1984). Exploring neighbourhood as an indicator of class, Blasius and Friedrichs (2008) investigated how individuals go out in search of a neighbourhood which reflects their occupational status, their income, their lifestyles, friends etc.; neighbourhood is pursued and found with respect to their capital volume.

## **'Authenticity' and celebrating the ordinary**

Authenticity has acted as a key concept within empirical research on music communities, particularly for studying issues such as identity politics and the notion of subcultures in relation to diverse music practices. Empirical studies have focused in particular on a sense of authenticity in music performance and the collective construction of what is considered authentic and what is not which involves a constant negotiation process between performers, audiences and the music industry. In discussion of the social truths of practice in Jazz and Rock performance, Hennion suggests that it is the physical presence which defines the music and this is aimed at the social authenticity rather than at the musical authenticity of performance' (Hennion, 1997: 427). Performance authenticity is thus defined as a social and physical experience, established through a mutual interplay between the performer and the audience. Within DIY music practice, issues of authenticity encompass both the artist's physical (live) and digital (recorded) performances as well as the ways in which they package and distribute their music. McLeod's (1999) empirical study of Hip-hop culture adopted a linguistic-oriented method to analysing how authenticity is used in communities threatened with assimilation. By focusing on how Hip-hop artists

preserve a sense of Hip-hop's past or roots through collective use of lyrical phrases amongst artists, authenticity is revealed to be a discursive construction which can culturally distinguish a music community.

However, as well as a method for artists who may pursue ways to hold onto a distinct style of performance, authenticity is also a socially-constructed concept. Grazian (2004) states that,

'Sociologists and historians remind us that authenticity is not an objective quality inherent in things, but rather an argument that people make about the things in the world that they value' (Grazian, 2004: 138).

In addition to McLeod's observation of how authenticity can act as a shared practice method, recent Sociological discussions of music identities have defined authenticity as whether the music itself is representative of an artist's audience and also 'whether it strikes a chord with those who hear it', as Redhead and Street noted in their theoretical discussion of how a Folk ideology is collectively deployed by Folk artists to justify that music is connected with some notion of 'the people' (Redhead/Street, 2008: 179). Recent ethnographic studies have explored the appropriating of non-local music styles into localised forms of expression and how authenticity is achieved in these reworking of genres through their performance style and lyrical content (Bennett, 1999). In relation to this, Moore (2002) interprets authenticity as ascribed to, rather than inscribed in, a performance as it is defined and fought for by both audiences and performers within a cultural and historical context. Moore states that whether a performance is authentic, then, depends on who 'we' are, giving an ambiguity then to the locating of a sense of 'authenticity' if it cannot be found in the music itself (Moore, 2002: 210). In defining a 'first person authenticity' in live music performance, Moore theorizes how, '...the audience becomes engaged not with the acts and gestures themselves, but directly with the originator of those acts and gestures' (Moore, 2002: 214). The audience is thus in direct communication with the originator (the artist), and the originator is then able to give the impression that their performance is one of integrity.

Peterson observes how central to the creative industries' work is a manufacturing of authenticity; their management and defining of public impressions of authenticity. Exploring country music as a case study, Peterson examined the various organizational processes which take place within the cultural industries in the manufacturing of meaning, exploring the institutionalization of country music which shaped its commercial development as a popular music genre which he observes as a 'fabrication of authenticity' (Peterson, 1997: 10). In

relating this observation to Kruse's argument that, '...without dominant, mainstream musics against which to react, independent music cannot be independent', alternative or independent music artists and labels have often been defined as existing as a counter-hegemonic reaction to the autonomous or homogenous mainstream (Kruse, 2003: 149). As Kruse uses Indie as an example of how alternative musics are constantly engaged in both an economic and ideological struggle in which its 'outsider' status is re-examined or re-interpreted, it could be argued that any form of music practice (such as DIY) which is defined by the cultural industries as counter-mainstream demands to be described as the 'other'. This idea can be related to Redhead and Streets' interpretation of the notion of the 'sell-out' in Folk communities; a term used when an artist has lost their authenticity within the Folk collective when they turn their back to their counter-mainstream status and fail to be in touch with 'real' people and 'real' experiences (Redhead/Street, 2008: 179). On the other hand, with the free digital distribution of music available to musicians through digital DIY services, artists may no longer be considered a 'sell-out' as observed by Redhead and Street if they are able to distribute their work themselves rather than having to move to a larger label to take advantage of their distribution techniques.

Authenticity as a value to artists can also involve how their music is produced, performed and distributed, with perhaps a desire to achieve a more stripped-down authentic sound to their audiences. In a world of *digital cleansing* and sound purification, music fans and listeners hark back to the days when a band would produce a demo, or perform a song for the first time, 'warts and all'. There is a quality in mistakes or happy accidents which perhaps gives the current DIY scene an aura of integrity. In terms of live as well as recorded music, audiences expect performances to be real and 'genuine expressions of self rather than a charade performed merely for the audience's benefit' (Grazian, 2004: 138). This puts a social and symbolic value on authenticity in the practices of music production and consumption. As is arguably the case with current DIY music collective activity, the expression of passion, energy and having a message can often be considered as a more important quality to a music recording or performance than any kind of technical ability (See Moore, 2007). An opportunity to convert this cultural/symbolic capital into economic capital is something which has been pursued historically by both mainstream and independent labels. By exploring the work of A&R managers through qualitative research, Zwaan and Bogt (2009) reveal a link between authenticity and the obtaining of economic capital in the mainstream music industry, stating in their interview findings that, 'what makes good music remained vague, as respondents indicated that good music is "innovative", "authentic" and "unique" (Zwaan/Bogt, 2009: 96). Therefore, getting a 'feeling' at a live performance is an important quality test for individuals working for mainstream

record labels, making authenticity a fundamental component to an artist's selling power. However, Zwaan and Bogt also report on how their respondents also state that most importantly, the music should have the potential to be appreciated by a large audience, which is perhaps not necessarily a quality pursued by DIY musicians who are able to tap into a global niche audience through music sharing and networking services online but seek to nurture and maintain their local close-knit audiences.

The current opportunity for local level cultural production through DIY music activity develops the role of authenticity, how it is pursued and consumed and its value as a method. Moore (2007) argues that, 'fields of cultural production tend to be fractured between two types of logic, logics that shape how art, literature, or drama is created but also what audiences come to expect of artists and how critics and institutions confer legitimacy' (Moore, 2007: 440). Authenticity as a method for artists and cultural production creates a system of norms and expectancies which legitimize their work and social position. Thus, an '*art for art's sake*' standpoint adopted by musicians can conflict with an economic capital logic which measures success through commercial sales and recognition by established institutions. Moore (2007) uses the authenticity practices of Jazz musicians (see Becker) as an example of how an alternative subculture is developed where status and symbolic capital is measured by an artist's autonomy from the commercial music market. Hesmondhalgh advocates that the use of the term 'artists' suggests that that these individuals are different from the rest of us and that they are 'involved in some mystically special form of creativity' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 4). Using the term 'symbolic creators' instead, Hesmondhalgh (2002) focuses on the manipulation of symbols for the purposes of entertainment as a key form of creativity (see Williams, 1958).

The Jazz musicians which Moore (2007) observes may often rely on a 'fetishisation' (Hesmondhalgh, 2002) of their work by industries, media and audiences which puts an economic as well as a symbolic value on their cultural work, even when that work is not necessarily original. In this interconnected relationship between economic and symbolic capital in the defining of 'authenticity' and 'art', as Becker observes, the Jazz musicians would never be able to escape commercialism or 'square audiences' entirely because they rely on their economic investment in order to survive (Moore, 2007; Becker).

It is this conflict between economic and cultural capital pursuit which defines an understanding of authenticity and artistic integrity in music production. Inevitably, within authenticity lie elements of both exclusivity and inclusivity. The artist can choose to bare all to the listener through melody and lyric and may only successfully do this in one place or one moment in time, but he or she will also invite the

listener as a critic to enter that performance and interpret it in their own way. These performances can elicit a shared discourse of authenticity and integrity between artists and their audiences (Bennett, 1999). Through this mutually established relationship within a DIY scene comprising of fans and other artists, a musician can create their own world and environment. This can be observed as a breaking down of the barriers which define an 'us' and 'them' interaction between the artist and the audience which has perhaps dictated the ways in which a music industry depending on record sales depended upon. Alongside this by challenging a myth of bohemian, counter-hegemonic, not for profit community, the DIY scene can achieve recognition within the existing music industry as a movement which achieves economic capital without that being at the expense of musical authenticity or artistic integrity.

The contested role of authenticity in DIY musician's activity can be related to the work of young fashion designers researched by McRobbie (1998), who 'rationalise their own economic fragility by seeing their market failure as a sign of artistic success, or at least artistic integrity' (McRobbie, 1998: 6). There is a conflict here between artists' shared concepts of authenticity and the pursuit of economic success, as if a common belief system portrayed that the two are inherently exclusive from each other. In terms of a democratisation of the music industry, the recent development of a 'name your price' philosophy observed in the online selling of music by both mainstream (Radiohead) and independent musicians (Cloudkicker) demonstrates how digital DIY can enable an artist to reach out to a global audience but with a democratic approach to setting the value of their music. Returning to Grazian's observation of Jazz musicians, it has been observed how musicians are able to seek active cultural production as a strategy employed collectively by artists wishing to pursue authenticity as a 'commodity to be manufactured, exploited and consumed' (Grazian, 2004: 139).

In viewing DIY as a music subculture with perhaps an 'alternative' genre identity, it can be compared to other 'non-commercial musics' such as Folk, as defined by Anderson (1986). The term 'selling out' has been discussed in different music contexts such as Folk to describe 'a loss of authenticity, itself signalled by a failure to be in touch with "real" people and "real" experiences' (Redhead/Street, 2008: 179). Similarly it has been observed as a phrase adopted in Hip-hop, Dance and Indie subcultures to describe an artist who rejects the principles of a particular music community or genre's principles, move from an independent to a mainstream label or favour fame and fortune (McLeod, 1999).

In 'Culture is Ordinary' (1958), Williams claims that culture is 'ordinary';

'Every human has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressure of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land' (54)

Culture is ordinary in that it is produced by the everyday interactions and experiences of the common man, rather than solely deriving from the arts or literature. Therefore, it could be argued that DIY aims to *celebrate the ordinary* through its handcrafted, 'warts and all' approach to music consumption and production. This is an embracing of what might in higher arts be considered the humdrum or the degenerate. The ordinary or everyday thus becomes the non-ordinary, as it challenges the typical mass-consumed and uniform digital release or digital sonic experience.

## Entrepreneurialism

Gill and Pratt (2008) reflect on how the free labour of the digital economy and networking activity can sometimes be a 'compulsory sociality' (Gregg, 2008) required to survive in a field; at other times it may be pleasurable "hanging out" (Pratt, 2006)' (Gill/Pratt, 2008: 18). DIY musicians are arguably defining their cultural production activity through digital networking technologies, but how do they make the distinction between work and play? Perhaps there is a question here of the defining of music activity as 'work', 'semi-work' or 'non-work'.

Networking and collaborative technologies in particular are increasingly adopted by both professional and semi-professional musicians as a method to obtain a sense of artistic authenticity which can then be converted into information, symbolic, cultural and economic capital. In considering the opportunities offered to DIY musicians who use networking technologies, we might ask as Jones (2012) suggests, 'where music is, where it is being taken (and by whom), and where it belongs' (Jones, 2012: 227).

Describing DIY communities as 'cultural entrepreneurs' who operate as freelancers at the interstices of a flexible labour market and self-driven cultural production, Scott (2012) reflects on the multi-skilled and flexibility of DIY artists who are committed to producing cultural goods with or without pay. Describing these musicians as 'relatively sans economic capital', Scott perhaps overlooks the current interactions in the digital world between audiences, promoters and musicians who are able to attach a DIY ethic to their cultural production whilst gaining a regular income and media attention

through independent production and self-promotion. It is the adopting of networking, collaborative and performance technologies by DIY artists which encourages a new way of working with cultural intermediaries and a potential grassroots transformation of the music industry as a whole. As cultural entrepreneurs, DIY artists and promoters can generate a 'buzz' (Caves, 2000) without the aid of mainstream intermediaries with financially/culturally rewarding outcomes for the DIY musicians as word of an upcoming scene can spread rapidly through online music communities and social-networking sites. Provided that artists have sufficient social capital to form DIY networks, with the aid of digital technologies a musician no longer necessarily needs to be known by the industry to expand their audience (Hoare, 2014). Technology adoption also has consequences for the ways in which work can be carried out and a community sustained alongside other work commitments for part-time musicians, with as McRobbie (2002) suggests, work replacing 'the social' for many young cultural entrepreneurs. In terms of a move towards 'the social' in media production, as audiences become dispersed and diasporic (Jones, 1998), does mass media shy away from the 'mass' and become more personal? (Jones, 2012; Seely Brown, 2000). This inevitably has consequences for existing local music communities which rely on free DIY tools to sustain their activities.

Despite the increased opportunity for DIY expansion and profit through digital distribution, as Neff, Wissinger and Zukin (2005) point out, creative work can still involve an element of entrepreneurial investment and risk. Exploring the work of fashion models and new media workers (2005), they observe how workers in both fields of work are able to visualize how their own part of the production process fits into both production and consumption of the final product, thus making them feel that they are creative individuals. This then leads to a subjective feeling that they 'own' the product and control their labour. The same could be observed in DIY musicians' commitment to self-promotion and distribution as part of a DIY collective that is forming and functioning outside of the mainstream music industry.

'To have seemingly circumvented "unhappy work" and to have come upon a way of earning a living without the feeling of being robbed of identity is a social phenomenon worthy of sociological attention' (McRobbie, 2010: 521).

The utilising of social capital which DIY musicians are able to attain through local events organisation and performance can be converted into economic capital to sustain their creative livelihood.



Observing creative work and an increasingly youthful workforce encouraging a decline of workplace democracy which is replaced by a 'network sociality', McRobbie (2010) touches on the 'second wave' of cultural activity which has been defined by 'de-specialization', 'intersection with Internet working', the 'utilization of creative capacities provided by new media and by the rapid growth of multi-skilling in the arts field'. What makes this cultural activity development thrive is the influence of a rapid capitalization of 'the cultural field as small scale previously independent micro-economies of culture and the arts find themselves the subject of intense commercial interest' (McRobbie, 2010: 517).

As these forms of employment attached to this burgeoning creative industry sectors are being adopted, past expectations of cultural work are no longer considered by youthful creative labourers who are working within a highly 'individuated' workforce and challenging the social norms of how work can or might be conducted. McRobbie (2010) views this individualisation as a way of encouraging individuals to become their own 'micro-structures', requiring 'intensive practices of self-monitoring' or reflexivity. DIY musicians within collectives can be described as the freelance, casualized and project-linked workforce which McRobbie discusses, who are having to find new ways of working with a 'new cultural economy' as they can no longer rely on the conventional working patterns associated with art worlds. As these individuals become their own 'enterprise', they must take on several projects with different companies at any one time in order to sustain their livelihood.

DIY as a site for 'cultural entrepreneurialism' (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999) may however provide mechanisms for organization and the development for workplace politics to develop through physical and digital networking between musicians which McRobbie argues may no longer be achievable in a realm of 'speeded up work'. New culture industries influenced by the entrepreneurial youth culture days of Punk or Dance/rave culture of the early 1990s (Thornton, 1995) as McRobbie adopts as a case study can involve 'self-designated titles' such as 'events organiser' and a way of organizing music by finding economical venues for events, negotiating with local authorities and police, and adopting a cultural entrepreneurial spirit. Networking between artists today is a development of this entrepreneurial endeavour which employs the 'social' work of hanging out with other artists and key individuals within an industry as a key aspect of their creative labour. Ethnographic studies have recently highlighted the ordered characteristics of shared music practice equally involving both socialising and music making, as Tolmie et al. explore as key to the running of Irish Music sessions (Tolmie/Rouncefield, 2016). McRobbie observes how 'young people have exploited opportunities around them', in particular their use of

new media technology and the experience of 'club culture sociality', with its attendant skills of networking and 'selling the self' (McRobbie, 2010: 521). This inevitably encourages the creation of new opportunities for earning a living in the cultural sector, brought about by the activities of these cultural entrepreneurs. Toynbee (2000) highlighted the essential sociality of Dance music subculture which made it an alternative to established cultural institutions (such as the Rock gig) and Dance music networks' activity encouraged the formation of new kinds of 'equitable and democratic social organization' (Toynbee, 2000: 149) (Laing, 1997). Agency plays a fundamental part in the dispersed networks and flows of information in Dance music and it is the instrumental logic of accumulation which Toynbee argues has been resisted. Perhaps the entrepreneurial spirit within new culture industries of adopting the social aspects of networking as a part of their work as McRobbie touches on, as well as the democratic social organization of Dance music networks which Toynbee highlights can both be observed in the current networking techniques shared by DIY communities, adopted as a way of sustaining a local scene without needing to adopt a 'bottom-line' ethos often observed in the mainstream music industries, as well as achieving a sense of artistic integrity through mutual appreciation and being able to understand and tailor for your audience by 'keeping it fresh'. This in a sense is an informational society or interconnected networks for capital accumulation as Castells (1994) conceptualises in the essential activities of global networking, blogging and distribution, but at the same time a close-knit community as these global processes are used with the subsequent intention to keep your audience or taste community 'tight' in order to know and provide for them.

## **3.0 Methodology**

### **Approaching an observation of amateur music practice**

This chapter details the empirical consideration and practical approach to carrying out the chosen research methods of interviewing and observing participants in relation to their live music and online practices. In addressing the research question, the consideration of a methodological approach to this study has taken into account how amateur music practice has gone through many transformations and the expansion of digital technologies to assist their pursuits in an online age plays a significant role in the reshaping of amateur musicians' social practices.

The researching of local music making requires an exploration of the ways in which social context plays a role in the motivations and inspirations behind amateur music activity. An epistemological assumption of the interrelation of identity, tradition and performance inherent in the production of amateur music and the founding of DIY communities arguably relies on a research strategy that identifies the mechanisms of shared local amateur performance. This requires a methodological consideration of social construction, particularly in relation to the importance of shared cultural practices.

In focusing my observation of amateur music practice in a specific social context and community who define their activity as DIY, I aim to achieve a further understanding of the *lived experiences* of amateur musicians by looking at those individual's own points of view. To consider how the everyday can also potentially become a site of resistance, I must focus on how local identity and social class play a part in the purpose of music making and performance as a face-to-face activity. Through interviews and observation, I have adopted a micro-level approach to this research, exploring in-depth the coordinating, creating and meaning-making activities of amateurs who are sharing both physical and online spaces for music production and performance.

### **A HCI and Sociological approach to Ethnography**

In aiming to contribute to both HCI and Sociological understandings of DIY practice, my adopting of an ethnographic approach to data collection has crucially involved a consideration of how the application of this particular research method takes on a particular meaning according to both of these fields of research. For HCI, an ethnography focus is to appreciate how 'practice brings technology

into being' (Dourish, 2006). For Sociological observation studies, ethnography has been key to much qualitative research concerning cultural practice and identity.

During the process of considering different methodological approaches to this study, I explored the extensive Sociological ethnographic work conducted by Finnegan (2007), Thornton (1995) and others which shed light on the importance of a sense of belonging between musicians and their audiences, achieved through live performance participation. This is now increasingly made possible and supplemented by the interactions between musicians, organisers and audiences online, creating a new and essential context for observation of their identity framing and community making practice.

In seeking to explore the settings in which live music performances are created, an ethnography approach in particular to the study of music technology spaces in HCI has been taken into consideration (Morton, 2005). There have been numerous HCI ethnographic explorations of doing music and the settings in which these practices take place (Morton, 2005; Ahmed, 2012, Tolmie, 2016, Benford, 2012). These studies seek to shed light on local music-making by concentrating on the *practice* of music and what individuals actually *do* on the ground (Saukko, 2003: 7). With a focus on the *practice* of DIY in a digital age, my methodological approach aims to consider both the practices of meaning-making as well as the practical methods of making and performing music (Crabtree, 2012). There needed to be a methodological consideration too of how the practices of DIY were distributed across several applications and devices alongside physical spaces, meaning that an ethnographic approach needed to allow for the observation of both the DIY musicians' online and real-world interactions (Brooker, 2016; Crabtree, 2006).

Reflecting on the use of ethnography in HCI design, Dourish considers how the concept of 'independent investigations' could be re-examined as 'contributions to a broader ethnography corpus' (Dourish, 2006: 548). The historical use of ethnography in HCI has been taken into consideration from the start of this study, particularly when seeking to explore the broader technological implications of DIY music practices in a digital age. Ethnography in systems design has traditionally been concerned with the study of practical action, applying only fieldwork to explore 'what ordinary' consists of (Crabtree, 2012). Although my applying of observational methods has aimed to explore the practical methods of DIY, interviewing the DIY musicians has aimed to shed light on the experiences of amateur musicians in a digital age. In particular, there has been a methodological consideration of both the practicalities

and experiences of using technologies and how these have impacted on the DIY musician's personal perspectives of their music and their music identities. Dourish (2006) highlights how ethnography as an approach to exploring settings and individuals 'closer to home' gives weight to its methodological application when seeking to study 'technology users'.

Any resulting 'implications for design' or Sociological analysis must consider how as an ethnographer I am both an interpreter and framer of the ethnographic data collected (Dourish, 2006). As a qualitative researcher, as well as an acknowledgement of the generalisability limits of my data, I must also be aware of how my own empirical analysis of DIY communities and amateur music practice potentially contributes to its culture and manifestation within society (Dourish, 2006). Diverse and dynamic, amateur music can be experienced, consumed and interpreted in multiple ways and therefore must not be attempted to be placed sociologically into a single, universal interpretation (Frow, 1995). These can be observed as musical 'worlds' (Finnegan, Becker) which can be created in the online communities and also a gig setting when individuals enact their norms, values and traditions into a live performance and physical space. As a researcher, there is also an essential reflection of how these musical worlds occur in a particular sociohistorical context, and how these communities and our observations of them are consequently shaped by this.

I am also aware, like others (Mackinnon, Cavicchi et al.), of how my own cultural background, experience of and enthusiasm for amateur music and live performance may have consequences for a researcher bias when observing these individuals and settings, and when analysing data collected. My own interest in amateur music can be related to Cavicchi's native anthropological approach to the study of a Bruce Springsteen fan community with whom, although he did not know personally were people with who he felt he identified with as a Springsteen fan (Cavicchi, 1998: 10). This 'native experience' has its benefits and its flaws as historically debated within Sociology, particularly in terms of how this on the one hand can uncover aspects of social practice hidden from those observing as an objective outsider but the insider knowledge of a particular lived experience and the researcher's own bias towards certain topics that interest them can consequently influence how the data is reflected on in analysis.

As a result, the main topics that the musicians chose to focus on during interviews as the key aspects of their identities and practices act as the structure of the data chapters. Central themes such as tackling isolation and cross-promoting that were unknown as key to understanding the amateur musicians when setting up the study but

were discovered during data collection have framed the data and the story. The data chapters structure thus acts as a narrative for the process of setting up a DIY space, a DIY method of music making and a peer network, with the order of topics mirroring the interviewees' describing of these separate stages to establishing oneself within a DIY amateur network.

Aligning my own ethnographic methodological standpoint with Dourish, Mackinnon and Cavicchi, I have taken into consideration how my prior knowledge and experience of DIY and amateur music alongside my own social and cultural background will influence my focus on particular aspects of the community which aim to offer an account of a distinct music community and its nuances, adding to existing studies. A self-reflexivity when acknowledging the *situatedness of culture* and my own interpretations of amateur music practices allows as a Sociological researcher the consideration of diverse viewpoints on these lived experiences.

## **Combining Interviews and Observations**

In seeking through this study to provide further understanding of 'DIY' and the practices of amateur music communities in a digital age, I aimed to explore both the shared practices and the individual nuanced experiences of the amateurs. Whereas there have been sociological studies exploring the non-digital real-world practices that take place in music venues and recording spaces, I aimed to provide further detail on the preserving of materiality in amateur music. There was also a desire to expand on existing understandings of the everyday digital experiences of amateur musicians and how these impact upon their local face-to-face interactions with their peers and audiences.

As a result, methodological decisions were influenced by these distinct performance contexts of the musicians' practice and how best to observe these. The adopting of a quantitative analysis of the everyday public activities of the musicians online through the collecting of social media posts was also considered early on in the study. Although the regular posts online by the musicians and the statistics of these were explored at the start of the research period, in order to explore the nuances of their everyday activities a qualitative method was favoured. By initially conducting observations of musician's interactions both online and in live settings, I aim to further explore the interplay between the two in the practices of amateur communities. With a period of collecting purely observational data at the start of the study to further understand the public practices of amateur musicians online and at live performances, close analysis of this data led to the methodological

decision that interviewing would assist in the revealing of the personal lived experiences of the musicians and how these relate to their experiences as part of a DIY community, bands and group projects. Although interviewing aimed to extend insight into the DIY musicians' experiences and practices beyond my own observations when entering their settings, I recognised that the responses from my interview questions were also shaped by my own subject position (Dourish, 2006). As an ethnographer I was aware throughout the study that my view of the DIY setting was determined by my ethnicity, gender, class background and social position.

A combining of the methods of observation and interviewing sought to shed light on both the real world and online practices specific to DIY communities whilst providing insight into the lived realities of amateurs practicing DIY, with a particular focus on the interactions between digital and face-to-face identities and practices.

Conducting a period of observation prior to interviewing aimed to inform the interview schedule. An overt observational style gave access to areas of the private real-world and online DIY social spaces away from the public. This helped to further uncover some of the mixing of genres, gig arranging and handcrafting activities. This also allowed for a rapport building with key members of the DIY venues who provided initial contact with interview participants.

## **Interviewing**

In choosing to explore DIY amateur communities in two distinct social contexts, an interviewing method was used following observation of these settings, aiming to achieve a richer understanding of the lived experiences of amateur musicians by looking in-depth at the subjects' own points of view. A semi-structured approach was adopted with open-ended questions in order to avoid probing and encourage a relaxed conversation.

Participants were invited during interviews to share their online profiles and tools via their own laptops, mobiles and PCs. This was explained as an attempt to explore their own personal day-to-day upkeep of these activities and how these were coordinated alongside creative practice and project management with other musicians. Many of the participants as a result chose to have the interview in their own homes. Interviewing involved audio recording the discussion using a dictaphone, with brief field notes made of their sharing of online and digital tools and profiles during the interview.

With many of the interviews conducted shortly following a meeting and observing of these interactions in the DIY spaces and gig

venues, I found that this encouraged a further discussion and reflection of these settings and an engagement with a local amateur community. At times these interviews felt very informal with interviews resembling more of a conversation led by the musician, with subtle guiding and leading of the interviews to maintain an interviewer/interviewee relationship. There was then a sharp distinction with those interviews conducted in the home. On reflection, the distinct difference in conversational style across the interviews disrupted the consistency of the data collected, however by letting each participant choose the interview venue themselves this aimed to make the interviewee as comfortable as possible. The choice of setting inevitably guided the topics of conversation, with, for example, more of a focus on personal activities away from the community when interviews were conducted in their home. When others were passing through the venue setting during the interview I also found that this influenced participants responses, with other participants at times adding to the conversation. This demonstrates the often changeable nature of qualitative research when the natural setting is volatile, making data variable. The ways in which the interview questions evolved over the study period will be discussed in further depth in the Practicalities of Research section of the thesis. The interview guide is also included on the following page and in the appendix.

Upon visiting the Nottingham DIY space, many of the musicians were initially reluctant to speak to me until they were aware of my own interest in DIY music and gig going alongside my research. There was a period of gaining their trust through informal meetings and hanging out at the space before I was considered a friend and on one occasion a musician approaching me in front of the DIY crowd during a gig to acknowledge my support of the space. Whilst this allowed for very rich and open accounts of their practice during the interviews, it also meant that I had to at times maintain a interviewer/interviewee relationship when the dictaphone was set to record. As many of the Cambridge interviews were conducted in the musician's homes due to their lack of a shared DIY venue, this also meant that trust had to be gained early on in the meeting and in order to gain a relaxed and semi-structured feel similar to the Nottingham interviews I sought to meet with musicians whilst attending their gigs prior to interviewing. As both an observer and interviewer, I had to be aware of how my own characteristics, gender, social background and expectations of the research may affect respondent's discussion and reaction to being observed by someone regarded as an outsider.



## Interview guide

### Background

- Tell me about your music background – how you got into music?  
Tell me about your music practice – perform with others?
- How do you practice? Where?
- How would you describe your music?
- How often do you play gigs? Does the frequency of gigs vary or has there been a recent increase in gigs? Where do you play?
- How do you manage time devoted to your music pursuits?

### The DIY Space activities

- Tell me about how you are connected to The DIY Space?
- How did you find out about The DIY Space?
- Tell me about your music activities at The DIY Space
- How are you sharing your music with others? At gigs or record marts? Online? Are you signed to a label? Tell me about the label
- How often do you play or record at The DIY Space?  
Are you sharing gigs and performance space with other artists?  
How does this work?
- How do you get gigs? Are you connected to other spaces like The DIY Space? (nationally/ internationally)
- How do you share responsibilities for looking after the space? How does upkeep of the space work?
- Do you have a particular approach to your music? How would you describe it?
- Are you collaborating with others? If so, how do you manage your time between different projects?

- How are you sharing skills and resources with others? How are you keeping in touch with your fans?
- What do you enjoy about performing and hanging out with other bands and music fans at The DIY Space?
- How is a gig organised with others? Explain the process
- How are duties shared on the night and the preparation? How do you rehearse beforehand and where?
- How would you describe the The DIY Space gig experience?
- Tell me about your fans and your typical audience – how do you get feedback from them and keep in touch with them?
- How does the gig space work? And interaction with fans during and after? Selling your merchandise?

### **Questions for interviewees who share The DIY Space management roles**

- How did you get into putting on gigs and set up recording space? What was involved in setting up the space? Did others help?
- How do you source the records you sell at the distro? How does selling the records and splitting the profit work?
- Tell me a bit about how you assist bands in their promotion (both online and live at gigs and record marts)
- How are roles and duties shared? Who is in charge? Are their leaders?
- How is equipment, tools and use of the space shared? Are these for shared benefit? How are these sustained?
- How do you keep in touch with the bands and other promoters and spaces?

### **Handcrafting and sharing music with others**

- Tell me a bit more about your merchandise and music sales, are these created by yourself? The artwork and the packaging? Tell me about the style of these things you sell
- How important is the style of these things? How they express your music? Their physical style? Is this an artistic choice?
- How do these relate to your work at The DIY Space? (Recording, performing)
- How does distribution of your music work? (How many are you producing and how are you selling these?)
- Where do you distribute your music? How often are you releasing new music?
- How about sharing these things online? And how physical sales online relate to any digital copies you sell?
- Tell me a bit more about the digital sharing of your music – streaming/download quality?
- How do the physical copies relate to the digital stuff you put out? Are they connected and do you release these at the same time?
- How does your digital stuff relate to putting on gigs and promoting them? How do you get feedback from those who buy your music and merchandise?
- How important is a sense of legacy to you in producing copies of your music and sharing it with others?

### **Music method and approach**

- How do you keep in contact with your fans?
- How does your The DIY Space activity relate to your communication with your fans and gig goers?
- How important is it that you manage each of the aspects of your music activity yourself? (distribution, organising gigs, promoting)
- Do you have an approach for this?

- How important is the medium/channel for your music? (the style of the recording, the venue, the artists you work with)
- How do these methods to your work relate to the methods of the community?
- How would you relate your methods to those of your peers? And a mainstream approach?
- Tell me about your collaborations/different projects you are working on
- How about your relationship with other promoters and bands? How do these relate to your artistic choices? (your style and methods)
- Would you say you have common goals or values? How important is this?
- How do you manage your identity? (online/offline) How does this work with others (being a part of The DIY Space) or other projects you work on?

## **Addressing generalisation**

As Mason (2002) explains, 'it is important to think very carefully, critically and sensitively about how to generalise, and about the wider resonance of your research'. This thesis considers two distinct and varied DIY communities, and from this seeks to draw conclusions and make generalisations about the wider DIY scene. As such, it is important to consider how an appropriate approach can be used to ensure such generalisations are reasonable.

Williams uses the micro-level study examples of Geertz (1979) and Fisher (1993) to demonstrate how interpretivist research often involves the producing of 'speculative generalisations'. Williams notes how Fisher's claims are far more modest and more 'clearly testable in other contexts' than Geertz's; but what they have in common is that they are both inferring, 'from specific instances to the characteristics of a wider social milieu' (Williams, 2000: 212). Williams argues that these inferences would seem inevitable if, as Geertz puts it, a researcher wants to, "say something" (Geertz, 1979: 218).

My research certainly seeks to say something of the DIY scene, and therefore I must accept that some generalisation will be inevitable. However, to ensure these generalisations are not just 'speculative', but are grounded and reasonable, I have chosen to use a moderatum generalisation approach. Moderatum generalisation is explained by Payne and Williams (2005) as follows:

"Moderatum generalisations are first and foremost moderate. They most resemble the everyday generalisations of the lifeworld in their nature and scope... First the scope of what is claimed is moderate. Thus they are not attempts to produce sweeping sociological statements that hold good over long periods of time, or across ranges of cultures. Second, they are moderately held, in the sense of a political or aesthetic view that is open to change. This latter characteristic is important because it leads such generalisations to have a hypothetical character. They are testable propositions that might be confirmed or refuted through further evidence".

As such, my moderatum generalisation approach aims to support the producing of testable propositions of the DIY community in the UK in the conclusion chapters that can be either confirmed or refuted through further research. These propositions will be moderate in scope, based upon the small number of case studies considered in the work. I will not seek to make 'sweeping' statements, but moderate, 'consciously produced' (Payne/Williams 2005) generalisations.

With a planning for anticipated generalisations made about DIY practices and contexts, prior to any data collection there was a considering of both the moderatum generalisations to be made and the broader resonance of my research findings (Mason, 2002). This involved a deciding on the range and the categories of generalisations to be made at the very start of the study. The moderatum generalisations considered prior to data collection aimed to apply specifically to current DIY amateur practices in the UK and only to amateur musicians practicing DIY with the use of online tools and shared performance spaces. In the findings write-up, the study aimed to continue to keep these selected generalisations moderate by focusing my analysis on the particular aspects of DIY in Nottingham and Cambridge (such as networking online and sharing spaces, tools or resources) that can be seen to be a 'broader recognisable set of features' of DIY music practices in a digital age (Williams, 2000: 215).

Whilst the number of case studies I have considered is small, and clearly not statistically significant or representative of the UK DIY scene, it was not simply just a random selection. Early on in the study I realised that by choosing to focus my initial observations on

DIY Nottingham, the ability to generalise from my findings was limited. As such, I sought to find an additional 'deviant' case study to broaden my population and provide a counterpoint and different perspectives. In choosing to widen my sample to include a group of musicians without a shared DIY space local to them I aimed to provide a detailed view of two distinct experiences of amateur practice relevant to existing broader perspectives of DIY and amateur musicians in a digital age. Cambridge as a second setting was therefore a theoretical, rather than a random, case study selection.

The selection of these two distinct case studies aimed to 'identify the data necessary for the kinds of generalising conclusions that may be anticipated at the outset' (Payne/Williams, 2005: 305). This meant that careful attention was paid to the selection of these two cases to support the range of generalisations that the study intended to make from the outset. By broadening the contexts of DIY practice explored in the study, 'strategic comparisons' were built in to my research practice to allow for the development of my theoretical explanations concerning approaches to maintaining DIY practices and identity in the conclusion (Mason, 2002). These strategic comparisons also aimed to strengthen the applicability of my moderatum generalisations to a wider 'receiving' DIY music community (Seale, 1999: 468).

The essential linking between the consideration of a strategy for generalisation and for sampling in qualitative research design is highlighted by both Mason (2002) and Williams (2000). The two DIY cases were purposefully selected to provide a variety of experiences and characteristics related to a wider DIY population and to reflect the relevant characteristics of the wider UK DIY community to which I sought to generalise.

My research includes particular findings relating to the physical spaces used by the DIY musicians. As noted by Williams (2000), generalisations made based upon how the characteristics of an environment 'enable or constrain' the user 'have a greater validity than other categories that might derive from cultural characteristics'. The 'physical characteristics' are 'more easily verifiable in other instances' and thus lend themselves to creating propositions that can be confirmed or refuted at other DIY gigs and venues.

The Nottingham DIY musicians have an established shared space, whilst the Cambridge DIY musicians do not, meaning that the sample reflects a broader DIY population than if just one space had been considered. The lack of a shared established DIY space in Cambridge also runs counter to my original understanding of the need for a physical space to be recognised as part of a wider DIY

community in the UK. This strategic selection approach has allowed me to test my developing explanation of DIY and I am able to claim stronger (but moderate) theoretical generalisations from these two differing DIY settings.

Deciding on the moderate generalisations to be made at the start of this study involved a considering of the 'varying degrees of similarity and difference' between these two DIY case studies and other forms of DIY and more broadly amateur music practice, providing as Payne and Williams suggest, a 'mental map of the sites to which generalisation can, and cannot, be extended' (Payne/Williams, 2005: 310). Claims were also limited to general DIY practices explored throughout the study period so that further research is likely to uncover similar activities but not identical.

Williams states that, 'Of course we can never really know whether our understanding of "bargaining" in (say) traditional Moroccan society is what we understand it to be, but we will have verified that we at least understand something if we observe this ritual taking place in Fez and later in Marrakesh, with much of its characteristics remaining the same' (Williams, 2000: 214). By attending further gigs at different DIY performance spaces beyond the initial Nottingham DIY space observations helped to verify my understanding when I was able to witness the same characteristics and activities taking place in these.

The generalisation restrictions on the two DIY music case studies chosen in terms of their constraining features for exploring broader aspects of DIY and amateur music practice and the subsequent claims made were then discussed in the Conclusion chapters. The resonance of my claims were also supported by considering the kinds of lessons that could be learnt for other similar DIY and amateur music settings. The intention was not to provide a complete picture of 'DIY music' itself in a digital age, but rather to contribute to broader understandings of DIY activity, amateur practice and the collaborative efforts of meaning-making, sustaining and evolving part-time amateur practices.

As an example, the concept of 'exclusivity capital' proposed in the thesis conclusion is a moderatum generalisation. Based on my observations, I have made reasonable inferences about the maintaining of exclusivity practices. However this is bounded to DIY spaces and the practises within them. I do not seek to apply this to the wider music community, or even the amateur music community. As my research has only focussed on the DIY scene, I do not have the evidence to make any wider assertions, and this is why a moderatum approach to generalisation is most appropriate. Similarly, this proposition is current. I am not claiming it will always be the case

for DIY musicians, nor that it has always been the case. Further research may support my proposition of exclusivity capital, however of course it may also refute it.

### **3.1 Practicalities of Research**

This section gives an account of the practicalities of the study, focusing on the study settings, the data gathering activities, ethics consideration and the participants involved.

#### **Observing their shared creative spaces and online profiles**

Applying the method of an in-depth observational study has aimed to explore the distinct nuances of DIY amateur practice. In consideration of how this approach demands extensive time spent observing participants and their settings, the focusing on two distinct social contexts has aimed to explore a heterogeneity of lived experiences with a limited research time-frame of three years. With a focus on the amateur musicians' practices and motivations, their lived experience has been observed from their point of view. For example, rather than viewing their online practices remotely, participants were asked to share their tools, webpages and social media accounts on their own PCs in their own homes. This intended to give insight into how these practices worked alongside their creative ones in their spare time. The then complimentary observation of their use of mobiles in the DIY spaces, recording studios and gig venues to update their online profiles allowed an analysis of the distinctions between online networking practice conducted in public and in private. Ethnographic observation of the gigs and DIY spaces for recording and performing focused on the amateur musicians rather than others present such as audience members, meaning that the data offered an insight into these often intimate spaces from the musicians point of view. Observing a variety of both individual and group contexts sought to give a more fully detailed picture of the everyday activities of an amateur musician and also aimed to further explore how the different norms of practices in each of these shapes the musician's own experience, their interactions with other musicians and audiences, and their DIY music identity.

Observation has allowed a research focus on what musicians *do* at regular DIY events and venues. This was then followed up with interviewing, allowing the exploration of what they *think* about these practices. Prior to data collection, extensive background research was carried out to get a picture of the local DIY and amateur music scenes in Cambridge and Nottingham; where were musicians meeting regularly, which permanent and temporary gig spaces



hosted DIY events, how and where were these promoted online and offline.

Applying a case study approach has meant the boundaries of each case has been identified in the early stages of the study (Silverman, 2005: 127). For both the Nottingham and Cambridge case studies, I aimed to explore music making, coordinating and organising practices that were both individual and collaborative. As my interest lies in the practices and experiences of DIY musicians in a digital age, the case studies were selected not only as they were accessible but also to provide insight into distinct settings and experiences.

## **Recruitment and Ethics**

A snowballing sample strategy was then adopted, with initial contact and gaining a rapport with key individuals preceding background research offering an introduction to other musicians connected to venues and scenes. This proved an effective way of learning of the interconnectedness of the different networks of amateur musicians established and maintained both online and face-to-face at venues (with many of the participants in the study being connected to each other through different projects), and who the key gatekeepers were. Musicians, organisers and venues were then approached and assured that their participation in the project was voluntary, they would remain anonymous throughout the study period with the use of pseudonyms in the thesis and published writing, and that their agreement would be confirmed with informed written consent. A consent form given to participants for both online/offline observation and interviews made clear what I hoped to achieve in the study, how they may be recorded audibly and visually and how these recordings may be used in the research. This form is included in the thesis appendix.

Although all participating musicians were informed of my observing activities, as some of these observations took place at gigs and events where the public were present, this made it impossible to give full information to all individuals in attendance, which was explained and approved during the University ethics review. A partially covert observation in these setting was therefore unavoidable, but field notes and analysis focused on the interactions and activities of the consented musician participants.

Entering the lived experiences of participants in an 'empathic way' requires a willingness to allow individuals to introduce their practices without intervention (McLeod, 1994). This is a non-structured or semi-structured approach to observation which allows the participants to guide the data collection, helping to uncover unknown

and unpredicted phenomenon. In the case of the DIY Nottingham community and the venues in Cambridge attended by participants, a rapport was maintained throughout the study through an engaging with and building upon relationships with the key individuals running and attending the gig and recording spaces regularly. This ensured that I did not appear intrusive or deceiving to individuals present when observing gigging and recording activity.

As is the nature of uncontrolled research settings of naturally occurring data, observations were often unpredictable with field notes detailing multiple interactions between participants at any one time. Analysis of these ethnographic notes following the data collection period allowed for the further reflection of the varied ways in which the amateur musicians interact with each other and carry out their creative work. The ethical collection of data included a comprehensive interview guide shared with all participants. This included an explanation of the purpose of the research and how both the thesis and subsequent publications would protect their anonymity. As the ethnographic research was 'equipmentally affiliated', ethics also had to consider the use of tools, artefacts and materials as ways of gathering insight (Crabtree, 2012).

Often becoming a member of the audience after watching rehearsals prior to a gig, note taking became discreet and added to after the event. In these instances I found I gained a researcher anonymity and acceptance by the participants who proceeded to regard me primarily as a music fan. At one point during the study upon speaking to one of the participants hosting an event I was attending, he stated that the DIY venue "*is yours too*". On reflection, this breaking down of a boundary between researcher and participant was inevitable in this informal, relaxed social experience and allowed for the kind of insights that were perhaps unattainable out of the setting and reflected the work put into gaining a rapport with these communities. These boundaries were then more easily observed and re-established in the more private settings of recording and rehearsal spaces and their homes.

## **Data Gathering**

Observation data was gathered at both sites with the use of a notepad for brief field notes and some photographs taken at the public Nottingham DIY space events. A scouting out of the DIY activities local to Nottingham and Cambridge preceded the field site selection, ethics approval and note taking in public spaces. Publicly shared leaflets, posters and music sold at both the Nottingham and Cambridge events were also collected as evidence during the data analysis.

A discreet dictaphone was used during the Interviews. The recordings were manually transcribed and coded. A total of thirty interviews were conducted during this period of 12 months (July 2013 - July 2014) with an approximate total of 31 hours of audio recording. Fifteen of the interview participants were connected to the Cambridge DIY scene and fifteen connected to the Nottingham DIY space.

The semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed for an informal, relaxed approach and the evolving of the questions asked during the data collection period. A set of broad questions (including questions such as, 'Tell me a bit about your music background') were followed by some more specific questions (such as, 'How do you organise band practice time with your band mates?'). The interview guide used during the study is included in the thesis appendix.

The semi-structured interviews were on the whole long and in-depth (between 40 and 85 minutes long) and the participants were able to give rich and detailed accounts of their practices without much intervening from the interviewer. This helped to uncover aspects of their practice which had not been anticipated prior to data collection, which were subsequently analysed in more detail as key findings that could be distinguished from previous studies of amateurs. As the interviewing period progressed, an iterative evaluation approach was adopted, with question probes added to the interview guide when previous interviewees had highlighted new and unknown insights into their activities as musicians.

Both the DIY Nottingham and Cambridge field sites were observed over a year long period with the interview period lasting approximately three months for each site. Observation of both the Nottingham and Cambridge musicians' public online profiles were also recorded during this period.

A table of the participants recruited features on the following page, detailing their locations and their musical practice.

**Table of Participants including location and musical practice**

Participant name (pseudonym used)	Their location	Musical practice
1. Peter	<b>Cambridge</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
2. Frank	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist in a band
3. Steve	<b>Nottingham</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
4. Anthony	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist in a band, solo guitarist, songwriter
5. Dave	<b>Canterbury</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
6. Jack	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist, songwriter in a band
7. Bill	<b>Cambridge</b>	Solo songwriter
8. Jess	<b>Cambridge</b>	Solo pianist, songwriter
9. John	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist, songwriter in a band
10. Max	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist in a band
11. Harrison	<b>Cambridge</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
12. Kev	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist in a band
13. Dylan	<b>Cambridge</b>	Bassist in a band
14. George	<b>Cambridge</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
15. Pierre	<b>Cambridge</b>	Guitarist, songwriter in a band
16. Jamie	<b>Stratford</b>	Guitarist in a band
17. Ray	<b>Durham</b>	Bassist in a band
18. Mark	<b>London</b>	Guitarist in a band
19. Ryan	<b>Grantham</b>	DIY label/promoter
20. Callum	<b>Liverpool</b>	Drummer in a band
21. Paul	<b>Nottingham</b>	Guitarist in a band, solo artist, DIY producer/promoter
22. Vince	<b>Nottingham</b>	Guitarist in a band/DIY promoter and mastering engineer
23. Rich	<b>London</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter, DIY label manager
24. Rob	<b>Nottingham</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
25. Jake	<b>Nottingham</b>	Guitarist/bassist in a band
26. Tim	<b>Nottingham</b>	Solo guitarist, songwriter
27. Saul	<b>Cambridge</b>	Pianist in a band, solo pianist, songwriter
28. Sebastian	<b>Nottingham</b>	Guitarist/bassist in a band
29. Lewis	<b>Nottingham</b>	Guitarist in a band
30. Carl	<b>Derby</b>	Guitarist in a band, DIY promoter

## Introducing the study settings

DIY is a growing network of amateur music scenes and artists spread out across the UK. Rather than the traditional genre or counter-hegemonic shared identity, their identity is instead predominantly defined by a collective endeavour to pursue the self-sufficient opportunities made possible by a more democratic, fragmented and decentralised form of music market. Not only does this allow for more unique, novel and alternative forms of music-making and scenes (as seen previously in the Dance club culture of the late eighties, Thornton, 1995) but also a more viable opportunity for artists to practice music locally as a social practice and a shared passion (rather than as an opportunity for strong economic capital gain through a consideration of what will sell well) alongside a full-time career outside of music. Under the name DIY, artists from different music genres are collectively experimenting with these new modes of promotion and communication in the digital world, creating an essential synergy between the digital world and the DIY group. It is the practice of these self-sufficient DIY collectives which drives this music movement rather than its 'alternative' appearance to the outside observer. However, it is perhaps also its communications with a niche audience and its adoption of a counter-cultural identity (venues on the outskirts of town, the production of zines and the cultural references made in events names) which enables its continual sustainability. As music fans have moved to the internet, it is communities of interest and perhaps a concentration on the microcosm which are key to DIY artists' creative, live and digital practice; the fans which were once marketed to are now artist's allies and assets. Generating a buzz surrounding DIY music groups is now about concentrating on the foundation of a real fan base.

Although DIY has long been an aspect of independent music production (the Punk scene of the late seventies for example), the movement known as DIY today with its more digital technology driven identity emerged as amateur musicians and their audiences began to network on *MySpace*. Suddenly there appeared to be a way for part-time artists to network and promote their music through a neutral (rather than label affiliated) social networking platform for free, gaining opportunities for international distribution and promotion of their music without the commercial, profit-driven and contractual constraints of a professional music industry. This paved the way for similar music sharing platforms designed for amateurs and an increase in internet-driven music scenes now with a global audience.

As a result of these online activities, the DIY scene in the UK currently consists of an interconnected network of around 40 DIY collectives geographically dispersed across England and Scotland. The majority of these are predominantly using social media platforms

to promote each other digitally through both individual band profiles and DIY community pages. This digital promotion is heavily reliant on an all-inclusive attitude amongst musicians and collectives; the willingness to share activities and information with others beyond their local peers. This can be a rewarding approach as platforms are used to instantly get connected to promoters and negotiate the hiring of venues.

The encouraging of an open-networking approach by social media platforms in turn sees the growth in interconnectivity and influence of those bloggers, promoters and enthusiasts who play a key role in mobilising audiences and artists for small non-commercial events. During our study we came across numerous examples of non-musicians who are passionate about sustaining the DIY scene, generating hype and producing crucial promotional material for the DIY events without financial reward but with the chance to feel they have contributed and gain a respect from the rest of the community. This shared activity both online and offline ensures the DIY scene can continue as independent and non-commercial.

### **A typical DIY event**

DIY collectives with a shared performance and production space meet with their audiences regularly for live events, usually with a mix of 'in-house' local, well-known DIY bands and perhaps other national and international artists on the road. These events tend to be organised quickly and are promoted a week or two prior to the event through social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter. Rather than selling tickets in advance, individuals pay on the door to keep costs down and promotion flyers often state that the audience may bring their own food and drink as events are typically hosted in spaces without a licensed bar.

Introducing Nottingham DIY as the first study setting, this is a typical DIY performance space that is a stripped-down, no-frills non-purpose built venue with instruments and amps set up on the same level as the audience (rather than a raised 'stage' area). The space has a similar feel to the early nineties warehouse raves. It resembles a large house party with borrowed furniture often provided by fans and artists performing. There is a table set up at the back of the performance room where bands' handmade tapes/records/CDs and t-shirts are sold. As the performance and audience areas in the space are not strictly defined, this allows for artists to mingle more freely with their audiences and extend the performance space if they wish.



Fig. 1 DIY Nottingham warehouse, DIY Nottingham

This undefined performance area also creates ambiguity to the start and finish of performances, with bands often jamming whilst setting up equipment and talking to members of the audience. However there is little waiting around for each band, performances are instant, loud and there is a sense of immediacy in the lo-fi sound and performance style. The typical weekly DIY audience can be between 10 and 60. Local independent music media and papers are not discouraged from documenting these events, with local music journalists often attending and documenting DIY events.

The average DIY artist is performing or taking part in local DIY activities alongside a full-time career outside of music (although some may also be full-time students) and there is a balancing of the two in everyday life. The opportunity provided by joining a DIY collective in order to perform regularly at a nearby local venue and keep profits made from ticket/record sales is a crucial impetus for DIY membership, allowing artists to sustain their music practice alongside a 9-to-5 career. As the typical DIY collective consists of an eclectic mix of 'alternative' musics the average audience can have a balanced male:female ratio, although often the location of DIY venues in bohemian neighbourhoods on the outskirts of a city will attract a dominantly younger audience (16-35 year olds) from a lower socio-economic background.

Exploring the wider picture in the context of the UK music industry, there is a preoccupation amongst those artists and individuals promoting DIY to keep music live and as a result create longer lasting and richer connections with their audiences.

Often established through kinship networks, DIY groups consist of bands and artists who aim to be self-reliant and have creative control over what they put out. This is often a practical decision made by artists (a more economically sustainable option for the semi-professional), but it can also be an ideological choice made by artists who wish to distance themselves from a capitalist-driven music

mainstream. DIY collective practice involves pooling resources, sharing flyering/gig promotion activities to assist each group. Digital activity then aims to improve accessibility of their music and compliment any face-to-face promotion and interaction with audiences rather than act as a substitute for engagement.

## **Cambridge and Nottingham**

The key characteristic of the Cambridge study setting that distinguishes it from the Nottingham DIY scene is that none of the musicians have a shared location for recording, socialising, speaking to audiences and performing. Participants talked more of a dispersed network of amateur musicians with similar DIY approaches and what is involved in staying in touch with each other and sustaining their relationships.

With regular gig opportunities found in the more traditional venues of pubs and clubs, interactions between the musicians at events were influenced by more rigid norms that typically govern the use of commercial performance spaces like pre-arranged set times and pre-defined stage areas and audience areas. With the exception of one gig organised by a group of DIY musicians and promoters during the study, each of the Cambridge events observed were arranged by commercial promoters catering for particular tastes meaning that the bands were selected based on their style of music.

This gave the DIY activities happening in the city *a less visible* identity, often hidden from public view. To the outside observer, those amateur musicians who would associate themselves with a local DIY scene were not so easily distinguishable from a more traditional genre-led Cambridge music scene.

Attachment to different groups of artists in the city felt *more informal*, a case of being 'in the know' about an emerging group of artists seeking to host more unusual gigs together without the space responsibility required by those using the DIY Nottingham building. This also applied to their often lesser intimately known audiences due to the lack of a shared meeting space, who were interpreted by participants as avid social media users and therefore nurtured, mobilised and analysed more regularly through this communication medium.

Without a central hub nor established group of DIY promoters in Cambridge, the musicians rely more heavily on the online networking opportunities to hook up with other artists and form connections with independent labels, distributors and promoters. Participants were keen to discuss their remote recording collaborations with other



musicians in and out of Cambridge, which offered a creative freedom not so achievable when working within the genre defined framework of a traditional live music scene. The linking of separate bands via social media had also stimulated the founding of groups of musicians and promoters who set up local and remote recording projects as well as put on their own DIY shows in empty public buildings and arts exhibition spaces in Cambridge and elsewhere.

With gigs often being sporadic for Cambridge musicians without a base, keeping in touch with their band mates and collaborators can be hard, with asynchronous online communications acting as an essential substitute for the often favoured face-to-face meeting. Cambridge musicians may attend each other's gigs for chance encounters with other musicians to form connections with, which could be followed up with online collaboration on projects to fit into their limited time for music practice and compensate for the lack of affordable space in the city. In the case of the latter, amateur musicians host one-off DIY events in Cambridge and there is a money and time commitment involved in the self-promotion of these shows alongside personal music practice and family life. This had led to many amateur musicians based in Cambridge instead choosing to visit well-established DIY spaces elsewhere and building a rapport with a large DIY amateur network in nearby London where healthy sized audiences are shared by artists on the same bill in commercial venues.

## 4.0 Getting a local audience in a digital age

With an introduction to the DIY communities in Nottingham and Cambridge, this chapter draws attention to a continued significance of local practices in amateur music practice. Amateur musicians are increasingly establishing collaborations with each other online, changing the ways in which DIY spaces and events are established. However, observations and interviews revealed how face-to-face meetings act as an essential activity for gaining membership in a DIY community. To maintain the shared rehearsal, recording and gig spaces, the amateur musicians must be prepared to offer their spare time and attend meetings prior to organised events. This chapter will discuss how the 'hanging out' heritage of Punk culture influences these face-to-face interactions. It will also consider how sharing physical space with each other and seeking affordable spaces has become a key aspect of DIY in a digital age.

Whilst observing the varied practices of amateur musicians across the UK reveals how the adopting of social media and digital communication technologies plays a significant part in the amateur musician's experiences of interaction and creative activity with others, the face-to-face real world activities more traditionally associated with the local music scene continue to determine an individual's successful participation and acceptance within a community of amateurs. This chapter of the thesis will explore how the participants in our study were keen to discuss their everyday interactions with other amateur musicians on a local-level; in music halls, venues, rehearsal rooms, pubs and recording studios and further described the levels of commitment required in gaining access and the norms of social etiquette and practice governing these public and private spaces.

A central hub of social engagement for amateurs observed during the study and one which encompassed a plethora of regular activities essential to nurturing musical skill and style was the self-funded DIY spaces. These are run by musicians local to an area with a goal of providing affordable performance and recording space and equipment for amateur musicians on a small budget. Acting as a base for many of the musicians, the DIY space is a communal place for meeting other artists, sharing ideas and initiating new music projects. Although there is a projected inclusive attitude when visiting the space for the first time, access to the inner workings of these spaces reveals that a long term commitment must first be agreed for those who intend to occupy and use the spaces for regular music practice. Commonly this can be established by getting new members to agree to contribute to the community, for example in assisting the

organising of social gatherings where musicians new to the scene are able to meet those who are already well-established.

With free social space in urban areas in demand and access to public areas for creative practice threatened by arts funding cuts, the musicians setting up these DIY spaces challenge the creative sanctions imposed on amateur musicians in commercial profit-driven venues dominating city music scenes and how these potentially jeopardise communal amateur music practice and its traditions. In doing so they aim to avoid a 'capitalist profit-driven music world' by promoting their music themselves (Haenfler, 2006: 24). DIY Nottingham exists within a network of amateur musicians throughout the UK who seek to reclaim disused urban spaces in cities for the benefit of communities lacking affordable and accessible places for creative practice and can be compared to some of the recently observed 'reclaim the streets' and occupy movements (McKay, 1998; Castells, 2015). Whilst the immediacy and accessibility of online networking offers a platform for those amateurs who feel disconnected from other musicians locally as a result of both a lack of affordable creative space and a limited part-time schedule, there is a desire to seek out ways to connect artists in cities and devote time to this cause. Participants revealed both the personal and communal benefits of contributing to the establishing and upkeep of DIY spaces, with a focus in interviews on the celebrating of traditional face-to-face music activities that give locations and genres a distinct identity. Examples of these will be discussed throughout this thesis.

Attending and assisting in these not-for-profit spaces appealed to the participants in our study as a way of gaining valuable feedback and exposure for your own music, whilst assisting the wider local music community. For example, those running the Nottingham DIY space stated that they aim to offer a longer set "*of your own material*" to recently formed bands than what they would typically be given in a commercial venue or open-mic night, making the opportunity to perform on a bill alongside well-known bands often quite competitive and sought after by local acts.

A common strategy is for the organising and promoting of weekly gig nights to be allocated to different local bands and artists who are able and willing to devote some of their time. Each of these bands or musicians bring their own connections and is then able to share these with others eager to play, expanding the local network as well as strengthening their own position within it. As well as offering a platform for amateur artists to master their live performance techniques, these events aim to establish connections locally between bands and musicians with similar goals, approaches and values. This activity reflects a long tradition of amateurs setting up

shared spaces in their local areas (Finnegan, 2007). Although the arranging of these shows can appear rather informal, the musicians devote considerable time to the promoting of these shows to ensure their success and it is a support network of bands and musicians who ensure that the space can run smoothly;

*“... because we have kind of a team who do shows or do shows independently if Vince can't make a show and I do a lot of live sound in the evenings so I cant make a lot of shows then we have people who step in that we trust.” (Paul)*

This direct face-to-face communication between the musicians was regarded as an essential component of the network and its appeal, and an important rule for membership. One of the musicians interviewed regarded the *'hanging out'* aspect of the DIY gigs as an attribute of *'Punk culture'* and another described a *'flat structure'* where all musicians on a bill and gig attendees are equal in the space and that the majority of the people who really like the artist's music will also know them personally. However, this also reflected a social convention of a sharing attitude that spanned the various styles and scenes that frequented the DIY spaces. The spaces are not just governed by the conventions of existing subcultural style or practice (which could alter on nights catering for different taste communities) but by the values and practices (e.g. modes of production and distribution and ways of coordinating such activities) shared by the musicians occupying the space. These spaces can be interpreted as *'musical worlds'* and importantly it is language and the shared use of terms such as *Punk* and *flat structure* which helps the musicians to define these worlds (Cluley, 2012).

As a network of friends, many of the musicians commented that a key aspect of their gigging activity and what motivated their travelling to far reach places was to keep in touch with the other musicians;

*“that's the one thing about touring that's great, seeing old friends, and making lots of new friends as well. But it's nice to see people who live in far reach places and the only way to see them is by doing that” (Jamie).*

After a tour, bands and musicians will follow up on acquaintances made whilst on the road and seek to go and play with them in their towns on their next tour. This has seen the quick expanding of the DIY network across Europe as well as the UK.

The connections between spaces across the UK are essential for the amateur musicians catering for a certain taste or hoping to get

regular gigs and a following in a town where a particular style of music is popular;

*“if you do gigs with people and they go well and it works then they're more likely to come back and go ‘oh do you wanna do something else?’ and that’s been working and it just happens that the networks that that works with aren’t in this town so it involves moving around a bit. I dunno, it’s just this kind of process of spotting the links and trying to work within them and in the same way when people get in touch with me and go ‘were looking for gigs in this town’”(Tim).*

Finnegan takes the standpoint that it is those within a particular music scene or community which frame and define music’s practices and conventions and how it ‘should be realised’ rather than the formal properties of music itself (Finnegan, 2007: 7). This was evident in the often mixing of communities of musical subcultures and scenes at many of the DIY events observed during the study.

Finnegan explores in-depth the kinds of informal grass-roots activities that continue to play a central role in amateurs music practice today; with particular attention paid to how they organise and perceive their activities at the local level (Finnegan, 2007: 8). In exploring an expanding of the possibilities of grassroots amateur music making through networking with others online, this study aims to add to Finnegan’s particular focus on what amateur musicians ‘*actually do on the ground*’, offering an insight into the impact of the digital on local practice (Finnegan, 2007: 8).

As many of the spaces attempt to offer a broad compass of genres and styles of music, participants revealed how there are still boundaries between scenes and their norms of practice;

*“I used to be in an ‘emo’ band, and there was a lot of rivalry between bands but now with our band its just the opposite. I don’t think I’ve ever gone to play at a gig and not got on with people...that helps a lot, really good supportive scene” (Callum).*

DIY offers an alternative, more inclusive gigging experience for musicians to get involved in, often alongside being attached to a more traditional genre-led scene. It is the more traditional genre-driven network which can help an artist establish a local audience prepared to attend DIY venues as well as the pubs and clubs hosting a particular style of music and attracted a particular crowd or taste community. A feeling of inclusivity in the DIY spaces can come as a surprise to those musicians used to an interaction amongst artists at gigs that is strongly determined by their style, tastes or affiliation to a traditional local scene such as hard-Rock, metal, grunge or hardcore.

A relaxing of the genre-centric forming of music communities and subcultures in this instance sees the re-interpreting of existing traditions associated with music scenes and can be interpreted as an attempt to offer an alternative third space for casual social interaction. A change in local spaces for music is perhaps also reflective of the changing dynamics of local scenes now disseminated online meaning that individuals can 'connect easily across localities, regions, countries and continents' as Kruse observes (Kruse, 2010: 625).

Participants talked of the appeal of visiting the DIY Nottingham as a place where friends could socialise outside of the workplace or home, catch up and share things aside from their music practice as well as make music. This was an atmosphere that the organisers stated they encouraged and a main pull factor for regular attendance and contribution to their events. This aspect however coincided with the strategic coordination of interactions taking place in the space and careful consideration of who was invited to contribute and influence the activities in the space behind the scenes, which will be explored further in this chapter.

With a view to gaining authentication and recognition for music practice by sharing norms and values of performance with other artists, music communities like DIY can be viewed as both constraining and enabling; like any other form of established music culture it will have its own defined norms and limits of practice so any artist wishing to join a collective will need to adhere to these norms. However, for the artist who wishes to challenge the existing commercially-defined norms of popular culture, DIY can provide a more liberal platform to experiment with new creative forms of music expression. In observing how this can impact on amateur music participation, Finnegan described classical musicians high art status and attitude to their practice as moulding the public's views of the music and their own participation in it on a local level. It has been reported by artists over the last century that to challenge the norms of a genre or music form is to take a risk in the eyes of the mainstream music industry (take the concept album, for example), and a less established artist in the popular music business is highly unlikely to get the financial backing of a mainstream to do so. As Dunn (2012) noted, DIY labels can become sites of resistance in connecting translocal networks of Punk scenes to offer alternative business models to the music mainstream.

There is an important distinction to Finnegan's observations in that although the amateurs in our study also encompassed a range of musical styles, in their discussions of DIY as an approach and in the sharing of spaces defined as DIY they described the joining and mixing of the distinct and separate 'worlds' such as Rock, classical

and Folk in Finnegan's study. Just as Finnegan observed, many of our amateur musicians belonged to more than one of these genre communities, but did not so easily define contribution to these as separate and distinct. This in part reflects a relaxing of the boundaries between music worlds in online networking and a DIY cause, which we will go on to discuss in this chapter. In the combining of online interactions between musicians, the DIY events and spaces observed in both Cambridge and Nottingham, there is a confronting of the kinds of taste community boundaries observed in Finnegan's study which continue to shape the live music industry;

*"Cambridge is very un-pop. It does... as in old style pop is very, kind of, I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man, kind of... a lot of old Rock and roll or whatever it is then... or singer... earnest, singer-songwriter, folkie people, who are very polite. Or then it's got that, kind of, almost Jazz standard, sort of, we're all technically good and we can play a Cole Porter tune and all smile, and we want to be singing on a barge going down the river, and we can play your garden party. They don't really like pop here, no." (Frank).*

In the case of the Cambridge musicians, Frank and others spoke of their live music experiences in Cambridge in a more traditional vein akin to the more self-contained scenes in Finnegan's (2007) study and venues catering for just one particular taste community. This reflects a local live scene comprising of well-established and more rigid norms of practice attached to certain genres of music such as Folk and Indie and was in distinct contrast to their conversations on their remote recording collaborations with other artists which suggested a willingness to challenge those traditions.

Whereas it could be observed that the running of the DIY Nottingham space and its events involved the involvement and expertise of several individuals attached to particular music taste communities and scenes, the Cambridge DIY events and scenes tended to operate in a more traditional genre-led way with one or a small group of enthusiasts connecting artists of similar styles in the region. Those participants engaged with individuals who were supporting a DIY scene by promoting a particular style of music described how events were usually intermittent often due to the absence of a *fixed* venue space meaning they rely on their exhibition and arts centre connections around the city;

*"...I performed at an experimental music thing in Kettle's Yard in Cambridge. There's a, a promoter called [...] who operates under the name of [...] in Cambridge and she's got real interest in, sort of, formal, formally experimental music, sort of, electro-acoustic stuff and sound art and installations... Yes, and [...] is a local art centre and they have a music programme and [she] has developed a*

*relationship with them where, as part of their, kind of, contemporary music season, she gets to promote one concert every year. And she, she, kind of, she sets out a theme and she, she asks local musicians to, to, kind of, come up with something related to that thing. That's a recording of that, of a performance I did there." (Peter).*

The Cambridge musicians made reference to key promoter individuals attached to genre-defined scenes and with an interest in a particular style of music who sought to strengthen the activity within the scenes by connecting musicians of similar styles to each other at events. Although many of the Cambridge musicians expressed a gratitude towards these individuals during the interviews, for those not attached to a particular taste community there was a frustration with the rigidity of genre-defined events and being pigeon-holed when approached to play a gig;

*"...a lot of people get set in their ways and not want to try different things out. When I moved here I played... well, I joined a band as a bass player, which is not really my main instrument, and I became known locally as a bass player, so whenever I was ever offered a gig it would be, 'you want to come play bass?' I'd say, no, I'm a guitarist, that's not what I do, you know, so I got a bit frustrated." (Bill)*

This had stimulated hiring venues to host their own events outside of the commercial live scene in a similar way to the efforts of the Nottingham DIY musicians. A guaranteed audience in Cambridge was something which the participants reflected on as a struggle at times, galvanising the activity of musicians setting up events themselves. However, these events tended to be genre-defined particularly when seeking regular gigs at pubs associated with particular scenes and tastes.

Split gigs help to guarantee a reasonably sized crowd attending your gig. Participants talked about how their search for local gigs involved getting in touch with those they know that put on gigs regularly, and then getting a couple of gigs starting a chain reaction when those individual promoters would hear them at a gig and approach them at the end of a show. This activity works alongside social media communication. The gigs and promoters that they would return to for further opportunities were not necessarily lucrative, with Anthony for example mentioning the charity gigs his band has performed in Cambridge after appearing on a community radio show.

As the key bands and musicians within the DIY community continue to return to each other's towns whilst on tour, it is inevitable then that the same bands are playing on bills together, often repeating the line-ups in the previous year; *"we end up, we tend to end up playing a lot of the same gigs. it's quite rare that we play a gig with no one we*



*know before” (Mark). For those wishing to expand their own networks of bands they can tour with or venues they can perform at and draw a crowd, it is a case of turning up to other bands’ gigs to watch and getting to know an existing core kinship group of bands and musicians running the nights. These direct, face-to-face interactions between the established and those new to the scene are encouraged in the physical layout of the typical DIY venue, and the relaxed and informal rules of going ‘backstage’ and socialising before and after a show in the space;*

*‘There’s never a separation, there’s never a back room area you know, it’s all [pause] and if you go and see someone and then maybe, I mean I don’t put on gigs but i get the impression that if you saw someone you wanted to play a gig for you you just go up and ask them. Or if they know you put on gigs they come up and ask you. And its, you know if you do artwork you’ll probably get contacted by someone’ (Mark).*

Those bands we spoke to who were new to the DIY scene in Nottingham explained how they were more likely to get to know other bands *at gigs* rather than contacting them online first.

This attitude to establishing oneself in the scene reflected an overall belief shared amongst the Nottingham participants that interaction in the spaces is about setting down roots for a community and making this a clear statement of identity. Rather than genre taking centre stage as a way of community defining, this is now increasingly carried out remotely online making the act of sharing space *itself* an identity statement regardless of a predefined musical style. For the participants, choosing to regularly take part in local practice and contributing to these shared spaces gives added meaning to their music, with the opportunity to make their communities distinct now that the ‘Indie’ industry alongside the mainstream is becoming increasingly saturated online. DIY despite its presence on global social media and music platforms is concerned with connecting local music scenes and promoting these which contrasts with as Negus observes a record industry focused on developing ‘global personalities’ (Negus, 1992:1). Although participants described a more genre-centric commercial live scene in Cambridge, significant time devoted to organising their own unusual events, labels and handcrafting activities suggest a similar meaning-making approach to Nottingham DIY, which we will go on to discuss.

## **4.1 DIY Nottingham and the Cambridge venues**

The average DIY space comprises of a large room for hosting gigs and separate rehearsal area. There is a reasonably sized but

intimate performance area either with a stage area or often there is no raised stage and instead the performance space is determined by the musician. There is usually a merchandise table set up and in the case of the Nottingham DIY space, some seating for audience where records are often shared prior to a gig. The rehearsal and backstage areas play a significant role in encouraging all those musicians performing or watching the performance on a night to meet with each other before and after a show. Here, connections are established between both DIY venues and the musicians touring them; these can be shared music styles, projects such as setting up a label or record mart, or the arranging of European and UK tours with bands going on the road together. The opportunity for musicians, promoters and journalists to network at an event is a social convention that ensures DIY's continued growth and sustainability through a division of labour between these individuals. This is a key example of how as Becker (1982) asserts, art practice is reliant on the work of others who facilitate creativity. Alongside musicians, participants explained how key contacts can be made at these events, such as those PR individuals who can introduce DIY promoters and musicians to influential bloggers who focus on reporting on the more unusual music scenes such as Math Rock and Post-Rock.

For those new to the scene, being invited by a friend to perform at a DIY venue in an area of the UK they have not gigged in before offers the chance to expand their own network of musician contacts as well as offer new contacts to their own local space upon returning home. This was demonstrated by a band who spoke of a burgeoning DIY scene in Liverpool when visiting the Nottingham DIY venue for the first time;

*"...big promoters don't put on bands like this type of music so we thought we would put them on, and now a couple of other people have started to...it's not a massive scene in Liverpool, there's not that many bands really...I think we like getting out of Liverpool and playing new places, plus we know there is a big scene anyway across the country" (Callum).*

The musicians we spoke to who had experience of running DIY gig nights and spaces explained how by being in a band (or often multiple bands) themselves they always had a guarantee that they could fill a bill and that those bands they knew as friends and have toured and collaborated with could also be trusted and relied upon when establishing their night in a local scene. This is a key strategy shared by many of the spaces, encouraging the speedy initiation of a network of bands and musicians who are already on friendly terms and generating hype amongst existing fans and audiences attached to those bands when a new night or space has been set up.

By offering not only affordable creative spaces for part-time musicians but also informal hangouts for their local musicians and audiences, they serve a community role. Importantly they provide a support network for local musicians who do not necessarily have any ambitions to go full-time and instead wish to continue producing their music part-time on a micro-scale but at the same time distribute and perform outside their own towns and cities. It is the interactions between the DIY communities across the UK and Europe which enable bands and artists who are practicing music part-time to tap into live audiences beyond the local, but to maintain direct contact with these audiences. Just as Hesmondhalgh (2008) observed the success of DIY Punk labels of the late 70's and the specialist record shops exchanging local products, these DIY communities are also geographically dispersed so not in direct competition with each other and able to capitalise in making links between spaces and labels catering for similar tastes.

Those musicians who help run the DIY spaces seek to encourage meaningful interaction between local bands and musicians which extends beyond the typically short preparation time and after-show tidying-up opportunities for meeting other bands on the bill in a commercial venue. By providing a hangout area and kitchen for local and non-local musicians, it is expected that those using the space devote some of their time to talking and jamming with others, often leading to collaborative projects such as tours, split records and the networking between DIY labels.

## **Building a network**

In terms of shared norms of practice, the negotiating between musicians for future dates in other towns and cities is an activity expected when visiting any DIY space or event in the UK or Europe. For those musicians who had toured Europe for the first time, they were inspired by the networking going on between musicians. For many amateur musicians, touring DIY venues was their first experience of touring in Europe and an opportunity to extend their own knowledge of emerging styles of music and performance instigated at these events when musicians from Germany, France, the UK and the rest of Europe were jamming together.

Touring Europe can often be a successful way for amateur musicians to mingle with bands from a variety of tastes and styles at an event. The experience of touring in Europe for the first time with other UK bands created a camaraderie between these bands, which would instigate tours between bands of differing styles in the UK. This is an approach to gig organising which the DIY Nottingham musicians have attempted to replicate in their space, encouraging bands who

might never normally get the chance to meet at a gig catering for a particular taste to interact with each other. The freedom to experiment, jam and record with each other at these venues inspired amateur musicians like Paul and Vince to recreate this experience in Nottingham and to encourage a similar kind of networking between artists resident in the UK. Without the constraints typical in a commercial venue to quickly set up, do your set and then promptly tidy up after, the musicians using DIY spaces embrace a freedom to interact with other musicians in the space *beyond* their time spent on stage. During my time interviewing and observing the Nottingham musicians' practice before and after shows, the backstage areas of their local DIY venue were always bustling with musicians sharing their latest recordings, stories whilst on tour and forging new connections with mutual friends visiting the space. It was often the case that many of the musicians backstage were not necessarily on the bill but were seizing an opportunity to meet those musicians on a bill and noticeably this was an interaction encouraged by those musicians who had arranged the gig and manage the space.

## **Working with promoters**

For those Cambridge participants without access to a local DIY space, when visiting other cities and venues unfamiliar to them they relied heavily on the venue or city promoters to promote their gigs; *"when you play somewhere you think that the promoter will have made an effort to try to get as many people in as possible"* (Pierre). The experiences of a fragmented network of musicians operating in and around Cambridge influenced a cynical view of the local scene in interviews and determined a focus instead on getting gigs elsewhere; *"I don't feel like in Cambridge, even if you went out and are doing all the old school stuff, you wouldn't actually get many people coming down. Whereas if you were in Brighton where the scene is better or if you were in Camden it's so much better to go out and do that."* (Dylan). Promoters can be 'picky', making the organising of tours hard work and in the case of commercial venues the opportunity to return rests on the bands ability to bring a good sized crowd to their first show. In contrast to the participants interviewed in Nottingham who tended to keep their gigging network to a manageable sized *inner-circle* within the DIY circuit locally, the Cambridge musicians revealed the competitiveness of commercial gigging;

*"It does get you down when you send out like 100 emails and don't get one reply. It's just like, okay. And then they say like, send out press kits, but if you're going to send out 100 press kits how much is that going to set you back? And how do you know that it's actually going to get to the right people?"* (Dylan).

Several of the Cambridge participants revealed how having a good relationship with a promoter means that they are able to get regular gigs locally in Cambridge. Some of these were part of DIY networks, arranging the more unique events hosted in atypical music venues, but on the whole independent promoters were attached to particular pub venues across the city and serving particular musical tastes. For Max's band who play in some of the key pubs in the city regularly, other local pubs were now contacting his band directly to put on gigs. The convenience and reliability of these local gigs had pushed many of the musicians to seek out gigs elsewhere, particularly in London in order to progress with their live repertoires and play to different audiences.

Despite a lack of gigs encouraging the Cambridge musicians to venture further afield for gigging opportunities, many of the participants were also determined that they would not carry on playing to the same kinds of crowds locally. Two participants argued that there was a lack of events showcasing local talent in Cambridge and as many of these musicians were not attached to a DIY promoter or venue, there were several examples of coordinating and organising gigs with others in order to tailor the event. Two of the solo musician participants had recently decided to host a gig together in a popular music venue in the city after an offer to do so from the owner;

*"I think we were in the pub after a few drinks and we know the guy that runs [...], and he's always said... he's said to both of us independently that if we ever want to go and do a gig there, he won't charge us for the room, and we can take all the money from the door...I put something on Facebook, Will put something on Facebook, we both put some tweets out and that was all we did. But it was full. Like, you know, we managed to get enough people there, so it was cool." (Dave).*

For Dave, as a solo singer-songwriter, gigs in Cambridge inevitably meant playing covers alongside his own material to please the punters and the pub promoters. However, Dave stated that those covers would be carefully selected, tended to be more obscure rather than anything too 'commercial'.

## **Pooling resources**

Many of the participants relayed stories of other bands in Cambridge including bands they had been members of who had fallen by the wayside when the responsibilities of administration and management in being DIY were not performed efficiently and as one participant put

it, band members could “*not be arsed to do it*”. Participants observed how this attitude distinguishes the successful amateur bands who are able to thrive in an increasingly connected amateur community from those who were not prepared to take on the non-creative work alongside the creative activities required to gain a foothold within gigging and distribution networks and then maintain these connections. Despite the describing of a more fragmented local amateur musician community without an identity centred around a shared space like Nottingham, the Cambridge musicians agreed that a significant aspect of local exposure and the opportunities to gig elsewhere is about *knowing the right people*. Getting into those networks often involves offering your own time to assist in the organising of regular local gig nights to showcase amateur musicians, in an effort to forge new links between existing and emerging music scenes and the artists attached to these. Both the Nottingham and Cambridge participants revealed their crucial involvement in arranging local gig events with other bands, but with some revealing that increased family responsibilities had regrettably meant they had stopped taking part in these. Alongside this, participants talked about the limits of part-time DIY music practice on a small budget and the importance of knowing these; “*So you might have, like, a rose tinted glasses view of what you want to achieve, but then, you know, it has a dark side as well, and you have to be careful about that.*” (Pierre).

Mapping their own experiences of playing live across Cambridge city and its outskirts, the same pubs kept coming up in discussions as well-known live venues with a preference for particular styles of music, or simply places which attract students and younger audiences. Participants talked about how these play an important role in the local live scene, allowing bands to cultivate a local following and be guaranteed a sizeable active listening audience particularly if organising a night and pooling audiences with other local acts.

This can work in a similar way to the shared organisation of events at DIY Nottingham. Anthony explained how in the early days of his band, it was the pubs in Cambridge which drew in teenage crowds too young for the clubbing scene but eager to hear live music; “*You’d put on gigs in dingy pubs where they probably would serve alcohol to minors and everyone would go along. It was the social event because you couldn’t go clubbing. There wasn’t this other, no one had these massive social lives; it was either that or hang out at someone’s house. So we used to sell out*” (Anthony).

For Anthony’s band, entering the local music scene during a resurgence in popularity of Indie music amongst young people in the

last decade had given them a distorted view of a bustling live music experience. All of the Cambridge participants including Anthony described their average gig in Cambridge as a moderate sized venue and audience, with the pooling of audiences between bands sharing a bill creating a larger than average audience for the musicians. The dominant population of students in the city was also described by participants as a way to draw in bigger crowds even if these were unaware of the band or their music beforehand. Although the larger gigs gave participants a buzz and sense of achievement as well as assisting in the funding of their music practice, many interviewees stated their preference for the more intimate live experience with a very similar attitude of pursuing their music making and gigging activities as a social activity rather than in search of a profit;

*“We’ve got some festivals around Cambridge; they’re more for fun, they’re not going to be big things.” (John). “think when you’re not playing as a... like, for big money, then after a while you’re pretty much doing it for fun – like, fun, exposure, I guess. And when it’s, like... it stops becoming fun when you’re just doing too much and, like, people are just, kind of, booking you all the time, you need to stop for a little bit just to reassess what you’re actually doing it for, which is what we’ve done now.”(Jack).*

### **Seeking new gig experiences**

With many of the participants in Cambridge either solo acts or practicing solo alongside playing in a band, there was the sense that the live scene was dominated by singer-songwriters and that these were more catered for by the key live venues in the city which promote and preserve Cambridge’s Folk music and acoustic heritage;

*“It took me three years to find a band here, because everyone is a singer-songwriter; everyone plays guitar and sings. It’s very difficult to get just a bassist...” (John).*

Some of the participants shared their experiences of the often unpredictability of the size and type of crowds that can be pulled in at the pub venues and that the not always being able to guarantee an audience had forced many local bands to instead seek regular gigs in nearby London. Reflecting on his experiences, for John the Cambridge scene can be quite closed-off and not connecting to scenes in other areas of the country where audiences can be gained for amateur musicians who want to tour and play elsewhere. This had recently led John’s band to pursue gigs solely in London, using this as a strategy for gaining some exposure outside of Cambridge;

*“We’re going to stop playing Cambridge gigs and just play London gigs, I think. Try and focus on London gigs, because we started off just playing open mics in cafes and pubs and stuff around Cambridge and [unclear]. And then we played... we played the [...] a few weeks ago, but we got the impression that Cambridge music is quite... things don’t really escape Cambridge very easily. You can do quite well in Cambridge, but word doesn’t spread. There’s nothing happens. You can make it big in Cambridge and nothing much happens after that.” (John).*

When discussing gigging activity during the interviews, participants drew distinctions between different kinds of gig venues and their typical audiences, and how this impacted on amateur musician’s experience of a local scene. Jess observed how the different pubs catered for distinct music styles and tastes and therefore local bands would seek out those which were known to have a particular live experience;

*“I think different bands have different preferences for where they like to play so, like, the [...], as I mentioned earlier, they love to play at [...] because it’s all ravey and mosh pitty and stuff like that. And then, like, Harry and the Bens like to play at [...] because it’s more acoustic and people just, like, like to listen to it. My brother’s in a band, they like to play at [...] because they’re a similar style and then people like me with just one instrument, one voice...”*

In contrast to the Nottingham musicians who reported the regular faces and sense of community when playing a gig at DIY Nottingham, the variety of venues the Cambridge musicians played means that their audiences are not necessarily known by them or returning to the venue;

*“Yes people come back definitely but they don’t come back every single one, like, yes, quite a lot of people come back but new people come in as well. Usually... I haven’t... I play a lot of different venues, it’s not usually the same place, so I don’t always go back to [...] or back to [...]...” (Jess).* There was talk amongst the Cambridge musicians of the frustration of playing in commercial drinking and eating venues that tend to dominate the live scene and are not set up or oriented around the live music being performed in the space.

Audiences are not necessarily aware of a gig taking place, they often stumble across the gig coming off the streets or are socialising, eating or drinking in the space meaning that at any one time the



space can be inhabited by those principally there to attend the gig and those who are not.<sup>1</sup>

For those sharing the bill in a pub venue with other acts, the timing of your set can be crucial to the musician's perceived success of the gig;

*"...it was a three-band thing and we were on first and then there was another band and another band. And we started playing at like eight and it was in the middle of June and so it was still quite nice and bright outside and then it got dark at about ten and then people came in and watched the music. And by that time we'd long finished our set. So by the end of the night there were quite a lot of people there, but we'd finished long before that. But I think it was all of our partners, some of their friends, the promoter, the other bands, their partners, and some people who wandered in off the street."* (John).

One participant reflected how the popular music pubs themselves were struggling for punters and so chose those bands who were willing to play covers as a *"novelty thing"*. This inevitably impacts on the exposure that new music is able to gain, perhaps partly influencing the gig organising activities of many of the amateur musicians spoken to during the study. Despite this, participants in Cambridge talked about setting up their own gigs with fellow local bands to produce quite unique live experience events. During the research period, I attended a gig hosted by a local promotion group in a church where two of the participants were on the bill. DIY gigs tended to be arranged in community arts spaces, disused buildings and public owned venues where rules for performance were more relaxed. Two participants in Cambridge reflected on their own experiences of challenging conventions of amateur play in Cambridge city centre;

*Dylan: "Cambridge is just not the place to do it because you're not even allowed to put posters around some places, are you? So, it's really a killer, trying to do it."*

*Kev: It could be.... I don't know. Maybe... obviously, you know, the best way to showcase your music and the best way to get yourself out there is... I mean even like doing... the thing is, like if you could play an electric set in the street...*

*Dylan: Yes, a busker.*

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<sup>1</sup> Whereas Negus (2002) sees a temporary release from identities when taking part in live music performance, our participants emphasised the importance of feeling a sense of common identity with an audience during a performance.

*Kev: That would be wonderful. That would be great. But the thing is that electric sets... I don't know if they're... well, they might be allowed but you would get noise complaints almost immediately.*

*Dylan: Yes, because the universities complain straightaway... So they played the roof of that a couple of times and straightaway the uni complained. And it's the middle of the summer, and they're just like, no, we've got students studying. It was just like, come on."*

In comparison to Nottingham, the live music scene in Cambridge is busiest in the winter months, with local gigs becoming more intermittent in the summer months during the festival season. For most of the participants their gig schedule tends to be sporadic;

*"if we look at our schedule and we've got two gigs in a month that's kind of, a minimum happy threshold. If we have three gigs in one weekend in that month then that's great and we get the rest of the weekends off." (Max).*

For those participants with families, their gigging schedule has been reduced to fit in with their family and work commitments. Despite many explaining how their contribution to the organising of local gigs with others had unfortunately either come to an end or only when they had the chance to alongside their busier family lives, there were example of participants reaching out to wider musician networks locally to create unique events;

*"I got these Ely club DJs who I, kind of, met through the Internet through Facebook who played old school, sort of, reggae, and we were there at Saffron Walden, and I'd got that gig through the Internet, Facebook, the whole way I'm saying. I asked the landlady if I could bring these couple of DJs who play old vinyl and this, kind of, old school reggae, and they were playing that and got the whole place dancing" (Frank).*

For those no longer arranging alternative events locally with others (e.g. Harrison), they still relied on those networks they had formed whilst promoting shows in the past for getting gigs and visiting other venues outside of Cambridge. These could be quite close-knit, closed networks supporting each other to the extent that they did not need to go in search of gig opportunities outside of the network; *"Jo and I go back a long way, probably ten years now, so she will occasionally put me on and so will Dan, but I don't pursue any other type of local gigs" (Harrison).*

## 4.2 Working with other DIY spaces

Local connections between promoters, musicians and venues continues to shape amateur musicians identity and a way in which to generate interest surrounding their music within particular scenes. Both the Cambridge and Nottingham participants spent a significant amount of their time creating and maintaining ties with seemingly very close-knit, niche circuits of DIY spaces and events catering for particular taste communities.

Discussions with the promoters attached to DIY Nottingham revealed how there is often an aversion to the more mainstream sounding bands who approach DIY promoters that are more likely to gain the attention of promoters attached to the commercial venues in the city. This gives the DIY scene a traditional subcultural or countercultural appearance to the outsider; an 'us' and 'them' stance towards those dominant commercial venues which can give a town or city a homogenous genre identity which they feel does not represent their community of artists. One interviewee who played guitar in two separate bands in the city, explained how one of the bands had a more commercial sound and so gain regular gig slots in the more well-known music venues, but it is the Post-Rock band where his heart truly lies. Describing the two bands as 'one's heart, one's head maybe', Jake juggles his time between the two bands and recognised the difference in audience and gig experience when playing in a DIY space compared to playing in a commercial venue in the city to a relatively smaller audience. Despite the current success of the more commercial sounding band, he felt that his post-Rock band could play the bigger venues but that it had been a collective decision to focus on gigging in the DIY venues;

*“We know we're a tight band, not much of a following but if we wanted we could play a big venue in town and it would be good. but were much more choosy now where we play. and that goes back to the whole in the past. We would bring CDs along and look out for key promoters etc. but now we don't want to do that, make a load of money, retire or even stop the day job. it's purely for the love and playing at gigs we know will be good. Venues that we like with other bands that we like as well.” (Jake)*

The quality of the audience, the performance space and the opportunity to gain valuable feedback and recognition from your peers tended to influence a band's preference to play in DIY spaces. A sense of familiarity and shared norms of practice in the DIY spaces that formed a DIY circuit meant that musicians knew what to expect, whereas commercial venues were perceived to be unpredictable and

less tailored to the needs of the artist. However, this preference despite sometimes meaning you have to expect a low turnout does not prevent the DIY promoter from feeling under pressure to ensure that each band he puts on gets a reasonable sized audience. Many participants talked of the necessity of “building up a buzz” (Dylan) and this was often achieved by spreading the word amongst those within a DIY circuit. Carl explained how he felt it his duty as a DIY promoter to seek an audience for each band he put on, and with a low turnout came a sense of guilt and disappointment. Knowing many of the bands personally can increase this sense of duty and a commitment to making sure that the gig was worthwhile for the band. Despite the perceived benefits of using social media to quickly spread the message about a gig or release, many of the participants believed that word of mouth in a local area can still make a significant impact on gig turnout. Although requiring negotiating physical access to other spaces or events, the results could be more immediate and long lasting. This in turn would ensure that bands would want to return to the space, or recommend it to their peers. However, Carl reflected that at times turnout can be unpredictable and that a poor turnout was to be expected from time to time;

*“Sometimes it’s what happens, you can’t ever predict it, never predict it as much as you’d love to. If I could predict every gig was going to be great, I’d put a gig on every day (laughs). Probably would. No, it’s one of those things, but its weird because I look at it from two different perspectives because if we show up and play a show and theres 10, 20 people at it, well says there’s 5, 10 people at it as long as 5 of those people go home and enjoyed it, I won’t care if i’ve had a good night thats alright. But when you’re putting bands on and 5 people show up its kind of like fuck, this is really bad. You want to just hide.” (Carl).*

This chapter has explored how amateur musicians gain valuable feedback from their peers by offering their time to organising DIY events and shared spaces and sharing the responsibility for sustaining these. In contrast to interactions in commercial venues, the participants spoke of a freedom to interact with artists beyond set times at DIY events. There is a common identity established through these face-to-face meetings, encouraging geographically dispersed DIY communities and amateur musicians to connect with each other through a commitment to live DIY music. Punk traditions of live music have been adopted by many of the participants but there is now a more tangible connectivity between amateur music communities catering for different music tastes across the UK and Europe. The meaning-making practices of amateur musicians continue to be determined by local traditions of live performance that rely on a commitment to regular face-to-face meetings.

## 5.0 What is DIY?

### Punk traditions

Reflecting on DIY in a digital age, this chapter explores how Punk continues to influence how amateur musicians adopt DIY practices and identity. However, rather than replicating the activities of DIY Punk, both the Nottingham and Cambridge musicians reveal an adopting of both the aesthetic and values aspects of Punk to compliment a more looser defining of DIY in a digital age.

By forming a network of venues, those amateur musicians support each others DIY practices and part-time music-making whilst expanding DIY's scope. This chapter of the thesis will explore how for those producing and performing their music part-time in these shared gig and recording spaces, DIY as a practical approach to music making continues to be an *aesthetic* as well as a *value* choice. Participants described a shared set of principles defining their music making;

*"It's just to help each other isn't it, it's not like you know, because if we're going to do a record we're not gonna pay someone loads of money to the cover, we'll probably do it ourselves or we'd ask someone who we know likes our band to do our cover for us, and then probably try and pay them some money for doing it, interconnectivity really." (Ray).*

With a blend of musical styles and tastes, the amateur musicians who have formed these DIY communities span a multitude of musical tastes and styles, from Punk to Instrumental and acoustic. Multiple music scenes in a city are centralised in the DIY space and it is an all-inclusive attitude which encourages a willingness amongst the musicians to experiment, collaborate and support others regardless of their affiliation to a particular style or scene. Musicians are drawn to becoming a regular performer and attendee not in search of a more traditional singular subcultural scene but rather to experience a sense of shared identity based on common values and motivations behind their music practice. The transcending across styles, classes, professional status boundaries makes DIY distinct to the well-known subcultures. Bennett's adopting of the term tribe as opposed to the traditionally understood coherent subculture and an observation of 'a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships' is evident in DIY and its spaces and communities' constant reinvention (Bennett, 1999: 600). Wulff uses the term 'microculture' as opposed to subculture when describing the activities of which 'seems to capture a more contingent sense of shared experiences, tastes and so on across "personalities,

localities, and events” (Gelder, 2007: 98). Here there is a mixing of subcultural styles, and often a cross-fertilisation of these when the musicians and their audiences interact. Where musicians of varied styles have met when playing on the same bill or rehearsing in the space, these have led to hybrid crossovers in live performance, jamming backstage and in the recording studio. For example, during the study a heavy-metal musician and part-time producer attached to a local network of metal artists decided to approach an Indie Instrumental band at the end of show and offered to produce their next album. For one of the participants, these kinds of interactions in DIY spaces between musicians who would normally be restricted to their own genre scenes when networking with others suggested a kind of ‘Punk’ ethos which these artists shared in common;

*“But, you know, the most important part of DIY, kind of Punk at the same time cause’ without gigs it would suck really but I always found it very stressful. sleepless nights beforehand. but always good fun and i guess that’s another good way to make contacts and when I’ve, not without the band, but when i’ve been travelling i’ve had places to stay in different cities through meeting bands that way and stuff which has been really nice. So again its just another area of that whole DIY Punk network.”(Jamie).*

In the act of grassroots music-making there is perhaps an inherent reaction to a mainstream "culture industry" (Horkheimer/Adorno, 1947). When describing a local network of DIY communities, the word ‘Punk’ was often adopted by the participants not as a description of their musical style but rather a way of *distinguishing* the activities of the musicians attached to DIY from a commercial mainstream which in their view carried a more profit-driven, often cynical approach to the arranging of gigs and collaborations between musicians locally. This aligns with Benjamin’s (1934) writings on a progressive cultural politics being reliant on position rather than content, with the adopting of the term Punk placing emphasis rather on *how* they intend to say it rather than *what* they say. One participant described an “*us and them*” atmosphere experienced at the larger more impersonal commercial venues, whereas with bands watching other bands’ sets in the DIY communities this created a more “*collective experience*” which was considered a “*rare thing*” which needed to be protected and very hard to replicate outside of the DIY scene. Although the promoting and arranging of regular gigs locally can be a stressful and time-consuming activity, the musicians regarded these as essential for maintaining a sense of community amongst both the artists and their audiences.

A culture of instancy championed by the traditions of a Punk scene is promoted through the adopting of a co-operative, free culture attitude

by the DIY amateur musician communities. Inspired by the origins of Punk and Indie music in the UK and with an aim to prevent a delay in production to distribution, participants revealed their in-house approach to releasing their music in order to have a fast turnover whilst maintaining a creative control. This approach however contrasts with their desire to promote a revival in a more leisurely listening to of an entire album in physical format revealed during the interviews, which we will discuss later in this thesis. Moore's ethnographic study noted how the musician participants regarded music released on independent labels as more "honest" and "sincere" and a supporting of this music creates a sense of community amongst DIY artists (Moore, 2007: 451). A DIY recording approach creates a strong dialogue between the musicians who assist each other, and their audiences who have a more direct access to the origins of the music and its inspiration.

Participants described DIY as often about a practical approach to music-making with one describing a DIY ethos akin to a Punk one as not having the inclination to go full-time, but rather to remain non-commercial and stick to their amateur music-making roots centred around performing and recording at the DIY spaces<sup>2</sup>. This shared attitude to their music making is what bonded the musicians when considering who they would like to collaborate with;

*"Yeah it tends to be, tends to be the nature of things. It always tends to be bands who we've recorded with or know somehow that we'll do a record with. None are a band who tends to be fussed about 'making it', whatever that means."* (Jamie).

There was much discussion during the interviews about what "making it" meant to amateur musicians today, with many making reference to the economic struggle of those they knew who had pursued label contracts and gone full-time.

## **5.1 DIY in a digital age**

The DIY musicians increasingly find themselves in a wider online community of handcrafting, makers, hackers, hobbyists and interest groups sharing their own DIY activities whether working in a group or connecting to others via their individual leisure time activities. For those either seeking to meet with others face-to-face or merely wish to share and develop their DIY activities with the public online, individuals are able to feel engaged with a wider community of amateurs without needing to attend or acquire formal membership to

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<sup>2</sup> McLean makes the important observation that a DIY musician 'is rebellious but not necessarily in an overtly political manner' (2010: 1367).

a physical space to do so. An informal belonging to multiple communities of interest relates to St John's observation of 'how contemporary society is characterized by voluntary, unstable and sensuous micro-cultures' (St John, 2003: 65; Michel Maffesoli, 1995).

This was also reflected in how the term 'hobby' was frequently used by the participants to describe their after-work or leisure time music activities alone and a way of distinguishing these from their gigging or recording practices with others that could generate income, or be described as 'work' when having a commitment or responsibility to others;

*"well, it's a hobby. It's, like, people I think used to maybe work in the office, come home and, I don't know, collect stamps or have Scaleelectric... or train sets or something, or go fishing; I think people used to go... or whatever it is they do... It's, like, that's what I do... the music,". (Frank).*

For many of the participants, approaching their music with a DIY ethos was as much a lifestyle choice as it was an ideological one, aligning with Irwin's (1977) describing of non-deviant subcultural practice. 'Scenes' can thus be interpreted as pockets of interest communities that are self-expressive and performative, and in Irwin's perspective focussed on leisure and entertainment. Adopting Tonnie's *Gesellschaft*, Irwin focuses on a lack of social interaction and alienation felt in cities but could also be seen now in an age of increased remote interaction with others and culture online.<sup>3</sup> The majority of our participants described their DIY practice as a case of making their music-making and feeling a part of a community fit in with their existing busy lives and careers, without the desire to pursue the possibility of going full-time. For Steve, his recent project with other amateur musicians had resulted in departing from some of the '*DIY scene*' methods of self-releasing, distribution and management, instead seeking professional assistance, but that this in his opinion had put them out of pocket and had not been worthwhile;

*"I don't think we're particularly further ahead as a result of using that system. So, I'm very... I try and be as DIY as possible. If I had more time... I mean, ultimately I want to get to a point where I can... I don't really have to deal with anyone to get my music out, that I can... But I need to build up money to do that, to be able to afford to press things and distribute things and promote things myself... I'm not trying to make it a primary source of income, it's just something that I'm*

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<sup>3</sup> Tonnie's (1957) defines *Gesellschaft* as work and social ties that are more conditioned by rational will than natural will.



*trying to do and trying to get it to the point where it's self-sufficient but it has to fit in around my family life and my work. You know, I think if I didn't have those responsibilities, I might approach it differently”.*

Motivation to promote their music can be hard especially for the self-sufficient DIY artist with no deadlines for releases;

*“It’s a good thing to have a goal, otherwise things don’t get done.” (Jack).*

In terms of an evolving definition of DIY in a digital age, the musicians chose to focus their discussions on the expanding of ways in which to engage with their audiences and how this influenced their creative practices. With ubiquitous access to digital recording equipment and the free sharing of videos of DIY gigs online makes DIY as a movement far more visual than its rave subculture predecessors. This has influenced handcrafting activities amongst the amateur musicians which we will go on to discuss in this chapter, but it also made the musicians reflect on the *pull-factor* of their live shows and the continual value of meeting their audiences in live venues. Audiences no longer need to be in touch with an underground music scene to discover DIY events and venues, so there was debate amongst the musicians as to how this influences how frequently they see new faces at their live shows. Whilst their typical live audience can be quite straightforward to interpret, the participants revealed that they find their online audiences not so easily interpretable, and the relation between the two audiences is also a tricky observation that is fraught with questions of validity.

Participants experienced how social media was not necessarily the best way to target particular individuals in the way that the more traditional direct forms of communication such as face-to-face. flyering and mailing lists can;

*“you can’t guarantee whom the message is going to on those things. So it’s not the best... The old trick is to go out and flyer outside other people’s gigs who play a similar type of music.” (Max)*

Reflecting on the normalisation of social media communication as a shared practice between bands and their audiences, participants drew a distinction between a pre-internet approach to building an audience and the more strategic audience expanding techniques in a global communication age. Whilst many advocated the continual power of direct live communication with the public for ensuring a better turnout at gigs, there were many examples of participants targeting particular individuals online based on the mentioning of music tastes on their public profiles. Bill believed that amateur

musicians initially had a cynical attitude towards this shift in communication and promotion approach to online;

*“...we’re laughing, they go, ooh, will you be my friend, you know, sort of...? And it just sounded preposterous, you know, and within a year that was the norm. But I remember just being completely appalled at the whole idea of having to collect people and sort of push it in their faces and stuff like that.” (Bill)*

For the part-time musician and the regular audience member, importantly there is a commonality of leisure time pursuit. For many of the participants interviewed, they regarded their practices in the DIY Nottingham spaces as their social life or leisure time, a chance to catch up with friends and rather than to carry out ‘work’, the practices are largely viewed as enjoyable and pleasurable. As there is not much opportunity for financial gain or even profit to be made, this attitude shared amongst the musicians is what ensures the continual existence and popularity of the space as a place for music. Interestingly, the participants regarded their audiences and their regular attendance to gigs as very similarly motivated, creating a bond between the musicians and their local audiences. Participants reflected on how an increasing democratisation of technologies (Chaney, 1996) for creating music influences a 'demystification of personal artistic expression' and a hesitancy to apply the more traditional boundaries of artist and audience to their DIY practice (Burnett, 1996: 148).

For this reason, the participants were reluctant to call their audience members ‘fans’, as this suggested a stratification in the DIY community and a distancing between the artists and their audience;

[So you don’t like to use the terms audience or fans?]

*“Ray: just it’s creating segregation*

*Mark: well for a start it’s ignorant because [pause] to call, there are bands who are at our kind of level who put on their social media or whatever ‘I met this great fan last night’ its like, don't pretend you can't remember their name!*

*Ray: I think it’s rude though and it creates segregation between you and the people that actually want to engage with you which is strange.”*

*“I don’t think I’ve got a fan... yes, I mean, I do get people getting in contact, yes, but I think... you know, it’s a hobby.”(Frank)*

With the breaking down of a sense of hierarchy or status amongst musicians performing at DIY spaces, there is also a reconsideration

of what makes a successful and worthwhile gig that both the musician performing and the audiences themselves enjoy;

*“But I think as long as you have a good time, that’s how I kind of judge it, if play well, if there’s lots of people there that’s great but I don’t think any of us would play different if there was 2 people or 200 people. Because at the end of the day someone has paid to get in or bothered to show up which is more than enough” (Jamie).*

Whilst some participants noted a sense of pride felt when gaining new followers, positive feedback and listeners online and then these translating into increased attendance at gigs, others believed that for those practicing DIY and not necessarily focused on making money, the important thing was to be *‘confident in what you do’* and this was a feeling which extended beyond these factors;

*“At first, you know, it does, you know, you read it and think, you know, it took a lot of effort that record and then this has just [been] dissed.... But then, you have to, kind of, you just disregard that basically, because, yes, as long as you’re happy with it, nothing else really matters, unless you want to be a, you know, popular music...” (Harrison).*

Whilst the accessibility of DIY or Indie online meant that the musicians are able to gain a healthy sized audience for their alternative music, this did not tend to correlate with the average size of a live audience or the frequent attendance of individuals to their shows. The contrast in audience size online compared to their live shows, and how the two related was something participants reflected on when considering their own satisfaction at sharing their music, and how it was received by the public. There was a shared feeling that although reaching ‘1000 likes’ was considered an achievement amongst their peers, the often anonymity of these online stats achievements made the musicians further appreciate opportunities to engage with audiences in a live setting. With the support of other amateurs, seeking regular gigs was something that the participants prioritised, regardless of whether a sizeable audience was guaranteed or not.

Despite having to play regular gigs in pubs, the amateurs in Cambridge were always in search of an engaged audience;

*“...if you’re at a gig where people are just talking, like, just talking and then, oh that’s nice in the background it’s... I hate it because it’s just you don’t know what to do, like, usually I look at people when I’m singing, like it’s weird when they’re all turning their backs and having conversations...” (Jess).*

*“My favourite kind of audiences are the ones where everyone’s really quiet and actually listens and pays attention. Because obviously, as an unsigned artist, you have to play a lot of gigs in a lot of venues where people don’t necessarily know who you are, they’re not necessarily even there to listen to music so it can be quite rowdy pubs and things like that. But if you do get a nice venue where people come to, specifically to listen to music and it goes down well and then you get a real buzz, a real kind of satisfaction from that performance, and that’s what... I think it’s quite addictive actually.” (George)*

Frith's (1996) argument of music producing identity rather than reflecting is revealed in the way in which participants shaped their discussion of their sense of belonging and membership around live interactions at DIY events. For Dave, there is a thrill in getting a pub audience to take notice and listen;

*“you can play a gig at that kind of venue and everyone listens and at the end, you find out whether they really liked it or not, because they’ll come and buy, you know, CDs or they’ll talk to you or whatever. But those gigs don’t really feel like a victory because they have to listen. So, sometimes the ones that make you feel the best are the ones where no one has to listen and you’re... like, if you manage to shut them up, that’s because they like what you’re doing...that is really kind of special because then you feel like they’re getting it, you know? They’re into the songs. And that means more than, you know, playing a gig where people have to listen. Or even in, like, a proper venue. So I supported people at, like, venues like [...] or I played at the [...] which is a really massive, like, really fancy venue as well. But there, you feel like people have to listen and it’s kind of expected. So, even though it might be a better gig, it doesn’t feel as good.”*

The amateurs were always in search of valuable feedback from their audiences, whether it was the arrangement of a song, the order of tracks in a set and tracks they would like to hear live. A 'new user-centric information infrastructure' in social media platforms that emphasizes participation can be seen to compliment a DIY stance (Seely Brown/Adler, 2008: 30). Participants would improve their own gig experiences through online communications with their audience, for example by encouraging engagement at live events through the sharing of lyrics and tracks online. The amateurs rely then on the fast-paced nature of the sharing of music between audience members through social media;

*“ if people listen to the recordings then they’re normally going to sing that in the gigs. And it’s good to get the crowds singing the lyrics to*

*you as well. So, if they know what it is, it just adds to the atmosphere of live shows.” (Dylan).*

DIY activity rooted in existing traditions of handcrafting for pleasure and building community gains momentum on the internet, where peer production is supported and encouraged (De Roeck, 2012). Anderson describes these maker communities as,

*‘small pieces, loosely joined... They form and re-form on the fly, driven by ability and need rather than affiliation and obligation. It doesn’t matter who the best people work for; if the project is interesting enough, the best people will find it.’ (Anderson, 2010).*

Participants also revealed how an inventive, experimental aspect of DIY continues to derive from a lack of access to specialist tools. The prevalence of peer-production and crowdsourcing in a digital age has ultimately influenced a change in how audiences contribute to both live shows and recorded music. DIY music is one example of the many creative communities observed as thriving online and their growth dependent on a desire amongst members to share ideas and inspire others, incentivised by the promise to be inspired and learn from others in return (Desjardins and Wakkary, 2013).

## **5.2 Multiple identities**

No longer limited to the cultural exchanges of their local communities, ubiquitous global communication means that the amateur musicians are able to connect with and share their music with a global network of musicians in much the same way as those professional musicians with the international connections of a commercial music industry;

*“And I’ve had messages from people from America, from Argentina, from wherever, you know, so that’s quite cool when someone on the other side the world, who you never would have got to otherwise, you know. So this is what I’m saying, I mean it might be a shame that you get lost in the noise a little bit, but at the same time it’s also great, because there’s someone the other side of world that would never have got to [unclear] otherwise, if it weren’t for all this.” (Bill).*

*“We got 1,000 odd of our likes are actually from Egypt so, for example, got a big following in Egypt, quite big in Ecuador, aren’t we, and things like that, which is quite random.” (Max)*

Something however which distinguishes the amateurs networking practices from those musicians in the mainstream is their focus on crafting ways in which to simultaneously connect globally whilst

maintaining local ties. Rather than seeking the expertise of PR specialists and label advisors as the professionals do, this is very much a DIY practice but one which is shaped by the community and dependent on the musicians supporting each other. Participants revealed how their strategies for online communication were influenced by the norms of practice of their own informal amateur networks. Anderson (2010) describes these informal networks as a 'garage renaissance', with each 'micro-factory' or 'micro-entrepreneur' contributing to the establishing of projects built around shared interests and needs. For Dylan, the avoiding of a hard-sell heavy promotion tactic online by his peers suggested the importance of etiquette over profit within a DIY community;

*"Because people do get annoyed, don't they, when you constantly post about your band? But if you don't want to do it then you're just going to just miss out on a much larger audience."*

This was also reflected in the shared approaches to maintaining multiple identities amongst the DIY musicians. With the exception of one participant who had tapped into a gaming community online, all of the participants chose to limit their presence to one or two chosen music platforms favoured by a DIY community. Music platform services were also chosen for their flexibility, when on a limited budget and sharing costs as a band;

*"it's there forever, as well as no monthly or annual fee, which I think is brilliant. So if the band splits up, or whatever, and we don't want to pay, you know, it's still there."* (Max)

Several participants referred to some of their peers attempts at creating an online identity to promote their music when reflecting on a myth-making temptation when the success and popularity of a band can be tailored with paid services and strategic social media campaigns;

*"Yes. And I think, you know, this is probably a lie. And it wouldn't surprise me if he's paid for hits, because you can do that. So I think that's probably what's happened. But people see this kind of thing and they do believe it a little bit. If they think, oh, it's on his website, it must be true. You know, you can't just lie about things. And then people... there's a bit... you can create a little bit of a myth, I think, and people will believe it. And then that will help you. But I don't want to do that."* (Dave)

Curating of an online identity is often a confusing and difficult task;

*"And then chucking it online just seems like a sort of release for me, like it's done now, you know, see what happens, you know, see if*

*anyone actually listens to it or not. If not that's fine too, because I've enjoyed doing it." (Bill).*

### **5.3 DIY and leisure time**

When discussing how they organised their leisure time around their DIY music practice, participants talked about the upkeep of a digital presence impinging on their own free time at home that they would normally devote to writing new music and rehearsing;

*"...at the end of the day there are only so many hours in the day. And when one does, when I do have free time I think it's, it's really more productive for me to generate, to, sort of, channel my creative energies into the music rather than, you know...It's a, kind of, necessary evil and, you know, there are times where I find, you know, you spend three hours doing something. And you think, and you reach the end and you think, I could have spent that three hours writing a new tune or I could have spent those three hours recording something or playing my guitar." (Peter).*

As a result, the participants have embraced the accessibility of platforms and social media services on mobile devices, finding spare moments in their working day to check and update their profiles, in order to free up time in the evenings for creative practice. Although all participants saw in particular the benefits of promoting their music through their digital profiles, there was also a fear of appearing out of touch amongst their peers;

*"I think, I kind of felt, with Twitter, that I had to use it even though I didn't necessarily really understand it when it first kind of came out. So, yes, I mean, inevitably you get a certain amount of peer pressure and people telling you, you must get on this, you must use this. So, yes, kind of listening to other musicians and friends and what they're using, what they do, and it's quite an important thing. You don't want to feel like you're being left behind." (George)*

Whilst considerable time was devoted to building relations with local musicians in order to feel connected to a local music scene, there was also a desire amongst the participants to be seen to embrace some of the creative opportunities online collaborations could offer. As this has become a widely accepted form of DIY practice amongst those in the DIY communities, it was regarded as a new way of conveying an attachment to a DIY scene in its digital guise.

Here, Anderson's description of companies built around communities of shared interest as forming and re-forming 'on the fly, driven by ability and need rather than affiliation and obligation' can be

observed in DIY. The solo musicians interviewed talked about how their remote collaboration practices meant that they were able to establish collaborations with a range of artists from a diversity of styles and music scenes and from different parts of the world. For one participant who described his latest album project as a *“rotating cast of collaborators”*, the ubiquity of remote collaboration tools and techniques that are not timetable constrained meant he could be a musical chameleon, his albums reflecting many aspects of his own musical tastes and styles;

*“it’s collaborating with someone completely different. So, on the first one the A side was, it’s myself I shared files with a harpist from... who lives in Newcastle called [...] who’s a, kind of, free improv. contemporary classical harpist; B side was with a saxophone player from Toronto and a sound artist from Norwich. And so, and then the second one is, there was someone from Cambridge and someone from London, third one, someone in the States, you know, each of whom, who are very, very different styles or genres... they’ve recorded stuff over the top of it and depending on their interests and how, kind of, tech savvy they are, they’ve either just, you know, recorded something on to, through a digital recorder and just sent me the thing and I’ve then, kind of, edited it and mixed it or whatever. Or right up to people who have taken my thing, my original thing and thoroughly processed it and reworked it and remixed it and produced it and come up with, come back with something very, very different. So, it’s been all sorts of different scales of collaboration but all entirely at a distance.” (Peter).*

For both the solo musicians and those in bands, a significant aspect of their time practicing music alone is an opportunity for self-reflection of their music; *“What I do is I literally do the sound recorder. It’s really bad quality, but it’s just for me...I listen to all of the most recent ones and go that was quite good, that was rubbish, that’s really good, I’ll remember to do something with that. And then my favourite ones I’ll go back to and extend them and record it again with more bits. Really rough stuff just for me. And then write some lyrics, if I can. And then if it gets to the stage where I think it’s turning into a bit of a song, I’ll then, at the next band practice or a future band practice I’ll say I’ve got a new idea” (John).*

Participants talked about the transition from being a dabbler with DIY tools and instruments in their spare time, to choosing to share their music and perform it to an audience. For Bill, it is also an access to new tools and equipment which can stimulate a new creative endeavour or in his case a recent focus and experimentation with drum machines. Constantly exploring new sounds and approaches means that although he likes feedback when he shares his music online, he is not particularly bothered about public attention or praise.



Despite his solo work often involving periods of music-making at home in his own spare time, he does have a network of local amateur musicians who he keeps in touch with, seeking their feedback and engagement. Taking time out to showcase his friends music locally in Cambridge, Bill has arranged and promoted gig nights in Cambridge. It is this local engagement with others of similar music styles and tastes which he focuses his efforts on, arguing that although the ubiquity and accessibility of social media means that all sorts of music styles, hobbies and interests can be shared his own experience has been a feeling of being '*lost in the noise*';

*"Obviously you need a following first but this is the thing. I mean a few years back I was all like good, let's see the record industry die, and crumble, that'll be brilliant, then everyone can do their own thing, but, unfortunately, you get lost in the noise, don't you?" (Bill).*

As some of the key musicians attached to the DIY space in Nottingham had revealed, Bill also believed that those who were not discovering local gigs and new and diverse music scenes (whilst arguing that the mainstream music scene had become stagnant) were lazy, especially with quicker access to different musics via online media platforms.

Reflecting on why the more unusual music available online was still going unnoticed by the general public and the idea of two music worlds (experimental and mainstream) remaining separate, Bill stated that;

*"But at the same time I appreciate that not everyone has that sensibility and why should people go out of their way and make an effort to trawl for things, you know, which is why I think maybe the whole online music thing in an ideal world, if everyone were aware of these things, and there is an infinite amount of different music they can discover, I think that's probably why it would be for diehard music freaks only."*

For the participants the entanglement of mass cultural and subcultural styles has become increasingly apparent, and the visibility of DIY practices alongside commercial music on online platforms further demonstrates this. (Clarke, 1993: 174). Importantly, the DIY musicians are able to distinguish themselves from a professional mainstream whilst distributing and promoting their music on the same social media platforms as the amateurs by their own unique ways of adopting technologies to suit their alternative music practices and audiences. This is something which has defined the alternative musics and Indie scenes particularly over the last 40 years with the development of digital instruments and recording equipment. Those participants who were interviewed in their homes

were keen to demonstrate their at-home recording, sampling and synthesiser tools which they had often modified themselves. Those who were interviewed in the DIY spaces shared how they were adopting particular digital recording techniques alongside the traditional analogue tape equipment to achieve a particular distinct lo-fi sound. Disruptive innovation continues to be observed in the DIY spaces and links it to the traditions of challenging conventions of performance and music experience by past music communities such as the late eighties Rave scene (Thornton).

## 5.4 Seeking experience over profit

*“And whereas money’s a pressure, it’s not necessarily, you know no one’s putting on shows or putting out records with an interest in making money and I dare say that’s true higher up, higher up in whatever sense” (Mark).*

When considering their do-it-yourself methods for sharing and performing their music, participants tended to comment on the creative autonomy which this afforded, and the value of this outweighing any profit-making potential in pursuing more commercial venue gig opportunities or signing to a larger commercial record label. Participants observed that although there is money changing hands at the DIY shows mostly to cover the travel costs of the musicians and the maintenance of the space, as those participating were doing so on a part-time basis this allows for more creative flexibility than if they were signed to a label full-time;

*“people are able to be a little bit more free creatively, they don’t have to worry about whether they can like tour it for 6 months cause’ it’s commercially viable, it’s just like ‘well I really like writing songs about food on a ukelele so that’s what i’m gonna do’ and that can kind of work as long as it’s not what’s paying your bills...” (Tim).*

There was a shared conception of creative advantage about not being *“ beholden to someone ”* (Tim) in not having to be accountable to a label head or concerned that their music was not selling commercially, an experience all the participants thought was a common one for those signed to a label full-time. Whilst the amateur musicians themselves saw the benefits of adopting a DIY approach to producing, performing and promoting their work, the communities saw the value of a shared sense of creative autonomy they were able to achieve as a co-operative whose prime goal was not profit but instead the opportunity to create and perform alternative musics which stretched beyond the parameters of an existing mainstream music model. This attracted part-time musicians whose approach was not necessarily to generate worthy financial return from playing

gigs but as long as their travel expenses were covered considered it worthwhile performing at a DIY space “*because it’s fun*”. Attending and contributing to a DIY space for the participants spoken to was regarded as a way for music enthusiasts and hobbyists to share their music and appreciate it, and this meant that there were not the same demands for “*good pay*” or healthy profit that might be expected from those less likely to regard their music practice as a hobby. In having the same expectations the musicians found gigging together in DIY spaces a friendly atmosphere, which influenced their decision to be much more choosy when it came to deciding where to play.

*“I don't think anyones going to ever make a load of money, retire or even stop the day job for any length of time. It's purely for the love and purely playing at gigs we know will be good. Venues that we like with other bands that we like as well” (Jake).*

An experience over profit ethos extended to the ways in which the musicians catered for their audiences, often choosing to cut down distribution and packaging costs in order to create an affordable copy of their latest EP/LP releases. This attitude meant that a few participants admitted to forgetting to print t-shirts or not being “*too fussed*” to gather merchandise prior to a gig or tour and for one participant a detachment from the more money-making aspects of gigs he felt ensured that performers and audiences are there “*for the right reasons*”.

This chapter has reflected on DIY’s Punk heritage, exploring how the term DIY defines both an aesthetic approach and a value standpoint to the amateur musicians in this study. Observations of the DIY Nottingham space and the lo-fi style of the participant’s handcrafting and music performance reveal a culture of instancy. Interviews uncovered this further, with participants reflecting on how they take inspiration from the makeshift, instant aesthetic of Punk. In-depth discussions with the participants also further uncover how DIY is as much a lifestyle as it is a value choice. DIY as a practical choice for practicing music part-time is further supported by online networking and promotion. Peer production and engagement is supported and encouraged online. This increases the visibility and exposure of DIY beyond its more underground, subcultural past. Despite a shared concern amongst the participants of an entanglement of mass cultural and subcultural styles online observed by the amateur musicians in this study, the practical benefits of having an online presence was seen to outweigh its impact on a subcultural DIY identity. Participants also revealed an expanding of creative opportunities that online tools afford, although the essential maintaining of a digital profile impinges on their leisure time. This chapter reveals how there is a balance to be achieved in the adopting of online activities whilst maintaining DIY’s distinction from a

commercial mainstream. Both the Nottingham and Cambridge musicians reveal their continued practices of disruptive innovation and a commitment to seeking creative autonomy over profit. Practicing DIY in a digital age may mean increased visibility and a belonging to multiple micro cultures. However, this chapter reveals how a shared grassroots approach to music-making continues to connect DIY to its Punk past.

## 6.0 Establishing a space

This chapter aims to focus in further detail on the range of activities taking place in DIY spaces and events and how these and shared reciprocity values aim to inspire the amateur musicians' approach to micro-scale music making. Whilst chapter 2.0 explored the 'hanging out' heritage of Punk and how past local traditions influence the DIY spaces and events, this chapter will look at the current social capital and community building aspects of DIY. Including an account of a typical DIY event, there will also be a focus in this chapter on what is involved in setting up a DIY event and how DIY communities have a shared desire to reclaim disused, non-commercial city spaces.

Micro-scale music making continues to centre around the face-to-face interactions between musicians taking place on a local level. In the case of DIY, collectives of bands and musicians have responded to a need for autonomous spaces for music practice and performance in their towns and cities by pooling their own local knowledge and funds to acquire large but affordable venues. By welcoming other local amateur artists to use the space, an alternative non-commercial music scene has been taking shape. Amateur musicians' re-imagining of disused urban spaces in Nottingham has seen the establishing of several DIY communities in the city, each with their own unique contribution to an expanding local music scene.

*"It makes a difference, everyone's in a good mood, it really helps. Like you said at the start most people have full time jobs now and you go there and you can forget all that. have some food start feeling like you're a musician. Put a show on for people." (Jake).*

DIY spaces tend to be set up in less affluent city neighborhoods, perhaps as Lloyd (2002) reports as a way of increasing autonomy. Nottingham DIY's creative reimagining of a grocery warehouse has added cultural value to the area, inspiring other arts projects to set up in cheap to rent buildings nearby. A similar phenomenon can be observed in towns and cities across the UK and it is now the interactions between these communities both online and offline which gives DIY its own identity within an increasingly global music industry. A distinct feature of DIY is that it is a decentralised network of interconnected communities with no formal rules or boundaries to music making set out by a central body. The musicians within these communities describe a creative autonomy and freedom to experiment with existing styles and conventions of performance and production.

Affordable rehearsal space is an essential amenity for the part-time musician and band who must seize any opportunity they can get to

meet up and practice. As well as offering storage space for band's merchandise, sound equipment and instruments, the rehearsal areas are a popular and pivotal facility offered in the DIY space. Work had begun on expanding the DIY space observed during this research project to include a large rehearsal room for artists to use prior to a gig or recording studio time. An emphasis is placed on the opportunity to offer local bands and musicians the tools to create and hone their craft. The lack of a shared DIY recording space in Cambridge city means that the participants seek out affordable rooms and buildings to rent themselves, with one participant revealing how a local bass player he often collaborates with is currently renting a space in a factory building in Huntington where they rehearse and record together. He explained how this was a far more creative, engaging and therefore preferred experience than for example having to lay a drumbeat down on a keyboard in isolation at their home.

Seeking out local disused spaces has resulted in a creative reimagining of public spaces. It is the spaces themselves which just as the sXe scene (Haenfleur, 2004) achieved, allows for the challenging of mainstream cultures and opportunity to create alternatives. This can involve the altering of meanings of commodities (Clarke 1993), with a type of bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1962) that places emphasis instead on the social aspects of music artefacts and buildings. In the case of the latter, the reclaiming of city industrial spaces by DIY communities correlates with Cohen's critiquing of Gramsci's concept of hegemony in subcultures territorial claiming of their own "space" as an act of resistance 'and investing it with "subcultural value"' (Gelder, 2007: 90). One of the participants who formed a collective of artists running shows in a local leisure centre, whilst another group of artists had set up a DIY gig night in a pizza takeaway. Just as the sXe music scene in Haenfleur's study emerged as a product of the times and culture it resisted, DIY has emerged in a time of an increasingly disposable, ephemeral attitude to music trends and digital consumption. Relating our study to Haenfleur's (2004) observation of the contextual and many-layered nature of resistance as opposed to static and uniform, DIY as a practice of reimagining abandoned spaces and social objects as well as a musical style is multi-layered in this sense and so is its resistance.

The musicians we spoke to quickly discovered that there are a lot of practical things to consider, such as appropriate facilities for the general public, accessibility, safety precautions and cleanliness. The two musicians running the space in Nottingham explained how once they began to fulfil these practicalities and respond to visitors' needs

they began to draw in more punters beyond their own friends and musical peers.

As DIY venues tend to be in disused urban spaces, turning these into music venues requires a degree of creativity and ingenuity from the artists. How to make best use of the space was very much a gradual process at the Nottingham space with money made on the door contributing to the upkeep and allowing additions such as sofas and decorative components to make a once empty and cold warehouse an inviting social space. There was a true sense of achievement shared by the musicians as they saw the venue take shape;

*“there’s radiators, it’s clean, it’s generally tidy before the shows start, we’ve got nicer lighting, we’ve made best use of the space, sofas are all at the back whereas before it was all kind of like higgledy-piggledy. It was kind of like, people just played there and we were like ok that doesn’t really work as we wanted people to be able to stand and watch and stuff” (Vince).*

## **DIY audiences**

The Nottingham and Cambridge participants talked about how live audiences validated and gave meaning to their music practice, and gaining an audience was regarded as a significant step for the amateur;

*“...that, kind of, objective, thumbs up is always, always gives me a, kind of, warm glow. It just, and, you know, it just makes you think you’re not working in isolation and people are interested and, you know, there is some, kind of, I don’t know, value to what you’re doing or what you spend your time doing.” (Peter).*

There is a blurring of boundaries with many musicians in the audience on a typical DIY gig night, creating a sense of homogeneity amongst the attendees of a gig at any given time. Even if the musician performing does not know any of the audience members personally, they assume that a certain percentage will be band members or part-time musicians themselves;

*“...you see regular faces there...you tend to see people who know bands or are in bands themselves mainly. then you always get a smaller contingent of people who are just really, they just love live music...”. (Jake).*

On the whole, participants described their experiences of playing at DIY Nottingham and other DIY spaces as playing to friends and that

belonging to a DIY community meant expanding an existing kinship network;

*“we probably playing to the same 20 people in every city when we started but I really like that, thats the one thing about touring that’s great, seeing old friends, and making lots of new friends as well”. (Jamie).*

There was a sense of pride when unknown faces began to attend their gigs;

*“When you start you’ve got zero fans and you get your friends to be your fans then quickly your friends stop coming to your gigs and then you get people you dont know, and when you see faces you dont know...we played Leeds and it was full and we didn't know anyone there and it was probably one of the best gigs we ever played, that was a really good feeling, people you dont know coming up to you and saying that was really good’ ‘I think with things like Twitter you find theres more people who you don’t know out there who like you than you realised” (Callum).*

With some of the participants preferring not to use the term ‘Fans’ when describing their audiences, this was a contested term in the interviews, with many participants believing that either all or the majority of their audience members as their friends or individuals they knew. Establishing personal connections with individuals locally motivated both the Cambridge and Nottingham musicians to seek out shared spaces where serendipitous meetings could take place.

For the Cambridge musicians without access to a space for regular meetings like DIY Nottingham, musician coordinated events tended to be more sporadic;

*“Getting people to turn up at strange venues just to see us is very difficult”.*

Pubs were revealed as popular hangouts as the more traditional live music venues centred around particular scenes or taste communities act as hubs for the amateurs in Cambridge.

Whilst the ubiquity and global aspect of online communications means that the amateur musicians can affordably contact hundreds of promoters and audiences at the touch of a button, the often faceless nature of these made participants find the process soul destroying;

*“...is quite soul destroying because you have to send hundreds and hundreds of emails, and then you might get one reply out of that. So*



*all the emails you send, you try to make them a bit personal and everything, rather than using a big mailing list” (Pierre).*

## **Creative control**

Holding onto creative control and managing the use of a DIY space and the bands who perform in it, these artists try to limit any outsourcing and keep all production and gig management in-house. After having shared experiences of being a new band with a distinct style and struggling to get a worthwhile gig experience in a commercial venue that didn't involve paying upfront to perform at the venue or giving the majority of money made on the door to the venue itself, many DIY musicians decided to join the DIY scene.

A key characteristic of the current DIY music scene is this frustration shared amongst musicians who reacted to this negative commercial gigging experience by setting up spaces and regular gig nights themselves. As this means that DIY shows tend to be held in non-commercial venues, artists are able to equally share any profits made on the door and have more of an input into the planning of a gig and the gig space itself. For example, as one participant pointed out that it is often the case in commercial venues that you get the same band (who are not necessarily the best band in the area) playing regularly at a venue because they are the only band that can afford to pay for the gig and the exposure. One of the main objectives of a DIY space is to ensure that there are a diversity of bands playing every week, local bands get equal slot time as bigger or touring bands on a bill, and the gig experience is kept fresh and up-to-date for the audience. Money made on the door is then shared equally amongst the bands on the bill, which creates a friendly atmosphere between artists before and during a gig and makes for a better gig experience.

The non-commercial, bring your own booze model to the DIY event also encourages an active listening audience as opposed to the typical ‘Saturday night’ audience who are out drinking in town and have just stumbled across the live music as opposed to actively seeking it. With the appropriate amount of promotion online prior to a DIY gig, bands can expect to get a healthy number of audience members in comparison to the typical commercial bar venue. DIY promoters and venue organisers tend to be in bands themselves, as is the case with the DIY Nottingham where the organisers Paul and Vince who both play in local bands decided to give DIY gig hosting a go, because they say they found that there were not the type of Rock venues available with the right kind of atmosphere for the bands they knew and there was demand from both music fans and artists in the area for this type of music venue.

The bands who manage the space tend to form the central point to a local DIY circuit; most of the local bands will be aware of their gig nights and their connections with other touring bands, and this band will often approach other bands they know are touring in the region to come and play at an event. This band will also connect other bands through their contacts, and suggest bands which may work well together on a bill. This is a key networking strategy to the maintaining of the DIY scene, as upcoming bands will aim to get in touch with these individuals and will rely on their knowledge of the local scene and their ability to form connections between bands who may aspire to go on tour with other musicians. Vince and Paul explained how it did not take long for word to get out about their DIY venue as the bands they knew and their connecting fan bases helped to quickly spread the word and their gigs grew in popularity. Bands assisting and promoting each other locally ensures that a DIY approach to promotion, distribution and touring is feasible, and it also then strengthens a musician's connections with other venues and musicians throughout the rest of the UK and Europe.

A key way of distinguishing DIY music today with amateur musician communities of the past is musicians' shared ambitions to tour Europe whilst working full time outside of music, and how feasible and achievable this ambition can be if you are connected to a DIY network of artists and promoters.<sup>4</sup> Two participants explained how there are '*two windows of opportunity*' in the year as Carl put it, during spring and towards the end of the summer when UK artists are able to tour Europe together and have multiple tour dates. This is very popular amongst DIY artists who end up competing for gigs in the same venues.

There are similar DIY venues throughout Europe and many of the UK DIY venue spaces have been modelled on these spaces and their approach to arranging gigs. Bands have returned from Europe describing a very positive gig experience where food was provided for all musicians, bands had lengthy slots and there was a feeling of respect, inclusivity and equality felt amongst artists. The DIY Nottingham venue organisers emphasised their determination to match this experience in their venue, offering meals for bands and a place to stay after a gig, rehearsal space and equal billing with other bands. A characteristic also of both the typical European and UK DIY gig noted by participants is how artists mingle prior to a show and watch each others' sets, giving each other valuable peer recognition and feedback. Bands are known to organise tours after sharing a bill with other artists at a DIY gig as well as form collaborations on

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<sup>4</sup> See Urry, 2003

record. A few participants noted the sharing also of 'gear' or equipment at DIY gigs, with for example bands arriving last minute from another town relying on the local band's amps or drum kit for the gig. This sharing attitude creates a sense of community in the DIY space where acts of reciprocity and a responsibility for the upkeep of the space are encouraged, giving added social capital value to the DIY gig experience.

There is an almost uniform standard to DIY spaces, so the musician knows what to expect when travelling to another venue for the first time. Speaking to a band from Liverpool travelling to play at DIY Nottingham, they described the average DIY gig space compared to a commercial venue as catering for a more niche market and a more up-close and personal experience with the audience;

*"...you'd rather have a hundred people in a smaller room, hot and sweaty, averaging 60 people at our gigs and it feels packed. You'd rather have a much smaller gig with more people actually into the music" (Callum).*

This band formed a group of bands in Liverpool who collectively organise and put on DIY gigs, and as demonstrated by their visit to Nottingham, tours are often organised based on connections made at DIY shows, with gigs often organised last minute after getting in touch with a band in another area of the UK after they had come to play in their local venue.

Acts of reciprocity are a vital way of keeping the costs of touring low; for example, a band may offer a place to crash after a gig and that band will then offer the same in return when they are visiting their local area. These mutual acts of good will ensure that bands are able to affordably tour around the UK and DIY gig goers are able to see a diversity of bands from around the UK, the US and Europe every week as there is a constant network of musicians travelling from city to city. The prominent DIY venues form a circuit for musicians, a way for bands to quickly establish themselves in a particular music scene (Math Rock, post-Rock and 'shoe-gazey' being the dominant DIY genres) and expand their fan base beyond their local area. Interviewees also discussed the added benefit of being able to play in more unusual spaces, giving them valuable experience of playing to diverse audiences.

## **A typical DIY Nottingham event**

The typical DIY Nottingham gig involves three to four separate acts who are sometimes related by genre but not always, and the gigs last for approximately 2 and half hours, aiming to finish by 11pm at the

latest. There is a strictness to this finishing time, as the DIY organisers regularly remind punters and musicians that they could have their space shut down by the local authorities if they are reported to be disturbing residents in the area. One promoter also explained that the finish by 11pm rule worked well also for encouraging those punters who might be planning on making their way into town later in the evening and fancy seeing a few bands live first;

*“it’s good start to your Friday night, a cheap start to your Friday night. Because most people will be at home having a carry-out anyway, so go see a few bands, have a carry-out there. Make’s way more sense, plus it doesn’t cost you as much. cause you can head onto jam cafe in town later, and you’re rinsing your money, its gone. it also ends up very messy as well though...it’s always good craic” (Carl).*

A respectful and civil behaviour is expected of both audiences and musicians, with posters in the space indicating to use recycling bins, not to loiter or act aggressively when standing on the street outside the venue in-between sets or after shows as this may also put the venue’s future in jeopardy. On the odd occasion, the organisers have posted to regular attendees on their Facebook page when complaints are made to remind them of these rules and how ‘we do not want our gig space taken from us!’. Despite the odd disturbance to these norms of the space, the organisers have stated that they find the audience to be very civil and respectful, with one promoter stating that he could not think of a single occasion when there had been trouble at a DIY gig. One interviewee suggested that the focus on the music rather than on drinking has a positive influence on the DIY gig experience, whereas disturbances were more common in the commercial drink-oriented venue.

The average entry cost for a DIY gig is £3, and DIY promoters in Nottingham stated that intended to provide good ‘*value for money... a pound per band generally*’ (Ryan). One regular local performer also explained that if the admission price was fair they tended to find that audience members were more inclined to purchase music or merchandise from the bands at the end of a show. With doors opening usually 45 minutes prior to the first band performing on a night, vinyl records are usually played in the space whilst the band sets up, selected by the bands, organisers and audience members. By placing vinyl and handcrafted artefacts in prime positions in the space and turning these into events themselves there is a managing of impressions that others including their audiences have of them (Goffman, 1959).

With seats and sofas dotted around the performance room, audience members commonly talk to bands and meet others at the start of the evening. There are typically 20-40 people in the audience and this fills the space to capacity. As Paul and Vince point out, not only does this make the DIY gig a manageable event for the part-time musician and promoter (as they stated they intended to keep audience numbers to this level and to host smaller rather than bigger bands which would be 'unmanageable') but it also helps to distinguish the DIY venue experience again from the commercial venue experience.

The small space aims to make bands feel further connected with their audience and allows for a more intimate feel. There is a sort of living room atmosphere to the space which appears to be an intentional choice to give a friendly, inviting impression to perhaps the more reluctant, new and unsure audience member; there are quirky lampshades (which have now become the iconic image of the space printed on t-shirts and bags sold by the promoters) and records placed on coffee tables.

DIY Nottingham is typical of the DIY spaces to be found currently across the UK; held in a disused grocery warehouse (as DIY spaces tend to vacate urban spaces empty or abandoned) and on the outskirts of the city where rent is more affordable. Paul and Vince who run the DIY Nottingham space explained how the recent relaxing of laws on late night shows and gigs had helped make the setting up of independent arts and music spaces in the UK more achievable and a popular way to create and promote more unusual music and arts events. This was regarded as something which had given rebirth to the kinds of amateur music practices more common in the days of Punk and prior to the eventual commercialisation of a rave party scene in the early nineties. On first meeting, they pointed out a similar DIY space across the street who they worked closely with, and a new space which had just been established around the corner.

## **6.1 Live to digital identity**

All participants discussed the benefits of seeking audiences for their releases and shows online. However, with the prevalence of spambots, a question of the authenticity of social media exchanges in both how they might be perceived by the public and vice versa concerned participants. Participants were skeptical of the value and usefulness of online promotion services that allow artists to promote their posts on people's news feeds for a small fee. Instead, many chose to discuss the benefits of playing live regularly and interacting with their audiences face-to-face;

*“I think I, you know, I should actually be getting out there and playing as much as possible and getting real followers because that’s what’s actually going to help my career in the long-term, not paying money to have ten followers.” (George).*

In viewing DIY as the fostering of local interconnected communities of musicians across the UK in reaction to an evolving music industry economy, through both traditional and new forms of cultural production DIY artists can be observed as reclaiming the live music audience and negotiating with them the aesthetics, norms and values of their performance (the space, live and digital interactions, the sound quality etc.). This is perhaps about a wish to provoke debate surrounding what constitutes authentic music practice and how is it experienced. It might also aim to inspire artists to nurture new creative practices and live music experiences. It may also involve a collective consideration of the possibility of it no longer being essential to have a mediator for these productions and performances in the digital creative economy age and to consider the opportunities for increased authenticity when the arbitrator (promoter, label etc.) is removed from the process of music production and consumption. Through the shared organisation of regular live events and fan/artist interactions through both digital and face-to-face communications, DIY artists can be observed as ceasing control of existing mediums for interactions with fans with the advent of shared negotiated music distribution sites such as Soundcloud, Bandcamp, Tumblr, Vimeo and Youtube. Whilst providing new opportunities for artists wishing to try out creative practices with other artists in existing and upcoming local music scenes, by enabling a direct communication between the artist and their fans on these free open services, DIY artists are putting music consumers in direct contact with the originators of that music.

Dividing their time between live interaction in the spaces and promoting their music online was a main topic of discussion during the interviews and something which defined how they interpreted their amateur music practice. The combining of these two practices is something which is constantly reviewed and revised by the musicians as they consider how they intend their audiences to engage with their music.

## **6.2 Situating DIY practice**

The once limiting boundaries of musical style which defined a musician’s allegiance to a local music scene and amateur musician community (Finnegan, 2007) broaden the defining of DIY music in a digital age. There was a sense of a widening of a public forum for music interpretation beyond the physical performance spaces, with

for example participants engagement with audiences online altering their own perceptions of their music style;

*“found the Insights [?] page on the back of that but it... You know, it's not like I'm sitting here conceiving marketing schemes based on what happens in my thing but somewhere in here is a... Gender and age split, so there you go. So, most people are like 35 and up, a small number in 65 pluses. Good for them. And like bugger all in the young and funky and, you know... If you like approach middle age, then it's more and more relevant to you.” (Steve)*

In a very similar way to the Nottingham DIY community, the Cambridge musicians were experimenting with genre boundaries, embracing a mixing culture that is shaping much of the activities within a national DIY scene. These activities however were much more focused on their home and studio recording practices rather than the mixing of genres in live performances, the organisation of these between individuals with separate affiliations to particular styles and tastes, and in DIY rehearsal and recording spaces that we witnessed in Nottingham.

There is an entrepreneurial spirit in communities of interest now as von Hippel suggests, ‘morphing into communities of creation and communities of production’ (Bollier, 2009: 248). Bollier uses the example of Threadless, a Chicago t-shirt company who have built a successful company by involving their user community in the design process of each t-shirt. Communities of interest with a common goal benefit from the sharing of innovations stimulated by digital technologies, and in the case of music a sharing attitude prevalent in sampling can lead to the reinventing and ‘remixing’ of styles and tastes (Lessig, 2008). For amateurs, Creative Commons allows for the legitimisation of this activity. All of the musicians talked about experimenting with different genres, and in some examples forming informal improvisation bands with other local musicians to play a certain style of music for pleasure rather than pursuing a serious music direction. This reflected a more traditional form of musical experimentation still shaping amateur music practice and our observations revealed how the shared spaces in which the musicians jam reveal how there are still the more conventional genre-defined identities at play. The musicians discussed their experiences of how

the genre-orientation of music shapes the groupings of musicians online.<sup>5</sup>

Bill, one of the Cambridge musicians reflected how DIY as a way of defining a shared approach to creating music amongst musicians online perhaps encompassed all genres and influenced musicians of differing styles to approach each other online;

*“When you got to put your genres on the online things I usually just put either psychedelia, alternative, or DIY [?], if they've got it. I like that best. I don't know. There's kind of a setting, a general, catchall term, DIY. I suppose people who're after that might give any style of music a go if it's in that remit.”(Bill).*

The importance of obtaining social capital through the expertise of certain genres and scenes which distanced their identities from a mainstream was discussed in detail during the interviews when participants revealed their processes of creating connections with musicians attached to particular music scenes (with sub-genres of Punk, Folk and Math Rock being key scenes mentioned) in areas of the UK, America and Europe for regular gig opportunities;

*“So i'm like, I've got a tour so you booked us so how about you can book a band for me and then we can do that again so it kind of goes, everyones kind of exchanging services when it suits and sometimes it ends up being that we play on tour as well and sometimes its not but either way you know that its us who have set it up.” (Vince)*

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<sup>5</sup> This genre oriented way of distinguishing between different music communities online is arguably mirrored by the importance the amateur musicians place on situating their music styles and influences. Knowledge of the *origin* of scenes and their communities of musicians and audiences becomes a key aspect of cultural capital exchanged between the musicians and those running or attached to DIY spaces. In the social ambiguities which surround understandings of place, social identity and tradition in an increasingly globalised world, it is the continual existence and use of the term 'subculture' to describe such music communities which challenges an overarching sense of cultural homogenisation. On the other hand, there is also an appropriating of styles and practices traditionally defined as 'subcultural' by a global mainstream, making an increasingly ubiquitous DIY scene harder to distinguish. Reflecting on Cagle (1995), Bennett (1999) observes here a weakening of the use of the term 'subculture' if there are to be observed both mainstream and anti-mainstream subcultures. Thornton (1995) suggests how it is 'subcultural capital' which Dance clubs use to distinguish themselves from a mainstream. This also relates to Strachan's (2007) discussion of how DIY micro-labels create myths of the mainstream music industry in order to justify and make sense of their own activities. They favour informal social capital over the economic capital defining a mainstream industry.



Individuals are aware of the value of their knowledge of particular scenes, audiences, bands, venues, promoters in particular locations and despite a co-operative, inclusive attitude this information is tactically shared with an inner circle of contacts or hidden from a wider amateur network. Access to this knowledge must be earned through social and gig activity and demonstrating a commitment to a scene, with the latter becoming something that can be increasingly proven without physical space attendance and instead through online networking. This means that in the case of both Nottingham and Cambridge musicians, they are connected to multiple music scenes with norms of practice not necessarily predetermined by the social meetings in fixed spaces.

Exploring more broadly this community making on an international scale, there is a similar defining of these by shared identity of musical style and taste as previously observed in face-to-face social meetings (Finnegan, 2007). For example, Harris (2000) explores how a Brazilian Death Metal band were able to travel across the world with their music by being attached to an international metal scene rather than building a reputation amongst a metal community locally. Looking at the Extreme Metal scene's emergence in the late 1980's and how it eventually became a successful popular music genre, Harris (2000) highlights how at its early stage of growth the scene was always highly decentralised; a large majority of its participants had never met anybody from it face to face and it had never been reliant on local scenes. Relating this to the Metal band Sepultura, Harris observes how their music did not reflect on their Brazilian background and instead they produced very similar sounding music to other Metal bands around the world who were also operating in a global scene. In terms of cultural and economic capital on a global scale, this raises questions of the continual importance of locality and a sense of place in music production and 'scene' management on both an independent (DIY) and mainstream level.

Here we can also reflect on Shields (1992) argument in reference to Maffesoli that tribal identities reveal the temporal nature of collective identities in a modern consumer society with individuals moving between sites of collective expression, reconstructing themselves accordingly. Relating this to Bennett's discussion of neo-tribalism and more loosely defined musical tastes, our observations of DIY reveal a more fluid movement of individuals between DIY spaces and their practices (art, music, writing, mixing styles, crafting, etc.).

In recognising perhaps that no form of musical practice can take place entirely separately from social processes (Harris, 2000), then DIY activity observed in this study which is taking place both in a local music venue by a music collective and individually in a private

space contribute to the fabrication of, and capital exchange operating within, a DIY 'scene'. As Straw (1991) observes, scenes are constantly in movement and are never static, following particular 'logics of change'. Global and local scenes have often been viewed as dependent on each other but at the same time both can produce their own unique forms of practices and capital (Harris, 2000). Here is a global/local relationship which DIY musicians find themselves at the centre of. Interviews and observations reveal the value of situating music practices in physical spaces and local contexts and that efforts to maintain these through the coordinating of DIY spaces and gigs act as a way of claiming ownership of a way of performing music which distinguishes their practice when seeking to make connections with others elsewhere. This can in turn be interpreted as a way of grounding their music in existing traditions of cultural capital and giving their music practice added authenticity.

### **6.3 Genre oriented promotion**

Conversations between the musicians in the spaces and during the interviews were centred around the importance of promotion activity in supporting their local live scenes and the DIY spaces and events. Promoting their live events and spaces importantly involves remote collaborations and online networking activity. The participants were aware of how rather than limiting their music experience to one scene, music audiences participate in a variety of cultural practices and gain social capital in doing so (Peterson/Simkus, 1992). As a result, the term DIY for some represented a willingness to explore different styles of music;

*"...we're starting more in a kind of [pause] more experimental DIY type scene, and we're kind of nowadays kind of gravitating a bit more towards a more kind of [pause] I don't know, like, I was going to say kind of pop based; not really that, but kind of a bit [pause] yes. We're just kind of [pause] yes, we like to do different things."(Pierre).*

The Cambridge musicians were more inclined to describe their own live audiences and shows by genre, and not in the sense of a particular 'scene' in the way that some of the Nottingham musicians would describe their attachments to particular venues with devoted audiences in the city. This gave the impression that in contrast to the Nottingham musicians with access to a fixed DIY space, the Cambridge musicians were socialising at long established genre-defined venues, conforming to the norms of an existing commercial live music industry in Cambridge that works within the parameters of mainstream genre expectations and conventions.

A clear example of this was Peter's describing of his current tour with another musician as having a strong genre identity, but then going on to explain how artists do not like to pigeon-hole themselves when it comes to describing their own music ambitions and outputs;

*"[My current live tour] is very much a pure capital F Folk thing, where we've taken traditional source recordings and, you know, that's what it's about. It's not, it's not really about mixing genres or updating it in any, you know, self-conscious way, which maybe, which is, to be frank, is probably more the case with my recorded output. I would find it quite difficult to actually define my recorded output because, I mean, I'm, sort of, very consciously using this template of a, of a, kind of, solo acoustic guitar to explore all sorts of other genres that I am interested in alongside that... Yes, people, people don't, wouldn't want to define themselves as, oh, with Rock or oh, with this or oh, with that. Because unless, unless, you're the kind of band that is deliberately going out to replicate only one particular sound, in many cases musicians are interested in exploring different aspects of music or listening to different sorts of things and trying to incorporate that. So, it would be, kind of, you know, the, I guess in many cases people would see it as, kind of, self-defeating to say, oh, I'm this or I'm that." (Peter)*

## **6.4 Sharing music with a wider community**

Although significant time and effort is put into their online profiles and communication with audiences and a wider network, participants on the whole aimed to limit these practices so as not to interfere with their commitment to playing live. This was something which influenced posts amongst the musicians and their audiences about attending shows regularly and remembering that this was the prime motivator for their online communications. Alongside the promoting of their own music and theirs and others' gigs and tours, private messaging and email are the primary ways in which the musicians keep in touch with each other. If the aim of public posts promoting shows is to mobilise audiences and the musicians contributing or willing to contribute to an event, private messaging is adopted for negotiating the activities in the spaces. The line-ups for upcoming events, the potential for collaborations during and after shows as well as the facilities and payments expected by the musicians performing in the space are some of the key factors negotiated by those hosting the events or performing at a DIY venue. These online interactions aim to instigate live shows, promote them and sustain direct communication between musicians and between their audiences. Therefore, participants revealed how any postings of live footage or recordings they make online seek only to promote live gigs in the spaces rather than to replace them. This is an important aspect of

the online activities of the amateur musicians within a DIY network and one which might distinguish them from the mainstream professional musicians adopting online forms of communication.

Many of the participants talked about how musicians practicing DIY, regardless of whether they are already connected and belonged to an established local DIY scene are ultimately looking to network with others online. The mass rejection of the MySpace platform amongst artists was a popular discussion in the interviews, dispersing a band community amongst the social platforms that are not oriented around music;

*“I've got to admit I miss MySpace, for bands that was really good, because it mixed... so you had the popularity of Facebook in that era, about 2005 to 2007, but you also had a service that was designed well for the bands... The way MySpace used to be, I loved that, and I thought that was great, but that's not that they changed it necessarily, it's just that everyone left, you know, migrated to Facebook.” (Bill)*

No longer grounded in one platform, this displaced both the amateur musician community and their audiences online. For many of the participants interviewed, the central hub offered a sense of belonging when online communication can often make individuals feel isolated. Amongst the musicians interviewed there was a personal preoccupation in maintaining an authentic voice which they observed as importantly influenced by the medium in which their music is interacted with.

## **6.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity is a constantly evolving method of artistry and identity, and ultimately is the way in which DIY artists communicate accurately their thoughts and feelings with honesty and integrity. More broadly in addition to lyrical content, it can also relate to performance sound and style, and whether the artist feels they have accurately portrayed the performance traditions of a particular genre. A question which has further meaning today when considering the effects that the digital world has had on music consumption is, when a piece of music is continuously reproduced (digital streaming, downloading, remixing) and reinterpreted (sampling, visualised), does it lose its original meaning? These processes can dislocate a piece of music, decontextualize it and encourage a greater distance in a listeners' experience between a piece of music's live context and its digital reproduction.

In the viewing of vinyl and tape as more authentic formats for listening to music, there is the work of a 'collective memory' at play (Halbwachs, 1992). Redhead (2008) discusses how recent mainstream Folk artists such as The Pogues are able to 'sing about and fix attention upon a common sense of history, to establish a (mythical) past which we share - or at least identify with' (Redhead/Street, 2008: 181). Through the limited edition records and the selling of these at DIY distros, musicians are able to fix attention on the DIY spaces themselves as a key aspect of their identities and the community identity. Perhaps also the self-destructing nature of vinyl and tapes (a challenging of the perpetual quality of online media sharing) ensure that activities and the spaces themselves are mythologised.

This chapter has uncovered how despite a distinct feature of DIY being its decentralised model of interconnected communities, there are shared values of promoting live face-to-face performances amongst the amateur musicians who contribute to DIY gigs and spaces. Acts of reciprocity are also central to the sustaining of the amateur musicians' activity and were observed as a value shared by the musicians in both Nottingham and Cambridge. In seeking to promote the adopting of disused city spaces to provide affordable DIY activity to take place in UK cities, the amateur musicians in this study advocate a continued value of the exchanging of cultural capital in real-world meetings. However, there is a looser defining of music identities evident at these events and this is also reflected in the mixing of styles and tastes online. Whilst establishing spaces situates DIY activity in a fixed time and space, there is a more fluid movement of individuals between DIY spaces and their practices.

## 7.0 Getting online

### Digital assisting the local

Whilst the last chapter explored more broadly at the activities involved in establishing a DIY space, this chapter will look more closely at the ways in which the amateur musicians are adopting online promoting and distributing methods. Focusing on cross-promoting and the relationship between online and offline networking between the musicians, this chapter will explore how online communicating is influencing real-world interactions at DIY events and spaces.

For the amateur musicians reliant on the gigging opportunities alongside the distributing of their music beyond their local area that a membership to a DIY community can provide, it is the sharing of DIY show details online and a mobilising of musicians and their audiences through social media which ensures the success of a DIY event. This chapter aims to uncover the online networking and promoting strategies shared by the amateur musicians in our study.

Beer interprets Web 2.0 applications as 'enabling a reconfiguration of the relations and organization of music culture' with users taking shared responsibility (Beer, 2008 : 224). The success story of the bands The Libertines and the Arctic Monkeys in the early days of social media demonstrated how independent artists with limited funds and without promotional backing are able to quickly generate hype and a following by the sharing of information between audiences. For amateur musicians on a limited budget, the quick, cheap and accessibility of online communications has made these an essential tool in an online age. Online social networking has supported these artists ambition to cut out the middleman commercial promoter or venue owner and to promote and organise events for themselves. The musicians themselves thus become the face of the gig nights and the spaces they perform in. There is also a desire to distance themselves from the more hard-sell, branding tactics adopted by commercial gig promoters online;

*“our online presence is just anyone who's interested can find out where the gigs are and stuff. we're not really interested in pushing like a brand, as opposed to like, it's a DIY thing come down, heres a gig”(Joe).*

A more personal and direct relationship with their audience members as well as those musicians invited to join a line-up means that a more subtle approach to announcing gig nights online is favoured over the aggressive approach or a commercial style to the visuals and titles attached to their gig posts. This sets apart the DIY space to the

commercial venues competing for news feed space and maintains an alternative, underground identity.

All of the participants revealed that their crucial adoption of social media is to get gigs and this was the main benefit of spending time networking with others online. Most of their email correspondence concerned chasing gig slots and reminding those key influential individuals and venues of their eagerness to play at events. Whilst some of the Cambridge participants started off by busking and having promoters approach them that way, many advocated that social networking both online and offline was the only way in which to get regular gig opportunities in the city; *“if you don’t have networking you have nothing basically. People have said to other people, you should have her in a gig and that’s still going on now, so it’s not really that I have to find gigs, it’s that people offer and I’m, like, oh that’s brilliant thank you and, yes, it goes from there, yes.”* (Jess). On many occasions, their efforts would not be rewarded and their emails ignored or forgotten, but participants believed that the labour put into getting in contact with people online was worth it for the times when it did pay off. When discussing an approach to networking with promoters via email correspondence, despite the ability to send a standard request out to a large number of individuals with the click of a button, a personal approach to emailing was favoured overall. This supported an observed shared commitment to maintain a close-knit network of promoters and musicians fostered on face-to-face interactions;

*“it’s a lot of emailing all the right people, trying to personalise emails a bit as well so they don’t read it and think, this is just, like, he’s sent this email to everyone. It’s got to be, like, maybe if you’ve already got a relationship with someone as well it helps, so if you’ve been doing it on a regular basis and you’ve got some kind of existing dialogue”* (Jack).

However, the musicians also talked about contacting bands they came across online to get gigs in different cities or venues with Twitter breaking down some of the network membership barriers by allowing individuals to make searchable public requests;

*“The other way is just someone contacts us, like, the same way you... If someone finds us online and goes, oh, I found a band... you guys online – do you want to come to our venue and play a gig? And the other way, which is actually quite cool, and it, kind of, takes the pressure off a little bit, is I use Twitter now and again.”* (Jack).

Facebook in particular was adopted by the majority of the bands as a way of coordinating band activity and sharing updates via private groups and messaging;

*“So you’ve got... obviously, there’s the page that I run, there. There are the members. That’s me. So he posts when he’s got the rooms booked. That was yesterday, so he said... no; the 28th was yesterday, so tomorrow we’ve got another one and the first and then the fourth. And people say the ones they can come to and not come to...And so this way all the organising stuff happens, where I say we’re doing this or if I get an e-mail saying would you like a gig here I put it there and say is everyone free on that date and people come on and say yes or no. Everybody checks it...So, yes, it’s very useful.”*  
(John)

With each new DIY space set-up comes an opportunity for the existing network to expand. The spaces are more likely to be set-up in connected cities and towns rather than the more rural or remote areas, with musicians going to their nearest large city to get gigs and host gigs with friends. In the case of one participant, after failed attempts to set a space up in his local area of Stratford-upon-Avon, he helped to set up a space and a label in nearby Birmingham. By strengthening connections with bands in Birmingham, the musicians in Stratford-upon-Avon were able to set up a sizeable network of artists across the Midlands to justify hosting a regular gig night in Birmingham as well as offer gigs to artists in other cities like Nottingham. It was this process of establishing a scene despite living in a smaller town which for one participant demonstrated the scope of DIY in the UK and its networking activity norms shared amongst the musicians;

*“really inspiring again for the reasons of being in such a crap small town and there being other people into music and trying to do something different...we put on their bands and they put us on countless times now and i’ve released records by other bands they both play in, and stuff like that so yeah so now we’re all good friends which is really great”* (Jamie).

Like the Nottingham DIY community, the Cambridge musicians very much rely on the networking and promotional services which social media and music platforms provide. Playing a circuit and documenting your local gigging activity online can establish a band in a live scene. Participants commented on how by making their gigs visible online via their websites and Facebook pages, this allowed local promoters to see that they were playing well-known venues in a circuit and approach the band directly. For those unable to rely on the high visibility online and the cross-promoting activities of a local DIY space or circuit, this proves a vital way to create a sense of hype and activity surrounding a band if individuals are coming across them online.



However, there is still an underlying tension with the advances of digital music consumption and how these might impact on existing traditional amateur music practices; the continual pull factor of live shows put on by amateur musicians on a limited budget and the desired ways in which they would like their audiences to engage with their music. For a scene that has held onto its traditional Folk, pub Rock and solo acoustic roots, Cambridge can be a closed-off gigging climate for upcoming bands with perhaps a more unusual sound and the continual dominance of pubs as key venues for pulling audiences means that creating an event that centres around the music can be a tricky task. Unlike the Nottingham DIY attendees, the Cambridge amateur community must fight for access to space in the city, which is heavily influenced by the University occupying and determining the use of large areas of the city centre.

## **7.1 Cross-promoting strategy**

Despite having their own personal band and musician websites which do not necessarily refer directly to their DIY identity, their choice of social platform is strongly influenced by the collective and their peers' opinion of a suitable platform for sharing music. All of the participants in our study chose to distribute and promote their music on Bandcamp, with some also having a Soundcloud profile page. This means that the majority of the amateur musicians performing in DIY venues will be visible on these platforms. With more subtle references to their DIY community membership and approach to music-making displayed on these platforms through tagging and acknowledgements made for DIY recording studios and collaborations with other musicians in the scene, the interactions and connections between individual and communal activities are more direct on the social networking sites. Musicians will often contribute to the discussions on a DIY space group page on Facebook alongside the re-posting and commenting on gig posts which they are performing at. Those running the spaces or gig nights will also post links to bands' own personal websites and music streaming pages, resulting in a cross-promotion of a DIY scene with an individual band's new release. For many of the musicians contributing to a local DIY venue, the promoting of their own music and the space can often be integrated as they tour with other bands attached to the scene or a local venue;

*"I often write to bands, this is a good technique I've found, I write to bands through [our] band account, even if its not bands of similar music, wouldn't be considered same thing, if it's a band we like as a group or that we'd like to maybe network with, we write to them through that and we always mention both sides of it so we write to someone about [DIY Nottingham], we'll often mention that 'oh we're*

*going on tour next week, oh what's your band like The States?' 'oh yeah we know The States' and everything becomes like one thing so if they're someone who likes the band or one of our other bands then they might ask us about a gig at [DIY Nottingham]. And vice versa. If they know that were the guys from The States and we put on their band from Sheffield or Leeds or somewhere, they'll go well we've got a show coming up so. And then we'll do the opposite kind of thing, so it kind of like works that way." (Vince).*

When discussing their own personal webpages, the majority of the Cambridge musicians talked about how they would often share the videos of their fellow local bands and musicians when promoting an upcoming gig where they would be sharing the bill with them, and that this was then reciprocated by the other artist on their site. One of the participants within a close-knit network in Cambridge stated that this would always happen, but whether this would result in an increase in audience numbers or record sales was not clear. Another described being in a genre defined online network of solo guitarists who he called the *"the international brotherhood of solo guitarists"* (Steve), who would always refer to each other's work in posts and create a *"sort of cross-awareness"*. His interpretation of this activity was that followers of that particular scene would listen to the recommendations of their favourite artists within that scene. He described this as an *"emperor's new clothes situation in music"*, in which an influential musician within a scene will draw their followers' attention to a musician, and the audience would explore the music of the artist and would be much more likely *"to get involved"* with the artist and their network of collaborators as a result. The activity of connecting with more homogenised scenes can have its consequences, as Harris (2000) explores how a metal band defined themselves as 'New Metal' in order to join a global mainstream and 'looser' metal scene, but in the process they lost cultural capital in an Extreme Metal scene.

A popular online activity shared amongst both the DIY Nottingham and Cambridge musicians is to tag other bands and musicians associated with a post about a gig or release, such as those who were sharing the bill. The tagging of others creates links between separate bands' audiences; *"Like, the more different kinds of things you use in one post, the more it'll, kind of like, get spread out, if you know what I mean?" (Dylan)*. Participants also talked about how tagging is also a way of getting in touch quickly with an artist you have met at an event post-gig and show their appreciation;

*"I mean, it's very common for, like, after a gig people will say, I really enjoyed playing with so and so last night, or, yes... And people I stay in touch with regularly, musician friends, then they regularly re-tweet and re-post things that I do and vice versa," (George).*

Piecing together a map of venues and a network of promoters and musicians who can offer gigs helps to arrange tours more swiftly. Gig swapping is also a popular practice amongst the musicians;

*“...we kind of just, like, send out emails to lots of promoters that we kind of know by, you know, from other bands or stuff like that, just kind of trying to piece together something that kind of... make a route that kind of makes sense, and it's kind of mostly on the level of that size of the... kind of the [...], sometimes smaller, sometimes bigger, so kind of really varies... usually through email or, like, sometimes exchanging gigs with other bands. Like, so [...], we actually put that gig on at the Portland and they're going to put us on at a gig in Liverpool for the next tour that we do, which we're looking at at the moment for October.”(Pierre).*

Many of the musicians talked about the sharing of videos of gigs and performances filmed by audience members as way of mapping out a community online.

*“I'm not precious enough to say, I'm sorry that was a shit performance can you take that down, please?...to be frank I'm just quite happy that, again, someone has actually put something up there; it just, kind of, raises the profile a little bit more.”(Peter).*

Linking each other's music and videos online can help to make connections with different audiences leading to gig opportunities. One participant also noted how it is often the sharing of media between bloggers which can give a DIY band significant exposure, giving the example of a track off their latest EP that was popular and shared by audiences and friends on their blogs as links and widgets, which had meant it had got far more plays than the other tracks available on their own Soundcloud page. One of the Cambridge bands talked about the popularity of 're-blogging' photos and images of gigs by audiences, choosing to recently set up a Tumblr page which they found is a popular platform for the sharing of gig photos between audience members.

Participants also reflected on the work of bloggers and enthusiasts who interview and report on the live events and releases of amateur musicians as well as creating mix tapes online, which can create links between artists but that these would create a cross-promoting chain that was not necessarily initiated or stimulated by existing communications between those musicians, even though this might be the assumption made by individuals coming across the pages. Often contributing without payment or with the aim to obtain economic capital, these 'cultural entrepreneurs' (as Scott (2012) terms the individuals contributing to a music scene) work for

'exposure, experience, friendship or interest' and perhaps also to sustain a live music scene locally. Exposure on both alternative and mainstream blogs and social media profiles can also result in the fostering of new connections between musicians coming across each others work online;

*“one of the main things that interests us about Twitter and Facebook is the fact that it gets us connected with a lot of different people. So this guy found out about me through BBC introducing’s Twitter, Just William, and then I supported him, and then we both went to Ely Folk Festival.”(Jess).*

This demonstrates how symbolic capital is key to the DIY musician's obtaining of economic capital, and is collected in the sharing of music and media through shared online pages and at the events themselves (Scott, 2012). There were also many examples of the participants promoting the work of bloggers and enthusiasts on their own websites, acknowledging their contribution to underground music scenes and reciprocating their promotion work by helping to further *'spread the word'*. Participants recognise the work of bloggers and enthusiasts, and those who will spread the word about artists, playing a key role in connecting amateur musicians to each other. These individuals will directly introduce musicians to each other through social media platforms, as well as directing their attentions to services supporting the work of amateurs across the country.

Alongside remote collaborations supported by accessible file-sharing and social media services, there was much discussion in the interviews surrounding cross-promotion activities amongst the musicians, and that these according to Anthony tended to be, *“founded in real relationships”*. A few of the Cambridge musicians mentioned the arranging of gigs for local acts by key individuals in their network which would result in links created between musicians when video and audio performances, interviews as well as blogs documenting the events were shared online.

## **7.2 Online to Offline interactions**

The pervasiveness of online music sharing and promotion which can be observed as a threat to the live event has actually encouraged the growth of a DIY network of spaces, allowing the musicians to quickly get in touch with record labels and promoters and be offered gigs by email. This can speed up the process of arranging gigs and tours. Importantly, there is an exchanging of information and contacts via email, with musicians trading their local knowledge of promoters and venues catering for particular music scenes. For one participant, his own approach was not to 'chase gigs around town' and get as many

gigs as possible but rather to maintain contact with those who he knew could offer him an appreciative audience. His musician peers also sought quality over quantity, so he would help to get them in touch with promoters in his city in exchange for their knowledge of gig opportunities elsewhere. As an instrumental solo guitarist, he has established his own network of artists across the UK and tended to get more gigs outside of Nottingham and closer to those musicians he had toured and gigged with successfully in the past. When describing an approach to promoting the gigs at DIY spaces, some of the musicians spoken to observed a much more 'friends gigging with friends' informal attitude to the hosting of events. The mapping out of a network was regarded as a fun activity. Those running the spaces and arranging regular weekly gigs tended to be in bands themselves so would strategically mention and promote their spaces when contacting those promoters and musicians in their band network;

*“so if they're someone who likes the band [...] or one of our other bands then they might ask us about a gig at [DIY Nottingham]. And vice versa. if they know that were the guys from [...] and we put on their band from Sheffield or Leeds or somewhere, they'll go well we've got a show coming up so. And then we'll do the opposite kind of thing, so it kind of like works that way” (Vince).*

Tours are arranged by bands pooling their contacts, with a co-operative attitude ensuring that gig offers and recommendations for other bands to put on a bill are reciprocated. Negotiations between the bands running DIY spaces across the UK result in those bands playing on tour or organising a tour including local bands they have played with or put on at their venue.

Amateur musicians practicing part-time are often limited to weekends and holidays to visit other cities and gig outside of their local area. For those aspiring to perform in other towns and gain experience playing to different crowds and venues, it is the connections fostered between DIY communities which can help determine this. Despite a tight schedule, this is a common activity shared amongst the amateur musicians and the variety of tour dates can resemble that of a full-time professional. However, on first observation the arranging of a DIY tour can appear disorganised and haphazard. Gigs can often be set-up spontaneously and with little preparation, and are often arranged whilst on the road.

The musicians spoke of the process of building up a list of contacts across the Europe and UK, and putting on gig nights in their own local cities acted as a way to meet musicians from elsewhere. This involves hard work on the musician's part to network with others which can be quite a slow and laborious process, with musicians

describing the experience of *'begging for gigs'* early on to eventually being able to easily set up a tour across the UK. For some, the early days of gigging and networking were not so fruitful as local bands and musicians they came into contact with were not so pro-active or not *"pushing themselves"* meaning they were pushed to gig further afield. Many of the musicians found that making friends with those who were running labels alongside making music can act as key contacts to attain knowledge of a scene and an audience in a location.

*"I mean if they were good and you got on well then you would hope to get on the same bill and do a gig with those people again, its always nice, its ideal you know. And then you start to make links around the country and they come down to where you're from and do a gig with you down there and you do a gig swap"* (Rich).

### **7.3 Informal networking**

When a touring band is offered a gig at a DIY space, it is expected that the band will offer a gig at their local DIY venue in return. Negotiations before and after a gig are carried out between the in-house bands and musicians performing on a night, as well those visiting or newly established artists who are keen to set up tours and hook up with others on the road. This gig exchange system ensures the health of a DIY community with a diversity of acts performing each week, as well as the offer of multiple dates across the UK for the musicians performing in the spaces.

*"...we played gigs over in Derby where thats happened, generally someone will hire out a venue or know someone who is putting a night on and suggest a band to play to come along so it seems often like, its just reciprocal, you know if someone does a Nottingham gig from Derby then a few weeks later we'll have another one there so."* (Jake).

This is such a regular scenario for many of the bands and musicians interviewed that for them their typical gig can resemble a get-together of friends who have played together for years, a chance for musicians to catch up and share their new projects. Gaining recognition for being able to turn up and put on a good show, or for being a hospitable gig venue can result in being recommended, as musicians are often contacted by email and gigs subsequently arranged on the basis of a good review. For many of the bands spoken to, finding a gig for a spare date when on the road involved sending a quick message or wall post on Facebook to those friends within the network who could hook them up with other friends in a town or city to play. Another tactic shared amongst the musicians

was to tour with another band preferably who is well-established in an area of the UK or Europe that you are less familiar with, making it easier to book gigs there. This was a common approach adopted by bands touring the UK or Europe who would tour with a UK band who then take the role of organising the gigs as they *“already have that network in place”*. One participant viewed this networking between musicians beyond their local areas *“very informal but very collaborative”* and another described this touring activity as a *“legion of friends all over the place”* and that amateur musicians within a DIY network would be able to find a friend of a friend anywhere in the world to book a gig with or crash on their sofa. In much the same way there is a network of DIY audiences interacting online. Beer (2008) interprets these interactions as 'flickering friendships' fostered on MySpace of like-minded audience members and musicians who have never met before arranging to meet up at gigs after connecting online.

For one of the participants who promotes a monthly DIY night in Nottingham and DIY shows around Nottingham, introducing bands from his hometown Belfast to the UK DIY scene was his way in to the network. A burgeoning post-Rock scene in Northern Ireland introduced many amateur musicians to the UK DIY communities, with a few bands seeking the knowledge of musicians resident in the UK. Rather than approaching the bigger promoters, they instead sought the support of friends and smaller promoters already attached to DIY spaces who were keen to connect bands in the post-Rock scene;

*“It’s better craic when you’re just going round when you know the people, the promoters in different countries and you know you can go to them, and its like going home or going to see friends, rather than just showing up at a venue and its kind of just kind of like well I don’t know anything about what this is going to be like, i’ve had no dealing it with whatsoever, and its just a bit more, its just friendlier sometimes I think, people are just more willing to all chip in and do their own bits and pieces to make the scene a lot better. because theres a lot of people that really want to do it and just all bringing their own different things to the table” (Carl).*

Networking activity online is a vital way for musicians to arrange gigs in another part of the country or out of the UK when they are planning a tour. The art of gig swapping can really pay off as a way of creating a rapport with other musicians elsewhere in that hope that you will be invited to return to play at a venue;

*“When I got off at the show in New York, I just contacted solo guitarists over there saying, do you have any shows that I maybe... Because I was over there for a week and I got a handful of gigs from*

*people going, oh, yes, okay, we can put you on and kind of doing that and then I got in touch with Alex recently and he's coming over to the UK and I said, well, why don't I sort out some stuff for you." (Tim).*

Reflecting on her peers in the local area, Jess believed that due to the Cambridge scene being dominated by the older and experienced bands the upcoming teenage amateur musicians would follow their lead on promoting their own music, choosing to focus their promotion tactics on flyers and posters rather than reaching out to online communities of artists and audience. This she felt was detrimental not only to the bands' own progression but also to the live scene in Cambridge;

*"Yes, it's dying out a bit I don't know why. And then some younger bands just don't use, like, sites and stuff which I think is a bit stupid. Like, how are you going to get your name out if, you know, if you just put posters up everywhere?"*

Online networking between the musicians and bands tended to be initiated after a face-to-face meeting at a gig venue. Sarah revealed how artists on the same bill will approach her after a show to ask if she would mind mentioning them in a tweet or Facebook post to help promote their music, and that she was more inclined to do this after a face-to-face request than if she was asked by the musician or band in an online tweet or message;

*"if it's face to face, you know they're being genuine, like, they really want you to do it. And so when [the band] asked me I was, like, yes of course I can. And then every time they bring out a new single I re-Tweet them and every time I do it they do it to me, so yes it's good that way."*

For Bill who had only recently started performing his solo music live when interviewed, it was an existing online community of artists which helped him to get his first gig slots; *"I got that show in London through Twitter and meeting people online. I've got... there's another local rap [?] radio show, the local community radio, there's a show called Sonic Delights and those guys basically do a mixture of whatever they're into, and lots of... they support all the local acts as well."*

Alongside collaborations made as a result of online communications between artists, there were examples of participants referring some of the other amateur musicians interviewed to others within a DIY scene or supporting DIY practice. One example of this was Bill mentioning how it was Peter who had introduced him online to a DIY vinyl distributor in the UK who had helped Peter release his music.



This interconnectivity between musicians appears to be supported online, with a joining up the dots activity strengthening a shared voice amongst the artists locally and internationally.

## 7.4 Interpreting the success of online promotion

Interpreting the success of promotional posts online can be difficult, and the faceless and statistical nature of an online audience or followers means that the participants often take analytics and visits to their pages (and relating to this to the number of listens or purchases of their music, or even gig attendance) with a pinch of salt, particularly when spambots were suspected to be at play (Hoare, 2014). However the amateurs were keen to explore ways to get gigs in new parts of Europe when they had discovered a significant number of listeners coming across their music online from areas they had not yet played live.

In fact many of the participants revealed how they expected individuals to view certain media and metadata as a resource for scouting out live acts, in very much the same way they sought collaborators and those they might share a bill with;

*“if I don’t know the artist, I tend to go to YouTube and just type in to see what the live performance is like. So it’s probably people probably do it in a similar way, I think, yes.” (Harrison)*

Promoting tactics can be a process of trial and error, and for those new to online promotion this can make these activities a frustrating task;

*“It’s a strain to not know what to do or what the next choice to make is... I don’t know what to do, exactly. So it’s frustrating that way... it’s just like that’s the annoying part. I don’t have the answers yet.” (John).*

Many talked of the hard work and how time consuming gig hunting can be, spending their evenings getting in touch with promoters across the UK in search of gigs after the release of an album. Building up ‘a folder of people you can write to’ (Peter) which includes those who put on gigs in different venues as well as those who put gigs on in their own spaces can make the setting up of tours less time consuming. Writing to musicians in different cities was also a good way of sounding out availability of gigs in certain venues and using their expertise knowledge of a scene elsewhere. There is a dependency on musicians sharing their promoter contacts, which allows for the interlinking of networks of musicians in different areas.

However, as Peter reflected on, the private emailing of several promoters and artists to get a picture of the availability of gigs at a particular time of the year can be very time consuming. Peter considered how perhaps the mass adoption of a particular online forum by musicians and promoters in the UK might assist this activity, but then deliberated whether this might actually challenge existing real world negotiations between musicians and promoters;

*“And it’s the sort of place where a bunch of promoters, if they were signed up, could look and see who was coming up and say, yes, well, we’d like to book you, or whatever. But it’s, I’m sure that something like that does exist somewhere but it’s the question is the extent to which people would actually buy into using something like that. You know, would they, I don’t know”.*

Participants talked about the inevitable interaction between artists who share their music online, with musicians contacting those they have come across online directly via email and suggesting gigs or collaborations, or simply offering feedback. One participant revealed that the activity of swapping records between artists is a popular way to create a dialogue with an artist online.

Keywords was a way musicians filtered through social media adverts for gigs or promoters they were coming across and contacting online. This is still done manually by all of the participants we spoke to and often a lengthy and arduous task combined with listing themselves either on social media or in mail lists; *“But we made a list of promoters that we don’t kind of know personally but we know put on gigs, and so we just, you know, if we’re looking for some dates as well, we’ll send a blank email to them with that kind of press kit kind of layout and stuff like that.”* (Pierre)

*“So when we’ve done little tours, I’ve found quite a few gigs by just searching for phrases on Twitter. Like, the most popular one that I use is just put in quotes, any bands, because then you’ll get... you’ve got, like, any sentences that include those words, any bands. And generally things like going, a band’s just... Someone’s just pulled out at the last minute. Any bands interested in filling the slot or, you know, any bands interested in, like, we’ve got a few upcoming slots we need to fill; any bands interested or any bands interested in supporting this... us, or...”* (Jack)

With many bands and musicians taking on a part-time promotion role, remote communication between them can often revolve around the arranging of tours and suggestions for bands suitable to fill a set who are available or in a particular part of the country. These are often arranged informally and sporadically, with a reliance on the connections known and attached to key venues in cities when hoping

to arrange gigs on the road. As a solo musician, Harrison explained how he would arrange his tours with both local and non-local musician friends who would assist in the reproducing of his songs on stage. With a drummer essential to his live sound currently living in Norway, his tour dates would typically cover two weeks when the drummer is able to visit the UK. Although Harrison would spend a considerable amount of his spare time writing and recording demos and creating promotional videos alone, he talked about maintaining relations with a group of session musicians and collaborators who are essential to his style and creative influence.

All of the participants were attracted to platforms which allowed them to release their music online with no fee for using the service and allowed them to embed players and downloads into their personal websites. It was the separate rules or options for release that the separate platforms govern which often confused the musicians or led to the releasing of their material in an undesirable way;

*“... when we recorded the new EP I put it up on Sound Cloud. I don't know if whether this was a bit of a mistake really but I put it up on Sound Cloud and you could stream the whole thing but you can't download it.” (Anthony).*

Participants talked about collecting reviews of their albums and shows across the internet in order to create a press pack to send out to promoters;

*“So, I've just kind of found all the venues, from going on other artist's websites and things, looking at oh, where are they playing, where are they touring? And then trying to focus on one area, contacting all those venues and just sending them, like, a press pack type thing.” (Dave).*

Whilst the amateur musicians in our study have embraced the DIY opportunities of online promoting and distribution, this chapter has uncovered how they opt for a more subtle approach to these. There is a shared desire to replicate online a personal and direct relationship they have with their audience members at the live DIY events. Their promoting efforts online also aim to maintain these relationships and ensure that DIY gigs and communities gain enough exposure to sustain their live music practice. An informal but collaborative approach to networking online and offline allows the swift establishing of connections between touring musicians. However, there is a concern shared amongst the amateur musicians that by sharing their music online this may have an impact on the popularity of their live shows. The musicians also consider how sharing their music via commercial online methods of distribution

may make their music styles and associated scenes less distinguishable.

## 8.0 Tackling isolation

### Coordination alongside other interests and identities

This chapter will explore how tackling isolation became a key topic of discussion for many of the musicians interviewed. The balancing of real-world and online activities has impacted on the ways in which the amateur musicians devote their spare time to different creative projects. Whilst there is a continued value in building close ties with other musicians locally and setting down roots in shared performance spaces, all of the participants in our study spoke of the new creative freedoms that remote collaboration tools can provide. This chapter will focus on how online collaboration activity interacts with live performance practices taking place at DIY spaces and events.

Collaborations with other bands and artists were often remote meaning that the musicians sometimes never performed with some of their collaborators face-to-face either due to practicalities or the belief that these collaborations only succeeded remotely. Dave discussed how he had once written a song with a musician elsewhere in the UK, but that they had never performed the song together, and he had no intention to. Similarly to Dave, Steve who is also a solo musician was attracted to the creative opportunities of remote collaboration with other artists internationally, working on a project with a musician based in Amarillo, Texas, and a London-based female Folk singer. He described these as “*indirect collaborations*” which would sometimes never be performed in a live real-world context. This chapter of the thesis explores further how amateur musicians are balancing their real-world and online activities and how this influences their creative practices.

These remote projects are conducted alongside their interactions and gigs locally. It was often the case that the musicians were recording with each other remotely and asynchronously out of necessity, for example due to conflicting work timetables or distance between band members. The popular decision to record remotely amongst participants also helped to keep costs down and allow for more of their leisure time devoted to touring and gigs. When considerable time was devoted to a project such as an album recording, the musicians expressed their pride in achieving this alongside their other life commitments;

*“we recorded an EP over Easter and it was about the longest I’ve ever spent on a recording. We spent six days in the studio, got it mastered properly and everything, and really took our time with it. And when we got the masters back from that I was really proud of it”* (Anthony).

A sense of achievement was also felt when work spent on a track with others is fruitful;

*“I mean, you can hear it blossom, suddenly like from being on the fence...that doesn't sound right...to we've nailed it, that's its sound, now; we've got it. And that's a good moment.”*

Kev & Dylan talked about how they composed together as a group, whilst others revealed how they would often write songs and compose and often arrange songs on their own. Although all of the participants discussed the demo making, mastering and sometimes recording of tracks often needed to be conducted with file sharing and away from each other in their spare time at home, the musicians also stressed how amateur creating and recording was still very much practiced in the real world, and the face-to-face interactions with other musicians a fundamental part of progression and honing your sound.

For those participants in bands or working with other musicians on tracks, the decision to adopt file sharing services in order to work remotely came out of necessity rather than preference;

*“I think there are only one or two practice evenings where we can all be in the same room at the same time to practice, which is a bit worrying. But I think that's quite a common problem. Getting everyone in the same room at the same time is the most difficult” (John).*

However, the participants disliked the lack of communication which the use of cloud services to share large master files, finding ways to replicate a production conversation between the musicians as best they could. Anthony achieved this by setting up a message thread for each separate project between the musicians on Facebook;

*“We have, Mike is there, and you can send files through there as well but we also have a hotline message thread. So that's both people where you can sort of communicate with the music.”* John also talked about the combination of online messaging and face-to-face conversations between file sharing when laying down a track; *“Every band member has access to that Dropbox and every chance we get we all listen to it and if someone has a point to make then they'll... we've got our little Facebook group and we post on there a lot and any points we have to make.”*

Musicians revealed how often projects can be slow or that the processes of recording were lengthened especially when working with others remotely. Tim was hesitant to describe his contribution to

a band separate to his own music-making as full membership, as their collaborating involved a more relaxed timetable with low commitment; *“I had a techno duo that I was in the 90s and then more recently I was in a Nottingham band... Well, I really still am in this Nottingham band, Escapologists, who I joined in 2007. I play mainly keyboards and some guitar with them and I joined them for... to fill out... It took us about four years working on the next album and that came out towards the end of last year but the singer then moved to Berlin and now he's in Glasgow, so it's difficult to get things together, really.”*

The number of times a band would practice varied, with some indicating that they aimed to practice at least once a week whilst others stating they would only practice in the run up to a gig which could be every couple of months. The frequency of gigs at any one time of the year tends to be sporadic for most of the participants; *“It's sporadic. It's really sporadic, you know. It kind of averages out a couple of months, I think, but like it all... That'll really vary, you know, and I think... It kind of feels like it's picking up at the moment, like there's more interest, you know, and more people getting in touch with me going, do you want to do this gig, rather than me having to hustle for gigs which for the early years was really important, just like cold e-mailing into the abyss.”* (Steve).

For some of the solo-musicians who had become self-sufficient in their live practice, seeking opportunities to perform with others was not a priority and this was instead replaced with remote collaborations when recording;

*“...there's a guy who sometimes plays percussion for me but he's very busy with other bands and I've just become so self-sufficient with things that I, it's not a priority with me. I'd never, like, dismiss it completely. The thing is it's healthy to play with other musicians then get input, but I'm quite happy on my own. I don't necessarily like relying on other people as well, you know, because it means then I'm... I feel like I'm at a point where I'm extremely well rehearsed with my live performances right now and if I was to then involve other people it would mean a lot more rehearsing to get to that standard again with them, so that sometimes puts me off.”* (George).

As well as connecting with other musicians, the internet acts as a crucial resource for connecting with artists and other creative industries. One participant talked about a recent collaboration with a graphic artist in Patagonia who had contacted him to propose designing some of his gig posters; *“...in October last year I had a show with [Peter] and [...] and just mentioned it on Facebook and this e-mail popped up in my in... in my Facebook in-box with this great*

*poster design. Like, hello, [Steve], I designed you a poster. Any time you need a poster, just ask me."*

A crucial aspect of networking activity online is the ability to be selective with who, how and on which platforms to seek potential collaborators. This means that time spent networking online as opposed to their music practice must be targeted and tactical.<sup>6</sup>

## **8.1 Maintaining connections with local musicians**

This de-institutionalization can also be observed in the maintained online identity of the DIY music scene. Peterson calls this a 'technologically mediated authenticity' which questions the common observation of music scenes depending on continual face-to-face interaction between performers, business people and fans, in order to maintain a sense of identity and cohesion (Peterson, 2005: 1089). Williams and Copes (2005) observe a new type of audience member whose music scene participation is limited to the internet. Both the face-to-face interactions between audiences and musicians in live performances, as well as the meetings between promoters, local music suppliers, artists and producers in physical spaces are perhaps no longer fundamental to music practice. According to Finnegan (2007), these meetings once ensured the organisation and ideology of local music-making, as well as offered sources of employment for musicians. However, both a sense of performance authenticity through creative control and feedback from fans and other artists are increasingly made available digitally. This makes the concept of performance authenticity a contested notion by both performers and audiences as new forms of authenticity are created which add to traditional methods. This perhaps makes the defining of authenticity in relation to digital DIY practice a complex ideology and activity for artists today.

There was a shared concern amongst the Cambridge and Nottingham musicians that the popularity and easy access to remote collaboration tools and services online may threaten face-to-face practice between artists, as it becomes more typical for music to be recorded and arranged outside of recording studios and the presence of the musicians in a recording session in the same space at the same time not being essential (Leyshon, 2009). The participants talked about remote collaborations becoming the norm and increasingly proving successful for amateur musicians on a tight

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<sup>6</sup> Terranova (2000) observes how in the 'participation economy' of Web 2.0, 'free time' becomes 'free labour' as individuals produce and upload content onto social media websites (Gill/Pratt, 2008: 17).



budget and schedule, however there was an observed attempt to promote effort made to meet and practice music face-to-face when the normalisation of remote collaboration could threaten these traditional social practices. Sharing your music with others in a live setting is as much a confidence boost as it is a way of progressing as a musician.

A counter argument to the observed collaboration and collective DIY practices taking place both in live physical and online recording and performance, Theberge (1989) suggests that the idea of the home studio and the hyphenated musician ('singer-songwriter-producer-engineer-musician-sound designer') is actually stripping away the once collective nature of musical collaboration (Hesmondhalgh, 2002: 205). The suggested democratisation of music through technology advancement, which gives a musician the freedom to record music without the need for expensive recording studio time can also be viewed as isolating the artist from a music community (Chaney, 1996).<sup>7</sup>

The musicians talked about how their fellow bandmates and collaborators are often dispersed, due to their own life commitments, living in different areas of the country, or being away on tour. This demands an effort to seek out opportunities to share their music and practice music face-to-face, still considered by the amateur musicians as an essential aspect of their creative practice. These interactions importantly depend upon access to rehearsal, recording and performances spaces. Often proving costly, the musicians will collaborate at their homes or before and after a live show at the venue. Participants talked about the struggle to fit in rehearsal time before a gig, especially in the cue of band members living in separate parts of the country. This can prove especially difficult if a band currently had members who are just depping. For Kev & Dylan, recent discussions in the band about signing to a label meant establishing who was willing to put in sufficient rehearsal time; *"when we actually want to start going to record labels we need to make sure that everyone's fully committed and that they want to put in as much effort as we're willing to as well"* (Kev).

For those participants in multiple bands juggling their time, collaborative projects are often only achievable working remotely;

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<sup>7</sup> Theberge (1989) also observes the passive nature of wearing headphones whilst recording as a way of reinforcing this breakdown of a shared recording and performing experience. Hesmondhalgh (2002) views this as a pessimistic view, which may overlook that music is not necessarily always a matter of sociality.

*“but we've been using SoundCloud to do some collaborative music things so... because Rachael's sister lives in London so we'll send her a track via SoundCloud which she'll then download and write some stuff along to and things like that.” (Pierre).*

The opportunity to contribute to different projects means finding affordable ways in which to record and this makes remote collaboration very appealing to the amateur musicians. Participants revealed how they had discovered that the lack of funds for studio time and therefore choosing to record at home had its benefit in terms of unlimited time to change arrangements and experiment;

*“Just... it's cheaper, you know. And not being in a studio means you can just spend as much time as you need to just get it, like, just right. Which is always the aim anyway, but then sometimes you leave the studio thinking you've got it just right, listen the next day and think, oh actually, you know.” “if you're paying to go into a recording studio then you have to kind of get it done in a day and I often find that's too much pressure so hence why I kind of developed my own studio at home. I think it's important to have time to put into it and listen back and go back and change things, you know.” (Dave).*

Dave who is a full-time teacher and solo singer songwriter in his spare time shared his frustration with not having the chance to meet up with other musicians regularly when limited to his evenings for arranging music activities and many musicians local to him not having the time to meet up alongside their own gig commitments. Busking offered opportunities for spontaneous meetings with other musicians in Cambridge. George also revealed his own stroke of good fortune when busking when he was approached by a promoter to perform at a gig in Italy. Participants also practiced face to face with other musicians in a more informal way rather than as an official group or project. These were often quite satisfying experiences for the participants as they required less ‘pressure’ or commitment and were instead solely about playing together.

Whilst a few participants shared stories of collaborating with other musicians they had met online, others were skeptical of this with one participant in particular having some disappointing encounters with artists whom they had first met online; *“it never worked out. I remember one guy, I went to his house and he just had such a different approach to writing songs. He said, right, what chord should we start with? And I'm like I don't know, C? Okay, C. What chord should we go to next? I don't know; that's not how I write songs. So... what chord should we use first, he was very structured. And I don't do that. So it didn't really work.” (John).*

Arranging rehearsal time and coordinating band members was often improved and worked on as band members joined and repertoires changed. This meant that making rehearsal timetables successful and optimising time paid for in hired spaces was a case of trying out different strategies; *“It was usually me and the drummer always there and then... I think in the future [unclear] will book off time from work so he’ll always be there, because he knows what he’s doing. It went much quicker with him there. Then, obviously, the violinist, she’s not integral to every song so she doesn’t have to sit there and watch us play guitar parts and percussion parts, we kind of say come in for a couple of hours this day and that day. But it’s not as important.”* (John).

Conducting most of their rehearsal, songwriting and gigging in the evenings music practice is very much dependent on keeping their leisure hours after work available during the week. For those juggling family commitments, this often meant sacrificing some music practices such as organising events or running spaces and prioritising band practice or gig opportunities. The musicians would try to catch up with their bands at any time available, *“figuring out a small part, going through something, or even just talking about what we’re going to do”* (John). This aimed to prevent a feeling of isolation from an amateur community and to elicit a sense of active participation (Putnam, 2001). For many of the participants, keeping in touch with a local community was prioritised alongside their music making, whether that meant giving up some of their time to support DIY venues and projects aside from their own or even assisting with charity work. However, it was observed how for the majority of the participants who were limited as to how much of their spare time they could devote to such activities, feeling an active member of an amateur community was achieved with a combining of online, touring and local communication with others.

## **8.2 Cutting ties**

There was a preference of the faceless anonymity of online communication which many of the participants felt made being rejected for a gig more painless or even prevent either a online or face-to-face rejection;

*Frank “...I went to Facebook, and then that does seem to be a place, if you’re applying to play live, that you can email a pub, put your Facebook page which links to YouTube videos or whatever, and then they can, sort of, see you and think yea or nay without the unpleasant thing of coming face to face. And, you know, that, sort of, I’m rejecting you, now I feel rejected, I can’t go on, I’m a lonely cloud*

*on the planet or something. And so the impersonalness of the Internet is very good for dealing with rejection.”*

*“if you’re applying to play live, that you can email a pub, put your Facebook page which links to YouTube videos or whatever, and then they can, sort of, see you and think yea or nay without the unpleasant thing of coming face to face...And so the impersonalness of the Internet is very good for dealing with rejection.” (Frank)*

The ephemerality of online communication means that the musicians feel they are able to cut ties fairly quickly and discreetly with those they seek gigs with; however as these often come with a shared history with those in a group of contacts connected to a project, venue, band or event, this has consequences for collective identity in the real world whilst influencing a norm of social etiquette established by the group or community for ending relations appropriately (Baym, 2010).

“The mobility of many new media helps them to be concretely tied to location even as people move around, and can hence support local civic engagement...What does seem clear at this point is that new media do not offer inauthentic simulations that detract from or substitute for real engagement. As we will continue to see in the remaining chapters, what happens through mediation is interwoven, not juxtaposed, with everything else’ (Baym, 2010: 93-96).

The link between public and political engagement and online social networking has been recently discussed by Baym (2010: 93) and others, who observe how those who communicate regularly on social media are more likely to engage in political activities offline in their local areas. As new media offers alternative ways to engage individuals in political activities, the DIY spaces are encouraging their followers to take part in local charity initiatives for example, whilst promoting a connecting of the activities of the DIY music venues and those running and attending them with community organisations. During the study Nottingham participants revealed their support for food bank charities and other free arts spaces in the disadvantaged areas of the city whilst all of the participants reflected on how social media has stimulated the musicians and their audiences coming together around shared interests aside from music. During the study, it was the increased use of more synchronous platforms such as Twitter amongst amateur musicians which was reflected on by participants as encouraging the fast coordinating of events on a grassroots level (Baym, 2010).

### 8.3 Remote collaborations and local DIY identity

*“We sometimes put a picture up after a gig, I like tweeting at gigs when people are there. I’ll occasionally tweet off the stage, are you ready to play or something. Then if anyone takes a good picture and links it to our stuff then I’ll share that usually.” (Anthony)*

With remote recording activity and online communication between musicians and their audiences potentially creating a distorted, asynchronous representation of their music activity and identity, participants shared their efforts to represent their music activity online in real time. The ability to update their social media profiles with up-to-date accounts of their gigs and interactions with other musicians with the use of mobile devices proved very popular and encouraged the linking and making connections between musicians performing together.

Networking online also works as an important way of keeping in contact with those bands they meet at venues when they play gigs together or whilst on the road, and sustaining these relations. Participants revealed also how playing gigs regularly and having a physical presence within a local scene would also translate it into more networking opportunities and people getting in touch with them online;

*“I think there's a point where all of that is going on and if you are out regularly playing, then people are aware of you and get in touch. The last... I guess the last couple of shows that have come in have been people that have... like that have come to other gigs and liked it and thought, well, I'm putting this thing on, so I'll get in touch with that guy. And that's like... that's the most pleasing way to get gigs.” (Steve)*

Jack talks about how bands will often approach each other directly online if they are looking for another band last minute to share a gig with, or perhaps a band has dropped out last minute and they are looking for a replacement. Bands will use social media to call out to the musician community, and those within it will come across requests by searching on Twitter for particular phrases such as, ‘Indie band wanted’ or ‘band needed Cambridge’. Responding to band’s public messages would then be done privately, with an email or private message. Jack’s band had been successful on many occasions adopting this technique to get gigs, with many memorable ones where they had made new connections with bands locally.

As discussed earlier, the lack of shared rehearsal and recording space for the Cambridge amateurs compared to the Nottingham amateur musicians subsequently appears to influence more remote collaboration activities amongst the artists. One participant believed that the university dominated city centre where bands are more inclined to play covers than their own material to please audiences distorts the reality of a music scene in Cambridge experimenting with ways of recording and the genre boundaries. Frank observed how alongside remote collaborations amongst amateurs, this was accompanied by an 'organic' approach to music-making thriving on the outskirts of the city; *"I mean, if you go out to towns like... well, even Newmarket or St Ives or Ely, it's, like, thriving. In the centre of town they've got, sort of, bands playing everywhere, but Cambridge has always been, kind of, keep a lid on it. And I'm sure it's something to do with don't have too many distractions here, so people can focus on their studies."*

For those who did not feel connected to other artists locally, remote collaborations importantly provide a sense of engagement within a national and international amateur music scene. Importantly, it is often forums and public messaging on DIY space pages that are used as a way of validating music practices (Kibby, 2000). There were many examples of participants who felt disconnected from a live music scene taking to online platforms in search of local networks of artists and gigging opportunities.

Whilst some of the participants argued that appearing live was a key way to gain promoter contacts and get further gigs, others including John had only been successful in getting gigs via their social media activity, with the gigs being promoted online with flyers and remote organisation with private messaging, emails and phone calls; *"everything is done online. There is very little done in person at the moment."*

## **8.4 Feedback**

Participants revealed how a key thing which motivated them was feedback from their audiences, particularly during times of heavy online promotion work when getting replies back from promoters are few and far between. Many argued that it is feedback in a live setting which is the most satisfying and rewarding. A feeling of isolation was something which musicians aimed to avoid by performing live as regularly as possible;

*"those personal, those pits of personal feedback from your peers or fans or professionals, all of those kind of make it worthwhile. Because you just think, all right, well at least someone likes it, and*

*you still carry on. If you go too long without any of that then it gets a bit disheartening I think” (Anthony).*

For the part-time amateur limited as to when and where he can practice his music, the opportunities of remote collaboration via online communication can give him a sense of belonging to a wider amateur musician community, supporting each other as a kinship network. This can also make up for a lack of access to affordable recording studios that provide 'emotional labour' for artists (Leyshon, 2009; Hochschild, 1983; Steinberg, 1999) by creating a sense of support and community. Challenging the conventions of music partnership and the limits that a lack of physical creative space can determine for amateur artists, the Cambridge musicians talked of working on tracks with musicians solely online often with no live practice or recording with each other, and in some instances without a prior face-to-face meeting. However, the connections were often founded on existing mutual circles of artists or shared acquaintances. Despite the majority of participants detailing their use of remote and at home recording tools and the benefits of adopting these, there was still a determination shared by many of the musicians that these would not replace the recording practices between musicians in a physical space;

*“Occasionally I’ve recorded stuff with that and he’s over dubbed some base onto it. But it’s not something we really do very much, we prefer to do like creative stuff in person really. I don’t really like the idea of everyone going off and adding bits on their own.”(Anthony).*

Although the Cambridge musicians were engaging with a wider DIY network of spaces across the UK, many felt that Cambridge itself was lacking a non-commercial and communal space of its own for amateur musicians, impacting on their own experiences in the city; *“I think it’s called [...] now; it used to be called [...]. But it’s a bit impersonal, I think. It’s like... it feels a bit like a factory there because there’s about six or seven rehearsal rooms and you just kind of get in and it’s just kind of geared a bit more towards probably, I don’t know, mainstream things, I guess is what I... But it feels like... you know, it’s very anonymous and everything.”(Pierre).* All of the participants reflected on the need to feel engaged in a live music scene or contributing to a community of amateurs and gaining their feedback. As gigging activity was often sporadic for the musicians and there were inevitable quieter periods of the year for face-to-face interaction with audiences and musicians, our participants sought other ways of practicing their music in the real world. Interactions with other musicians in their spare time extended beyond their own bands, recording or performances, with Dave for example explaining how he offered guitar tuition to individuals when he first moved to Cambridge. Many of the participants observed how the normalisation of social

media as the main way for artists to promote their gigs and shows had influenced a lack of physical real-world promotion activities between individuals which were once a way of maintaining a sense of engagement between music scenes, venues and their audiences.

There was a nostalgic reflection of the physical promotion involved before the internet; *“ I mean, this is pre-Facebook, I mean, it was mainly, I mean, people don’t do it now. It really is a shame. I mean, we used to put posters, physically posters, on walls and also hand out fliers” (Harrison).*

## **8.5 Time commitment and digital labour**

Some of the Cambridge solo musicians revealed that their main pursuit in their amateur music practice was to experiment with recording techniques and playing live was an afterthought rather than a key motivator. Both George and Bill in particular reflected on past attempts to perform in bands and the work involved in coordinating as a group taking the fun out of music practice;

*“...Not necessarily, like, falling out or anything like that but just trying to manage other people. And if you had a gig or a rehearsal scheduled then you’d have to ring round three other people and make sure they were available and often, if they’re working jobs as well, then that becomes quite difficult. And I think, inevitably, yes, that puts a lot of kind of pressure on people and although you might start off as close friends who form a band after a certain amount of time it becomes a job and that affects your relationships internally as well, so [pause] Yes, it was definitely troublesome at times.” (George).*

Those who were currently in bands reflected on how a change in circumstance or how band members can clash on how they view their amateur music practice and ambitions, determining individuals going their separate ways;

*“...the band, we’re all, like, really good mates, but at the same time I don’t think we’re all looking to go in the same direction. Some of them want to do it as a pastime, some of them are taking it seriously, so we’ve really got to look at it properly and then if we want to decide that it’s like a real kind of project then we need to revamp things, don’t we?” (Dylan)*

Similarly, participants described the common occurrence of how once a key individual promoting and running gig nights and spaces to assist other bands locally chooses to relinquish their role due to a change in their own life commitments altered the identity of a local



scene. A few of the participants revealed how they themselves had given up their role and turned instead to remote collaboration to coexist alongside their family commitments. Once a community has been established in an area, and it is maintained by a group of bands and musicians locally, the moving on of these collectives can have a devastating impact on a gig scene;

*“...the other thing iv found actually through all of this stuff is it does really often come down to one or two people in a town. so when i started out my kind of contact list of people to hit up for gigs, quite different from the one i’ve got now just because someone will be 23 and go ‘oh i’m going to put on shows and get music I really like happening in my town cause’ i’m gonna do it’ and then there circumstances change and then they move on and its like that town shuts down.” (Tim)*

It was widely regarded amongst the participants that it was the youngest members of the community whom are able to devote more of their time to sustaining activity in the space, having the least personal commitments outside of their part-time music practice. Online however acts as a tool for drawing connections between local musicians when there is no prominent gatekeeper or musician promoter linking scenes. For example, the act of liking other bands or following them not only aimed to draw connections with those bands and musicians they respect within a scene, but also to display a sense of being active within that scene themselves to those audiences and musicians, and also to connect those audiences;

*“you get a lot of musicians kind of trying to help each other out, so they’ll re-post things on and re-tweet and things like that. So I think, because a lot of my musician friends are trying to do the same thing, you know, it’s nice when you help each other out. And they’re, you kind of share fan bases almost, which is quite useful.” (George).*

As the DIY musicians bypass the middlemen of a record industry, one must look at the individuals in the wider network who could be considered the gatekeeper (Shoemaker, 1991) or the cultural intermediary (Bourdieu, 1984; Negus, 2002) who decide which bands get the gigs and exposure (Zwaan, 2009) and these are now often first contacted online;

*“So one way is just we want to play somewhere so we just contact someone. So we’ll find out about a venue via something like the Unsigned Guide or just using Google or just we’ve heard of a venue that we like the sound of or we’ve been to a venue that we like the sound of and we just basically harass them and send them emails and make phone calls and then get a gig that way.” (Jack).*

In comparison to putting out adverts in local and national music papers, the internet has become a vital gig arranging tool for those without connections to scene gatekeepers or key venues in cities. Our interviews revealed how gaining recognition and even 'constructive criticism' by other musicians continues to be something predominantly pursued by amateurs (Zwaan, 2009) and this defines the continued role of gatekeepers or key members of the scene despite the now more informal and instant access networking between individuals online. This online activity can be observed as a way of replicating a sense of community through remote communication, when a local network of musicians has dispersed.

Whilst the majority of the participants revealed how they seek to play live and meet with their musician peers face-to-face as often as they can, they also talked of the practical benefits of online collaboration tools. For the amateur musician practicing their music in their spare time, their gigging activity can often be sporadic so their contribution to music projects remotely ensures that they are kept engaged in a community of artists during times of the year when they do not have regular gig slots. Online collaborations also serve a practical value when musicians are unable to devote as much of their spare time to touring or playing shows as they would like to. This chapter has explored how the musicians have adopted their own approaches to remote collaboration, aiming to find unique ways to make music with others through online file sharing tools but without compromising on the kinds of interaction they may have in a live setting. The participants were aware of how these remote music making activities can create a distorted, asynchronous representation of their music activity and identity. To challenge this, the musicians aim to provide real-time updates of music activity online through the use of mobile devices during DIY gigs. This chapter has also explored how despite the practical benefits of collaborating remotely with other musicians, our participants seek to balance their real-world and online activities in order to gain a meaningful regular engagement with their peers and audiences.

## 9.0 Activities in the space

Whilst the last chapter explored how online practices impact upon performance and identity, this chapter will look more closely at their influence on the sharing of music through physical formats. With a focus on shared DIY practice, amateur musicians continue to assert their agency, responding to a cultural shift towards detached, remote methods of music distribution and consumption by altering and adapting aspects of a dominant mainstream culture to suit their own motivations for making music. In our study, examples of this include the subtle embedding of the digital into physical music artefacts and the adopting of mainstream social media and music sharing platforms to promote and distribute their music with a lo-fi, stripped down aesthetic. The visibility of DIY practices alongside commercial music on online platforms reflects Clarke's observation of an entanglement of mass cultural and subcultural styles becoming increasingly apparent. (Clarke, 2005: 174). This chapter focuses on how whilst embracing of the mainstream channels and formats of sharing their music and promoting it may be seen as a contradiction of the DIY ethos, our participants revealed ways in which they combine elements of these tools with their own activities in DIY spaces to encourage their audiences and fellow musicians to collectively engage with music in live settings.

### Materiality values

*“But really getting a physical thing is a really big thing for me when I have the record there, that's like... Yes, I like that a lot. But that's when everything comes together, when you see that physical thing... when we have been playing together, you know, we can get into a place where it's really, really free and, kind of, enjoyable and... Yes. So those two things, making records and playing live, but more to do with just the fact of playing with somebody else, because that tends to be the context when you're playing.” (Harrison)*

With the production and consumption of music increasingly unfixed by time and space, the amateur musicians are finding value in the crafting, storing and experiencing of material artefacts for their music (Ahmed, 2012). Just as the live gig spaces give context, collective identity and meaning, the opportunity to document their music and celebrate it through artwork, videos and physical handcrafting serves as a way of closure and landmarking separate releases and projects; *“...for me it's part of the, sort of, completion thing. I like...I like doing little things like that...And if it's promotional as well, then that's great, you know, but that's not really the end goal, I suppose, although I want people to watch it.” (Harrison)*. The collectible and novelty aspect of these physical artefacts also appeal to their audiences who

seek a tangible sense of belonging and exclusivity. Social differentiation is made evident, and in fact implied in the distinct sacred symbols produced by the DIY community which distinguish it from a mainstream music participation experience (Lynch, 2012). The exclusivity aspect sees the revival of nostalgic formats such as tape and vinyl, which make the DIY audience feel they belong to an elite club of music fans, further distancing the music and its consumers from a homogenous mainstream largely centred around the instantly acquired Mp3 or music stream. Alternatively, the physical release requires both a time and space commitment from both the artist and audience. The encouraging of audiences and musicians meeting to share artefacts and discuss them suggests a desire for a deeper engagement with cultural objects (Bennett et al., 1999). An omnivorous culture encouraged in heterogenous consumption of music online is acknowledged, but in the isolating of a particular music through live events and physical artefact there is a negotiating of its value as a marker of identity and social context (Prior 2013). There is a harking back to a pre-digital music experience here, which is partly a constructed myth by the DIY musicians and attendees when entering their world.

The 'nostalgic' quality of certain formats suggest a desire to rekindle some of the pre-digital experiences of music centred on a fetishisation of the material artefact and what it represented. For many, these are objects which not only hold personal value as memory stimulators but also tell a story of the owners engagement with the music, with for example the physical worn out state revealing how often it had been played. Over time the owner forms an attachment to the object as it follows them, meaning their copy has a story *distinct* to any other.

Whilst a recent increase in the popularity of vinyl has seen a rise in physical record sales, many of the musicians regarded the format as predominantly a cherished object of desire for the serious music fan and collector. With a diachronic analysis, we have seen how the 'social power' of the collectible vinyl for example has risen and fallen, and gained popularity once again both in a DIY and mainstream context (Lynch, 2012). Regarding them as a dominant population in their own audiences, and identifying with these individuals as avid record collectors themselves, the musicians are keen to release their own music in unique and creative formats and styles despite having a very limited budget for producing them. The participants however revealed how there is a common trajectory of choice of format that reflects their audience size.

The popular format for a band's first few releases is the CDR, quick and cheap to produce and distribute making it a practical choice for

gauging opinion and building an audience; *“I don't think were in the position yet where it would warrant it' 'but haven't done a full album yet so when that date arose then perhaps yeah' 'get a bigger fan base as well to warrant it' 'first EP was digital, second was digital and physical, so maybe with the next one vinyl” (Callum).*

Where the tape was once also the budget choice, a recent surge in its popularity means that it has become a niche and trendy format for musicians within DIY communities. It is now the 7inch and 12inch vinyl that has become the trophy object to trade and own, and a symbol of a DIY artists or band's success and popularity.

There was a sharp aesthetic and sound quality distinction between the fast and cheap production of CDRs to sell at gigs and on the road, and the limited edition vinyl with handcrafted sleeve that tended to come later in an amateur musician's trajectory. These two were viewed as servicing particular purposes, the CDR with plastic wallet offering an affordable format for both the musicians and their audiences perhaps when a band is in its early stages of establishment within a scene, and in contrast the limited edition vinyl offering a collectible and cherished item once there was a devoted audience that demanded an artefact which displays their affiliation. The physical CDR sold at gigs were a preferred choice particularly for those starting out as they demanded more prolonged attention and acted as a reminder to those who attended a gig. The physical ownership and storage of the CD by an audience member meant that they were more likely to go home and do some more research into the artist;

*“They buy it, they take it home, they listen to it, remember how they liked you and then go onto the Facebook and Twitter and stuff. It's... yes, I much prefer having hard copies than iTunes” (Jess).*

For the independent amateur musician, there is a sense of pride that their music is the product of their own time and effort. Despite asking others for help when releasing their music or promoting it, there is a desire to hold onto the handcrafted aspect of their DIY practice and the intrinsically authentic value attached to these;

*“There's always, I always do a, kind of, short run of handmade CDs on my own little CDLs on my own little label. So, I, kind of, it felt quite important for me to, kind of, maintain that, that kind of handmade DIY aspect of the work, if only to just stick on and remind myself of the effort that's involved in doing it.” (Peter).*

What was notable during the interviews was the level of detail the musicians went into describing the artwork and packaging for their

physical releases, tending to be on limited runs and those released via DIY labels having the same handcrafted or stand-out aesthetics which they apply to their own DIY distribution efforts. Viewing these as a whole, a collection either online or physically in their homes and then sharing these during the interviews emitted a sense of pride and success from participants. These collections formed an integral part of the DIY community identity, creating a sense of authenticity which as Grazian (2004) suggests when exploring similar meaning-making activities in a Chicago blues club can then be used for economic gain.<sup>8</sup>

These objects also serve a collective memory and purpose (Hennion, 1997). Resembling a traditional mixtape, the DIY communities in both Cambridge and Nottingham produce their own compilation albums documenting the bands and artists who have recorded and performed in the space over a year. These can represent a dispersed community of amateur musicians reaching out to each other across music platforms;

*“I’ve been on quite a few compilations, as well. There’s this guy called the active listener, and he’s not a musician, he’s this real uber-fan who stalks Bandcamp, and people he likes he’ll contact, and go, can I put you on my new compilation. So he does these compilations, he calls it collections of modern psych, because that’s obviously his thing, but, you know, the term psychedelia is extremely loose, because it could be anything from Hip-hop to atmospheric, electronic, or...”. (Bill).*

The packaging for these are intricate and multi-layered, with flyers, posters and other memorabilia related to key gigs and events contained inside. Those musicians running Nottingham DIY stated that these were very popular amongst the musicians and their audiences and sell out fast, acting as a way of documenting the

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<sup>8</sup> The DIY approach to handcrafting these physical releases reflects as Tanenbaum (2013) observes a democratising of design and manufacturing, as a result an individualisation of production;

‘As well as shifting the notion of the user from consumer to appropriator, these practices shift us from considering technology use as primarily a productive or useful experience to an aesthetic experience as well. From the copper cables of CELL to the feel of wooden needles, form and materiality come to the forefront. Functionality plays a role, but it is leavened with aesthetic explorations as well. This relationship to technology is characterised by a spirit of playfulness combined with a commitment to critical resistance and material creation, both challenging and celebrating the current conditions of technical production’ (Tanenbaum, 2013: 2609).

connections between bands and musicians made at the venue as well as a narrative of the events hosted by the musicians.

The look and feel of the artwork and the CD, tape and record sleeves tend to purposefully reflect their lo-fi, handcrafted production. This has given DIY physical releases a shared certain aesthetic quality which connotes a sense of authenticity that would not be so easily replicated by commercial mass production. Anderson (2010) interprets a move towards both personalisation and reappropriation and a move away from profit making and utility as a 'third industrial revolution' in which the means of production are democratised. Certainly during interview discussions surrounding online distribution, the commercial mass production approach was viewed as replicated by bands and labels online, creating a uniformity in online packaging of releases. It is now the linking of social media tactics with this approach that participants felt encouraged a manufacturing of authenticity and the constructing of myth surrounding an artist to entice browsers to purchase their music. This had instigated a backlash amongst the DIY communities and musicians who feel they must distance themselves from these myth making strategies and focus more of their efforts on getting people to gigs and engaging with handcrafted releases.

There is also a transparency of creative process here which is not so easily revealed in mainstream music production. The willingness to unpack both the distribution and creative components of their music through these objects also suggests a value in transparency within the DIY community and an appreciation of handcrafting.

Art to accompany music is an important aspect of their music identities online, with Bandcamp being a popular platform with its option to display artwork prominently alongside digital downloads. A visual representation of their music as well as a running artwork theme throughout their releases was regarded as vital as the releases themselves by many of the musicians we interviewed. This attitude extends to the complimenting promotion videos they share on online platforms like YouTube.

Importantly there is a visual continuity in their online aesthetic. Despite aiming for continuity in physical artwork, Pierre talked about how his own band's different approach to separate web profiles and their aesthetic appearance was largely influenced by a conscious effort to present themselves in the way an online audience would expect on a particular site or platform;

*"you know, they're more like the identity of the band because of the way it looks and you don't want to kind of, like, overload it with data."*

*It might... you know, it could just be, you know, a very simple thing, just one page with some artwork and a music player or something like that. And I think people go to a band website and expect that, and not just, like, endless conversations or something like that, which is what Facebook is good at, I guess."*

Curating a music journey online involved a selective attitude for many, with some choosing to separate their past bands of differing styles from their current ones. Several participants however documented their story from one band or project to another, creating detailed websites with rich meta-data. Participants often had a separate page to display artwork over the years or chose to make their artwork the prominent objects displayed on their Bandcamp pages (see fig. 1).

Attracting alternative taste communities and fan groups outside of

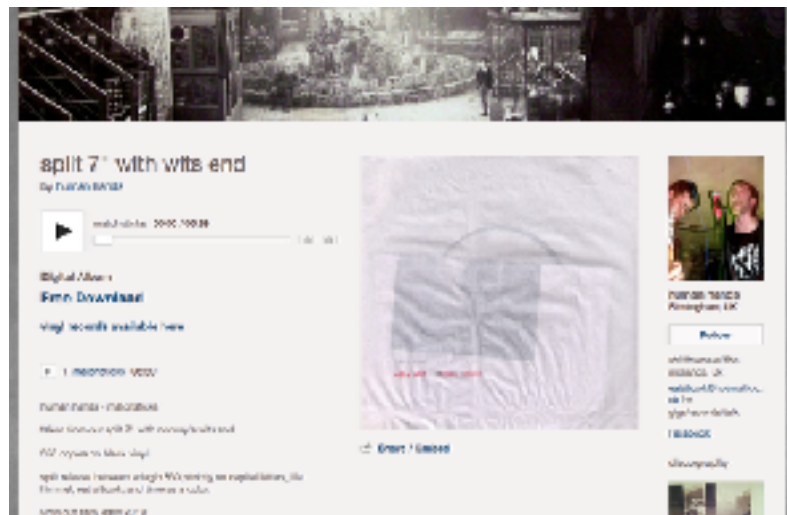


Fig. 1 online profiles reflecting a lo-fi aesthetic

music on their websites was something that made the musician's online visual identities distinctive. Jack's band had gained a lot of attention from an international gaming community, leading to their production of novelty merchandise sold on their website, such as ID cards and floppy disks with their music on. For visitors to their sites, it is the visuals which first captures their attention before the option to play tracks, and the musicians are keen to make a strong statement through their artwork. However, the aesthetic appeal of the popular music sharing platform Bandcamp was hampered by an inability to make songs seamless when it had been the intention of the artist for their albums to be listened to this way (Bill) and a lack of control of playback here. Participants revealed how they were willing to make certain sacrifices in order to present their discographies in the way they intended to alongside photos of gigs and a travelogue of their



visits to spaces which Bill for example regarded as a personally valuable 'keepsake'.

## 9.1 The power of the visual

Acting as both a personal and collective archive for the DIY communities, the musicians also recognised the promotional value of artwork and presenting a particular aesthetic to online audiences. The power of the visual in social media influenced participant's conversation on the importance of aesthetics and a recognisable image or brand; *"If you put audio up, less people will do it. I think on Facebook it's a visual thing that pops up; you get everybody's view"* (Max). Contradictory to their social media promotional methods, many of the musicians revealed how they were swayed towards certain platforms for their music and videos due to the site's aesthetic style matching their own, rather than the promise of a larger audience; *"it would make sense to only upload to YouTube because there's many more followers, but still kind of like Vimeo more for some reason."* (Pierre) This suggested a commitment to image and style over promotional tactics, with the migrating of DIY communities and amateur musicians from one platform to another perhaps signifying more strongly an act of identity management rather than an economical strategy.

The musicians were very protective of their music online and the ways in which it was presented and consumed by their audiences. Despite there being a shared belief that the increased accessibility of Indie and DIY music online has benefits for the amateur musician, there was a cynicism towards how placing their music alongside mainstream music on certain platforms might cause assimilation and the devaluing of their unique style, ethos and aesthetic. Harrison talked about his recent discovery that his label had made his music available on Spotify;

*"Spotify I would say is a slightly more moral issue in a way, I mean, only because I haven't.... I guess it's because I don't consume music in that way and because I haven't conceived of it being consumed in that way and I haven't given express permission then that does slightly annoy me..."*

Following the music purchasing system prescribed by platforms like Bandcamp frustrated many participants who had their own ideas as to how their music would be consumed;

*"...we were in a bit of a catch 22 situation whereby we had to upload the album so that we could get the download codes but we didn't*

*want the album to be streamable so we had to subscribe to Bandcamp Pro, and in the end, you know, it was like \$5 a month and we were not actually selling that amount as well, so probably ended up actually losing more money that way. But, I mean lessons learnt and stuff.” (Pierre).*

Despite stating that he makes “weird music for weird people”, Harrison shared his strategic promotional methods and ways of releasing select material to generate interest leading up to an official release. Although the musicians adopted visual mediums more commonly associated with commercial promotional material ahead of releases, their view of these was more that they are a creative rather than promotional necessity. Harrison spent significant time crafting videos to accompany his singles which he felt act as an extension of his creative expression. Like the majority of the participants, Harrison felt that amateurs are now liable to get carried away with the promotional opportunities online which would impede on creative time and perhaps distract from the true meaning and value behind their creative practice;

*“if I pay too attention to that, I wouldn’t do it because there’s not enough to really make it worthwhile for that purpose, whereas the purpose is a creative element. That’s why I do it. If I did it for the promotion, I probably wouldn’t do it because it’s probably negligible, you know, the difference it makes, you know. Yes, as I say, the only way to sell records, to really, really know that you’re selling records is tour. Everything else is, kind of, either part of the creative process or, you know... You know, you can spend a bit of time doing it and this is all right, but you can spend a whole... I mean, maybe, I think people are probably better at it than me as well, but, I mean, I don’t feel like it’s worth spending that time trying to promote yourself... You know, I think. I’ve got better things to do with my time than trying to get people to buy my records. They can buy them if they want.”*

## **9.2 Collectible pieces**

When discussing physical releases, many participants revealed a sense of achievement when they first see their music in vinyl format; *“...it looks like a really nice product, its kind of like somewhere between a piece of art and also something that plays” (Rich)*. For one participant who after extensive research to find an affordable pressing plant had opted for a square laser cut vinyl, the physical release was distributed on a limited press to keep costs down and offered a physical collectable piece alongside the digital download;

*“its quite a nice way to release something physical because alongside that iv still done a digital release which you can find on*

*itunes or you know...so its easy for people to find if they want to buy it you know their regular way online, or if you wanted the physical nice collectable piece then iv got something to you know, show for that which is nice as well ...its kind of more of a token collectable piece, it comes with the download as well and an extra track so, yeah its kind of, hopefully it covers all bases, you have a nice physical product, you have the tracks on your iphone or whatever, and you know it kind of ticks both boxes I think” (Rich).*

This unusual format meant that a compromise on sound quality was made, offering a mono rather than a stereo recording. Whilst aiming to keep production costs low, musicians are prepared to spend when it comes to crafting the design and style of a physical release; vinyls are often multicoloured, sleeves made from durable card material rather than plain paper which might be chosen for a first release. By selling these on a limited press, unique and handcrafted design is achievable for the DIY musician, allowing them to tailor their releases to appeal to their micro-scale audience perhaps in search of a collectible piece. Both in Cambridge and Nottingham, musicians handcrafted limited edition artwork and sleeves for small pressings of promotional material. Dave commented on a short press he did of acoustic tracks where each of the sleeves was ‘ever so slightly different’. This was a lengthy task, but worthwhile he believed as he preferred the results to the general release. He then shot an alternative video to the official one for one of his tracks, preferring the handmade, organic quality of his video as ‘natural’ and ‘lo-fi’.

With the variety of unusual handcrafted sleeve designs on display at the record marts, these events often turn into a shared celebration of these beautiful artefacts, with DIY space organisers stating that the more unusual the better is often the buyer’s preference. A shared experience of a particular DIY aesthetic and style of performance is of significant value to the musicians in our study and their audiences, as Finnegan notes;

‘ The shared subjective experience of performing was also part of the expectations of group music-making – an aspect left out in many sociological and musicological works, but of great significance to the performers themselves’ (Finnegan, 2007: 158).

As well as collecting and selling the releases of local and visiting bands to the space (which are also sold in the local independent record shop in a ‘Local’ section of the store), the DIY organisers source more obscure records from the US and Europe through the touring bands they are in contact with or who have also performed in the space. The result is a pop-up record store with a very niche and unique stock for the typical DIY music fan who would not be able to

buy these records in their local record stores and would usually only be able to buy them at a particular artist's gig when they are touring in their local area.

As we can observe in the past with the sourcing of records by obscure amateur musicians from the US to Northern Soul fans, there is a similar small-scale supplying to suit a particular taste or a demand for an obscure style of music which the mainstream does not currently cater for. There is the same sense of excitement shared when a particular rare record or tape is sourced. DIY musicians tend to reflect a burgeoning underground scene taking place locally, and in the case of the growing DIY network, the revival of particular music scenes (post-Rock, Math Rock, Instrumental Rock) is connecting these audiences and musicians as well as influencing an ever expanding underground music scene. Describing the awkwardness of tapes, one participant talked of their ephemeral quality;

*"I think its a cool format...They're just a fun, cheap, stupid means of releasing music, and they're awkward which I think is quite good as well, you can dig out a tape and spend bit of time with it which I like. its just it forces you to engage with the form of media a bit more you know, its not just clicking with a mouse which at the same time I think you know, streaming is amazing and downloading and that its all amazing, but I like stuff that makes you work a bit more. And I like the fact that it actually, if you listen to the tapes enough it will cease to exist as well. I think thats a cool concept. although I doubt anyone's listened to ours enough to break it but thats okay." (Jamie).*

Alongside the material documenting of projects and activities in the DIY spaces, encouraging audiences to further engage with the music and to appreciate an album or EP in its entirety played a major part in the time and money put into releasing their music physically alongside the digital download. As the physical product demanded that the listener purchase and listen to the whole of an album, rather than a few select tracks as online download allows, the participants encouraged their audiences to show their support through purchasing a physical copy rather than perhaps streaming it online for free, and also revealed a stronger intention to appreciate the album as whole;

*"I don't actually like the idea that people can just listen to the whole album because that's not how I conceived it to be listened to. Also, I don't see why you should just do it for free, if I'm honest. If you're going to go and buy the physical copy... I have no problem, say if they could listen to three or four tracks or samples, that's fine. But listen to the whole thing from beginning to end. I mean, that is my*

*work, you know, the work is not...I love the physical product...but the work is actually really the music.” (Harrison)*

### **9.3 Passive consumers**

Whilst some of the participants were keen to acknowledge the accessibility and ubiquity which online music consumption allows, others revealed a dislike of the sound quality that Mp3s offer, and suggested that this was perhaps a negative chapter in music consumption history. A return to the original music sound, format and aesthetic perhaps is the musicians’ way of reacting to this chapter and reminding their audiences of the qualities of pre-internet music consumption and the value of the physical object. There was a feeling shared amongst the participants that a passive consumer had been cultivated in online music distribution, moving away from the traditional amateur music values of community engagement and participation.

Despite participants suggesting that playback equipment for tapes and vinyl were becoming obsolete, this did not deter them from distributing their music on these. Many observed how audiences were foremost attracted to the artwork on these formats, rather than the opportunity to listen to their music in this way whereas others were keen to suggest the rituals of owning and playing these. With the artwork and limited edition came the quality of exclusivity; the feeling of belonging to an exclusive community of devoted fans and musicians. Dave on the other hand acknowledged that his audience members perhaps preferred the ubiquity of the music download so had come up with the plan to offer his music on memory sticks, in order to offer his audience the opportunity to store and document the artwork alongside the music.

The shared commitment amongst both the musicians and their audiences to document musical processes, recordings and live shows through artefacts reflects a broader aspiration in the DIY communities to protect a cultural memory and heritage in the traditional social practices of amateur musicians in a pre-digital world. The musicians were committed to encouraging a dialogue between the audiences, bands and those organising the DIY events and would tailor their online as well as live promotion strategies to achieve this. For example, all of the DIY musicians interviewed were releasing their music online as well as regularly gigging in DIY spaces, meaning there was a shared preoccupation to ensure that those tracks they made available to purchase digitally were the ones they intended to perform regularly live. As the musicians rely on their releases to get their music heard and connect with their audiences

in-between shows and tours so that they continue to attend live events, they are tactical in their pressings and release dates. A popular method is to release LP's and EP's on a limited press in physical form, with typically around 350 copies released with the majority of those copies taken on the road to sell at gigs. This means that the acquiring of these is dependent on attending a gig. This in turn is a direct to audience approach and a way of gathering instant feedback rather than distributing to record stores.

Aside from the selling of their music at regular 'distros' hosted by some of the DIY spaces and those musicians attached to the same DIY label taking each other's LPs on the road with them, the physical copies are mostly sold face-to-face by the artists themselves. One participant talked of his band's decision to instead release their latest LP vinyl for mail-order online prior to their tour and to their surprise the LP quickly sold out;

*"The LP sold out which is kind of mind blowing for us because we, you know, we've released records over last 4 years so you know they've always sold but that's always been as a slog of touring constantly and sold the majority of them via our gigs rather than via online sales I guess. Whereas on this one with the first press of it it had kind of almost gone by the time we tour which is crazy. But really cool as well. Just you know it's cool to know people are enjoying it I guess."* (Jamie).

Bollier states how, 'Speciality interests and products that once were dismissed as too marginal or idiosyncratic to be profitable can now flourish in small but robust "pull markets"' (Bollier, 2009: 139). Generating interest amongst the wider DIY scene tended to influence the establishing of DIY labels between bands to cater for dispersed DIY audiences. These tended to adopt the lo-fi approach but on a limited edition press to give their releases a distinct identity on the record shelf. For those participants seeking to create collector objects to accompany releases, they approached independent labels catering for a niche DIY audience. Peter was keen to create a dramatic display box for his recent recordings which he chose to release on tape.

Like many of the other musicians interviewed, Peter combined releasing his material on his own label which allowed him to 'handcraft' the sleeves himself, with releases on independent labels that allowed for wider distribution.

Alongside the forming of DIY labels, the ability to straightforwardly sell physical copies through the platform Bandcamp has grown in popularity amongst the amateur musicians, allowing a culture of the love of the vinyl and physical music aesthetic to be celebrated online

as well as offline at the record marts and DIY shows. In promoting a physicality to their music, there is a desire to promote a deeper engagement with the music as the gigs themselves intend to promote amongst audiences, and a resurgence in the tape and vinyl formats is a welcomed development in the DIY scene for those musicians who encourage a more long-term commitment to their music and listening to an LP from start to finish;

*“...people can get the digital thing straight away and its just like well, I don't have to wait for the physical. and I don't know, I think vinyl sells a lot better as well. There's just a market for it, it's just a nicer, big physical thing that you can hold whereas a CD, generally with a CD I find that when I get a CD i'll put it in the computer, rip it, probably never pick up the CD again. And then you don't then listen to the album from start to finish because you've probably got it thrown in with all your random stuff, whereas with vinyl, you sit down, you put an album on, you listen to it all the way through, you'll probably, sometimes the easiest thing is put it on again just because you cant be bothered to get up to change the fucking record! [laughs] Yeah, I love it, and i cant wait because were doing our next album on vinyl and i cant wait! I cant wait to actually have our first actual record, because we did the first one on CD and like, with Todd's artwork and stuff like that, it's nice to, it'd be nice to just have it bigger, just be so much nicer.” (Carl).*

Carl makes an important point here that the vinyl stands apart from the digital download or even the CD in that it involves a time commitment from the listener, and for that reason alone it is treated as a worthy vessel for their releases. In a digital age of multiplicity in music, the vinyls prominent physical presence in your home commands attention, it demands patience as an experience and can be compared to the live gig in terms of an activity where an effort has been made to seek out the music and subsequently in attendance, full attention is expected from the audience member. Interestingly, this contrasts to the “instant art culture” approach adopted by the majority of the musicians to ensure fast distribution of their music (Jaimie).

Determined to encourage this higher level of engagement with their music through physical album purchase, the musicians would spend considerable time designing and handcrafting the sleeves;

*“...beautifully designed covers and, you know, luxurious inserts and, you know, coloured vinyl and, you know, all sorts of stuff that's a ridiculous amount of work to actually do. But it just makes for a beautiful artefact. And again, that's a, that's an aesthetic I really, really like and, you know, this guy Dave, his approach to putting out*

*records was something that, kind of, influenced the approach I wanted to take when doing my own things.”(Peter).*

The collectible quality of the CD, vinyl and tape was debated during the interviews, with some pertaining that it was more the physical ownership and display of the physical product, and the wanting to contribute to a band’s funds which attracted audience members rather than actually preferring to play music in this way. Whilst some of the participants believed that the ubiquity of online streaming and download meant most listeners ultimately consumed their music this way, others believed that it was also the ritual of playing a record or CD in their homes and the sonic quality of these which attracted listeners. It was also the large artwork format of the vinyl sleeve which had an influence on the popularity of their physical sales. Many chose to combine the two by offering a digital download with each physical record purchase;

*“Maybe you could sell it with a digital download or something so it just puts the two together as a set and also it’s, like, a novelty thing to promote the single.” (Jack)*

However, for the majority of participants who were handcrafting their own limited edition record sleeves and releases, there was a reluctance to make these available for download online as this might diminish their value;

*“That’s a conscious choice with that because I think with... until it comes... I quite like these singles to remain, kind of, collectible in some way; that’s slightly the function of these particular artefacts... it’s just that I think, you know, it’s just, kind of, I don’t know, maybe a little effort to maintain the physical artefact is something with currency or value, intrinsic value in some way. But I think it’s only really in the case of that, everything else I’m more than happy to, you know, to make available.” (Peter).*

The amateur musicians sought to create a higher level of engagement with their music available online by offering digital downloads of their whole albums but packaging these with physical artefacts to collect;

*“we’re just looking into getting some books made, like lyric books. For people that don’t buy CDs anymore. A book with, like, artwork...it’d be like a booklet of just the lyrics, but then there’ll be a download code for the album. So people buy the book instead of a CD. They have the book, which is nicer than a CD. ” (Dave)*



## 9.4 Creating a music journey

The opportunity to release their music regularly without expensive promotion and distribution costs online saw the musicians adopting commercial tactics for building hype surrounding an album release, such as the creating of electronic press kits to send out to online music blogs, and offering taster tracks as digital downloads;

*“... you have to build up to the album release...that way you've got more chances of people actually buying it or just listening to it...keep releasing some content, so doing something or whatever, so that you just kind of stay on the radar and people just don't forget about you straight away...” (Pierre)*

For many, the sharing of metadata attached to their music and gigging activities online offered a way of curating their own music journey as well as an invitation for other musicians to comment, make suggestions and review their music as a whole;

*“I think probably my Bandcamp is very important, if only just for myself as a, you know, it's a, kind of, here it all is, sort of thing, it brings... I'm someone who... I'm quite old fashioned in that, you know, I, kind of, grew up in an era where, if bands wanted to, sort of, contact a fan base or whatever they would put out a record. You know, and that was the, kind of, the main way you'd measure a band's or a musician's, kind of, progress or whatever. And that's often... and so I've, kind of, I measure my own, I don't know, artistic progress or achievements in much the same, sort of, way. So, for me the Bandcamp thing it's, you know, I, kind of, look at it and think right, well, you know, here I can, sort of, map out how things have developed or whatever. And it, kind of, brings it all together in one place and, you know, if someone says, oh, what do you do? Or where can I hear your stuff? Or where will I get a sense of what you're about? I'll probably send them to Bandcamp just because it's, it's a, kind of, you know, it's an archive...” (Peter).*

For some participants, documenting and sharing their bands legacy online with rich detail was more about a personal value than regarded as something that their audiences would like access to;

*“My own enjoyment. Maybe I should some time like link to it and say look at this old stuff. But really it's more to do with what you're doing in the future that's important. Nobody's really interested in what you've done.” (Mark).*

The exchanging of records between bands is a tradition preserved in the holding of weekly record marts, or 'distro's at the Nottingham DIY space. Silver et al. (1982) describes this as the way in which scenes, 'organize consumption into a meaningful social activity' (Silver, 1982: 9). Tables are set in rows in the space with crates of local band's and international band's LP's and EP's in vinyl, tape and CD. These are sold by the organisers alongside badges, t-shirts and totes with the Nottingham DIY logo (designed by a fellow DIY musician). With each vinyl sleeve comes a detailed description provided by the organisers, describing the style of the music, the origin of the band and a brief history of their releases. The 'distro's' and record marts accompanying gigs seek to recreate the experience of the record store for individuals where a sense of community was once attained (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). By collecting records from the bands who have performed at Nottingham DIY as well as notable bands in a particular music scene, these record marts celebrate the scene and the collaborations and connections made as a result of meeting and gigging in DIY spaces. Often these are releases distributed and sold by small DIY independent labels, or the bands themselves, and the Nottingham DIY organisers then document the legacy of the space and it's contribution to a scene by producing and releasing limited edition compilation albums showcasing some of the DIY musicians attached to the space. A recent compilation included a handcrafted sleeve casing with collected flyers and anecdotes from past gigs attached to the album cover (*see fig. 2*).



Fig. 2 DIY Nottingham compilation of bands

As well as being a DIY approach to the design and production of a physical release giving the musician creative control, it is also a meaning-making activity, an artistic statement which aims to convey an authenticity to their music practice. One musician commented on the symbolic importance of the cover sleeve as a representation of their identity to the music fan, and that the most effective way to make this statement is by making the artwork as big as possible (which partly explains the shared preference for vinyl as opposed to CD distribution);

*“Yeah, I love it, and I can't wait because we're doing our next album on vinyl and I can't wait! I can't wait to actually have our first actual record, because we did the first one on CD and like, with Todd's artwork and stuff like that, it's nice to, it'd be nice to just have it bigger, just be so much nicer.” (Carl)*

In terms of ownership, the physical vinyl, tape or even CD as a piece of property has a social value in that it can be legally traded, exchanged, lent to a friend, or sold when finished with; qualities according to all of the participants in the study which a digital download does not possess. Whilst the digital file is a fast and convenient way of listening to music, the amateur musicians felt that their audiences hold a traditional view of music collections as material and personal;

*“...It's, like, quite a geeky kind of retro demographic, and I think a lot of those people want to own something, so they want, like, a t-shirt or they want some random thing...so we sell little bits and pieces.” (Jack)*

## **9.5 Shared Punk aesthetics**

The amateur musicians know that in much the same way as books, owning and displaying a record is a way for individuals to express their identity. This puts the artwork at the centre stage of a release;

*“So I didn't put anything up until I had the artwork done, so it was, you know, the art... Once the record... you know, I put up the track and the artwork at the same time. I wouldn't have written... I wouldn't have made a press release about a record if I didn't have the artwork done because I wanted to present it as one thing.” (Harrison)*

There is the sense that a synesthetic response is strived for by the musicians who adopt a lo-fi style and approach to both their music and art. Rather than the glossy, professional finish the amateur musicians choose to strikingly distinguish their physical releases from

those of their mainstream counterparts, often opting for the organic feel of untreated papers and cardboards that draw a link with the original UK Punk movement of the 70s. Thinking beyond function, the musicians recognise the ways in which sensory materials such as wood can elicit emotional responses and were determined to find affordable ways in which to use these materials in their release packaging and the interiors of the DIY spaces.

Williams interpreted this as 'ordinary people...collectively making their lives meaningful' (Gelder, 2007: 85). Culture is defined by sociality, self-made as Thompson (1963) would observe in working-class communities. It is meaning-making which can be observed in the shared space practices of DIY music, where seemingly ordinary spaces, objects and materials are reimagined. This on the one hand reflects some of the writings on subcultures and consumer society (Cohen, 1972), in the sense that shared aesthetics and consumption of these are a form of identity making; but it also challenges mass-produced and consumption in its deviation from this through the act of recycling. *Evoking traditions of amateur play* that have a natural, stripped-down appeal, the musicians talked of their attempts to make their accompanying artwork reflect their DIY ideology and aesthetic, with the almost de-digitalisation of band photos to "make it look a bit more nostalgic" (Kev). This lo-fi look also reflected the urban, industrial aesthetic of the DIY space itself, one which suggests that social meaning is found in the architectural heritage of the city's industrial past. This for example can also be found in the house club culture centred around warehouses in the late eighties (Hacienda). Where the interiors of the buildings of Nottingham's past are stripped and made uniform in commercial aesthetic style in the city centre, there is a wanting to convey an authenticity in the DIY venues, which is then mirrored in the lo-fi handcrafted record sleeves and merchandise. Relating to Dadaism, there is an appreciation also of the mundane here, challenging preconceptions of what is interpreted as art or of aesthetic value and how it is experienced.

This celebration of the ordinary and the pre-digital also aligns with Widdicombe and Wooffitt's concept of 'everyday resistance' that is, "...fashioned around the routine, the personal and the everyday" (Widdicombe/Wooffitt, 1995: 204). A preoccupation to convey a nostalgia and a pre-digital aesthetic was demonstrated in the time participants put into producing their own videos and artwork online as visual reference points for their music, with the setting up of green screens and silk screens in their homes for example. These were on the whole regarded as 'fun' rather than another online promotion necessity. There were many examples of the 'artificially ageing' (Steve, Dylan) of digital posters, or even the filming of promotional videos on VHS (Harrison). Interestingly, when this nostalgic aesthetic in photography and video could not be produced

authentically, the participants would adopt tools to recreate a nostalgic look.

With the amateur musicians working together on the promoting and distributing of their music through labels and record marts, a shared visual identity is cultivated; one which preferences the organic quality of untreated textured materials and an almost countercultural, unpretentious approach which the adoption of these materials implies to the purchaser. The adopting of cheap materials also means that the musicians are able to produce the packaging and artwork themselves in their own time, and that importantly no one product is the same as another. This is an aspect of these physical releases which reflects a fundamental aspect of the DIY co-operative; the shared striving for a uniqueness and an organic, untampered, authentic feel to their musical production. With this they are able to offer a uniquely personalised, bespoke product and aesthetic to their audience;

*“well I guess there probably is to be honest I guess because nothing we’ve ever done has ever been done, the artwork has never been done at a pressing plant or a printing plant, it will be unfortunately folded and what not at home which I always think is a good idea at the time and then you’ve done 200 and you’ve still got another couple of hundred to go and you regret making that decision. But with the LP we hand stamp every inside label so I guess in that respect they are kind of all you know ever so slightly different but thats something we’ve never thought about but i guess that is the case.” (Jamie)*

Although the participants wanted to make clear that their material and distribution choices usually came down to their affordability and immediacy, visual identity was a key topic during the interviews and one which reflected their own music tastes and consumption;

*“...hate you know, i can love every kind of record but if the artwork was bad i’d be you know, it would kind of ruin it for me in a weird way. that sounds kind of crazy but. Before teaching I worked in a record shop for ages and I kind of got, i’m a record collector as well, so our artwork has always been very kind of important to me. So in a way its that early kind of Punk culture, just make something in 10 minutes and then photocopy it, be in your hand within an hour of making it which I think is really cool. that kind of instant art culture. but yeah thats probably the main influence and then kind of collage artists and stuff like that, i couldn’t think of anyone in particular to be honest. I take a lot of photos and stuff like that and it will kind of somehow make their way into it as well. but you know influenced by lots of great photographers and stuff like that.” (Jamie).*

Here, Jamie describes how it is a sense of immediacy conveyed in the kinds of lo-fi sleeve covers associated with Punk and Post-Punk scenes which have inspired his band's photocopied photography aesthetic which they have adopted on all of their releases to date. Whilst some of the participants sought the direction of professional and amateur artist friends to create more bold, graphic-like visuals and others like Jamie went for the handcrafted lo-fi approach, what connected all of the participants interviewed was to create a visual continuity that made their records instantly recognisable on a record mart shelf;

*"I think with all these things the art is kind of important, with the music itself and stuff and i like it when bands have similar artwork across all their releases rather than a couple of record sleeves that look completely different...Yeah i like bands with a strong aesthetic I guess. And i'm glad that came across because again thats the goal. But thats probably the part I enjoy the most to be honest, it sounds crazy but. the artwork and inner sleeves together and usually it takes no time at all". (Jamie)*

Shared aesthetic connotes membership within the DIY spaces and scenes, and the musicians expanding of their own music releases to include collectible artefacts suggests an engagement with audiences beyond their music. Participants conveyed the feeling of being a part of a community through a *cult of the aesthetic* that forms an integral part of their identity as a community. Gell (1998) suggests that the social relations created in the production of cultural objects are distributed spatially and temporally when these are circulated, which results in both the social relations and the objects being transformed in the process (Born, 2010: 183).

Both in the production and consumption of records with a certain aesthetic, there is a shared construction of a myth of DIY amongst the musicians and their audiences that connects DIY practice to a Punk movement of the past, thus strengthening its subcultural capital. A mythologising of Punk was definitely evident when many of the participants during the interviews described DIY and their activities in DIY communities.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Sabin (2002) suggests a romanticising of Punk and its ties with other music scenes and in particular how retrospective accounts of youth subcultures create a distorted mythologised view of subculture (Sabin, 2002 :206). Sabin reflects on his own listening to the Sex Pistols with his friend as for him a moment of celebrating Punk, but with never the intention to 'sign up to any full Subcultural involvement, the key point that being into Punk didn't necessarily entail being a Punk...' (Sabin, 2002 :224).



Fig. 3 DIY Nottingham gig poster

However, where the history and ideology of Punk was mythologised individually by the musicians during the interviews to give weight to their DIY practices, the practices themselves can be interpreted as a promoting and a revival of the original values and motivations of the Punk movement.

Throughout the study there is evidence how their projected Punk image is amplified by the musicians to promote their music and spaces and the value of Punk as a subcultural movement that is well-known by music fans is not underestimated. In the case of the DIY community's construction of a musical 'world', here the myth seeks to transcend 'the banal reality of material life' (Alexander, 2003). Upon purchasing and collecting some of the limited edition compilations and releases, individuals were hoping to gain a deeper understanding of the artists and as a result a stronger sense of belonging and engagement with the DIY community.

This extended to their shared promotional posters for their events. The participants came up with affordable ways to produce striking artwork in the venues and for their regular EP releases, such as the use of independent co-op printing businesses and the hiring of some key artists across the country who those musicians attached to the DIY spaces return to and recommend to others. Groups of artists in Nottingham and other cities sought to connect and strengthen ties between separate DIY scenes, spaces and their audiences through a shared art aesthetic. The artwork has become instantly recognisable both online and in the spaces to regular gig goers. The artwork will tend to take centre stage both in the displaying of posters across the city and in venues, as well as posts made on social media (*See fig.*

3). The artist can become a prominent well-known figure in a local DIY scene, with the limited edition merchandise (particularly t-shirts) sought out by fans and giving the art cultural value.

*"I don't know quite how i feel about it but there is still that thing of gig posters even though you know people put off putting flyers in towns, think thats just a facebook thing, but again you see a lot of the same artists do these posters who are connected to the local scenes or whatever, so James always does the posters for Anorak Notts Ray... and I guess he's, i don't know what the relationship between him and anorak are, Mark...he also puts on, he organises Queer Fest a few weeks ago Ray...and he also did the DIY Nottingham record store day, designed the dinosaur".*

In suggesting a sense of community and inclusivity, the merchandise and posters invite individuals to reconsider a codified live music experience which often conform to the conventions of performance associated with certain styles of music. These publicise the fact that the practices within the DIY spaces and gig nights often transcend the traditionally understood genre boundaries which alongside the scenes and subcultural styles associated with certain genres are often distinguished from each other visually. The posters which dominate the DIY Nottingham gig postings online, their blogs and donning the walls of the venues themselves as well as the local record stores seek to present the hybrid forms of style and music created through the DIY scene. The poster above demonstrates this attempt to visualise the mixing or 'mash-up' of musical subcultural styles and traditions, with the online description of the band to play in the DIY space as; *"Driving garage/hardcore with a slight pop tinge"*.

The unity of a visual identity for a DIY scene and a sense of a supportive community or co-operative in Nottingham is further highlighted through a co-promoting practice where two DIY promoting groups will put on a gig together and celebrate that collaboration on posters. Further supporting existing traditions of grounding music practices in physical spaces, promoting their music and gigs solely online rather than by distributing of physical posters and flyers was regarded by all as a practical choice rather than an aesthetic one.

## **9.6 The joy of handcrafting**

When there was time and the budget to do so, participants revealed that producing their own flyers and posters was something they got pleasure from as a creative activity alongside their music-making. There were many examples of handcrafted gig flyers and posters



during the study but these tended to remain in select venues where the right audiences would view and appreciate them. Just as the collectible vinyl has seen a recent revival, the physical gig poster has become a celebrated artefact in itself, stimulating collaborations between musicians and artists. There were example of artists approaching musicians directly and offering to produce posters for them. Despite often commissioning others to create the artwork for their 7 inch's and LP's, the participants spoke of a close working with them;

*"...I kind of quite heavily direct it so i'll say kind of exactly how i'd like it laid out, and what i'm kind of looking for and then I kind of like to think i always work with the artist you know kind of in unison and its a joint project, um, so yeah certainly important to me how everything's presented and yeah I think as well if you can connect everything so that there is a through line for the art it sort of makes it nicer for people looking in to sort of understand it all and, you know, its a nice clear line of what you do like how you present yourself visually." (Rich).*

The musicians would devote considerable time seeking out artwork and creating art themselves which they regarded as a more appealing promotion activity as it is creatively stimulating. Participants talked of the synthesis of art and music in forging their own creative styles, and how their artwork would develop in order to compliment changing musical directions and sounds;

*"or the next cover, especially because it's going to be more... Well, it's going to be completely un-guitary... Yes, I want to have something sort of straight, graphic, image, you know." (Bill).*

On the whole, there appears to be an ambivalence towards a uniform style or slick production and a desire to distinguish themselves from a de-personalised, homogenous music mainstream. A mediocrity was seen as increasingly prevalent in online music consumption and something which influenced the time the musicians put into handcrafting and designing their physical releases. The intricacy of sleeve designs and inserts, as well as keeping much of the design and distribution activities amongst a close-knit group of friends aims to challenge the strict rules of music making in the professional industries. This is also about the preserving of amateur play and free creativity (Negus, 2004).

In the physical handcrafting activities there is perhaps also a reaction to the digital on music experience;

*“No I guess that’s probably influenced by the first, always the first wave of kind of Punk singles in that regard, because it was all so cheaply done and been influenced by those kinds of Punk signs that were cut and paste. And I’ve never used any computer to do any artwork, all hand done and hand photocopied kind of straight from the master copy which again can make things kind of annoying sometimes but people ask for standard things like I have to snail mail it to them.” (Jamie)*

When drawing a distinction between the official label released records from their own sold at gigs DIY copies, the presence of ‘shrink wrap’ or ‘bar codes’ were used in interviews as markers of a brief departure from a DIY aesthetic. Being on a certain label and having your music released and distributed in stores that stocked these labels releases brought a sort of kudos in that their records were as a result of this label association deemed collectible.

## **9.7 Locating their music**

A similar reaction to the increasing remoteness or isolation of music experience and music making could be observed amongst the DIY Nottingham musicians and also the Cambridge musicians despite the more dispersed nature of their local amateur community. Although the musicians have embraced the audience expanding opportunities which digital access to their music provides, the musicians are still keen for their audience members to have a physical engagement with their music and chance to *locate themselves within music*, whether that be attending their live performances or collecting their limited edition physical releases.<sup>10</sup> Their often niche audiences appreciate the work and craft put into the creating of these unique artefacts, and are prepared to attend gigs where these can be obtained and part with more cash than they would do if they purchased the same music in Mp3 format.

*“people who buy this stuff just don’t buy music that way.” Harrison*

This reflected a belief shared by both the musicians and their audiences that a cultural shift towards the consuming of online and intangible music formats threatened the traditions of physical engagement with music. In the DIY spaces, at the gigs and in the record stores it is a shared serendipitous discovery between audiences and artists, and how acting as a physical memento the record is intrinsically linked with the memory of the event. Reflecting on Durkheim, Alexander (1990) notes how a social gathering allows

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<sup>10</sup> See Jones, 2012.

for the elevating of certain objects normally considered mundane, as they become representations of membership in the group. These objects then become "batteries", 'for carrying over this moral energy into subsequent situations, when individuals are away from the intense sources of moral power' (Alexander, 1990: 111). For the musicians, the selling of physical offered the opportunity to have a more personal relationship with their audience;

*"in a way it's a good thing that everyone's got this freedom, but at the same time music is being devalued quite a lot, don't you reckon?...I mean even on a consumer level, you know, when you're buying [unclear], or something, it's just not the same, is it? You don't value that. You don't value an MP3 like you would even a CD, let alone an old record, or something. So, I don't know, I've got mixed feelings about doing this sort of [unclear]. I love doing it. I've had to make myself not care really who listens to it, because, you know, I'll labour away at something, but at the end of the day I'm only here because I feel compelled to."* (Bill)

As one of the Cambridge musicians noted, many of his audience members are amateur musicians themselves and so the sonic quality from a vinyl compared to that of a digital file is a shared appreciation between the musicians and their audiences. In terms of the distribution of their music, the participants find that both digital and physical releases can happily coexist, but efforts are made to maintain a culture of physicality amongst the amateur communities and a rejecting of these traditions are seen to put the amateur live scene and experience under threat. In the case of the Nottingham participants, we see a determination to protect shared spaces for music-making and performance, thus promoting the experiencing of music in a physical space and capturing the unique sound in that space via video and sound recording (Jones, 2012); and in the case of the Cambridge participants we see a drawing in of audiences via their unique events and limited edition music artefacts which can often only be purchased at the events themselves. These practices can be observed also as a way of getting their audiences to engage with the musicians and amateur music practice live in a physical space, and preserve the more traditional aspects of amateur music experience. Participants reflected that their audiences were able to tell whether a live video was authentic or not, despite the advances in technology;

*" think that's important. I think people can tell if you haven't done that. I guess people do, they can do it these days because of the technology is there to make it look like it's done, but I think usually people can tell if it's not quite done live."* (George)

A key characteristic of the DIY Nottingham gig space is the absence of a pre-defined stage area. Bands perform on the same (ground) level as the audience, and the size of the stage area tends to be determined by the size of the audience and the style of the music played. For example, the average acoustic set tends to encompass a larger area of the room, with the artist performing further away from the sound equipment and the audience sitting in a semi-circle around the artist in a traditional Folk gig fashion. On the other hand, the typical Post-Rock gig sees the band performing closer to the amps and the back walls of the room, and the audience standing usually as close to the band as possible and as one promoter stated the audience members are typically encouraged to stand as close as possible to one another in order to allow more punters into the space. With the absence of windows in the space (and little else other than the band's equipment and a couple of sofas at the back) the DIY gig can be quite an immersive experience as an audience member. For many of the artists this is the preferred gig set-up for experiencing their live music, the audience is surrounded by the sound and it is impossible to escape the performance once you are in the space or not feel a part of the performance itself.



Fig. 4 merchandise tables at DIY gigs

Thus, contact with their audience feels direct and feedback instantaneous; all aspects of a bands' performance techniques are exposed to the audience and there is an instant feeling of equality and inclusivity. During the intervals between sets musicians are able to mingle with fans and other musicians in the space, sharing knowledge and experiences as well as offering feedback. There is often a table set up by the musicians themselves which displays

merchandise, CD's and vinyl for sale and it is common then for the musicians to talk to individuals about the albums and EP's they are purchasing. This is generally exclusively a small gig experience (as opposed to a mainstream artist's gig) which encourages a feeling of having a personal relationship with a band or artist as well as a sense of ownership, and the DIY musician seeks to capitalise on this experience offered in the DIY space. However, despite the setting up of a merchandise table in a prominent position at DIY gigs in Nottingham, bands did not want to rip-off the gig goer by trying to sell merchandise for a price significantly higher than the cost of its production, with one band member recalling seeing another band attempt to sell t-shirts for four times the price they cost to make and that he considered this "*not very DIY*" (see fig. 4).

## 9.8 Intimacy in performance

Whilst the DIY practice of distributing your music yourself and handcrafting the accompanying artwork and packaging enables complete creative control of a music release from its creation to its physical distribution, during our study we observed a similar approach to building a relationship with their audience. The mise-en-scene that is the DIY performance space provides a meaningful framework in which the music artefacts acting as sacred symbols can be 'performed' (Alexander, 1990). The DIY musicians running the spaces and their peers performing in them (or the 'directors' and 'actors' as Anderson would term) initiate and shape how these artefacts and performances are experienced. The success of the performing of these symbolic artefacts is importantly dependent upon the choice of which mediums in which these artefacts are produced and distributed (social networks, spaces etc.) (Lynch, 2012). As well as a more tailored, personal gig experience and take home artefact, a direct communication with audience members is encouraged in the DIY Nottingham space.

A personalisation of the physical artefact handcrafted and sold at the gigs, record marts and on their own personal sites is accompanied by a direct-to-fan approach to sharing their music. The 'distro' and record marts held in the DIY spaces offer their audiences the opportunity to purchase their music before it goes on general release. It is often the case that a space like DIY Nottingham will receive the records of artists before they are due to go on tour, meaning that the audience is able to listen to their latest music before the band play at the venue, and learn the lyrics to the songs. Whilst this might sound like a common strategy adopted by mainstream artists, in the case of DIY this is as much about promoting a sense of community to those musicians visiting the space for the first time;

*“...they’re in the distro [record mart] so it works really well, they know there’s already at least a handful of people who will not only come to the gig but know the record. So for someone coming over from America for them to know your record that’s kind of nice, it’s not totally new to everyone. Makes for a better show generally. Singing along, or nodding there heads its quite useful for those bands. And that wouldn’t happen if we didn’t have the distro because no one else is really moving that stuff like face-to-face” (Vince).*

Vince explained how the record store events offered the opportunity to recommend artists to visitors to the space and an introduction to scenes and styles of sound outside of Nottingham, a practice proven successful for encouraging a diversity of acts to visit the venue. By building enough hype surrounding a touring band locally the key space organisers can also justify putting them on their bill. This is a practice of introduction to others surrounding the physical release, now an event in itself, with those visiting the space sharing a love of the physical artefact and the vinyl in particular. As Vince highlights, a face-to-face interaction is key to the ethos of the DIY movement and the spaces driving this movement, and it is the physical artefact which can often stimulate meetings between musicians, and their audiences.

Participants believed that a direct-to-fan approach to distributing and performing their music in a live space made their audiences more visible and easily interpretable than their dispersed and remote audiences online;

*“...just stand there and it’s, like, you think, [unclear] someone there that’s, like, wearing a British IBM which is quite cool.” Jack went on to discuss how his band had a devoted fan base but that they were spread out across the UK and some of those might not necessarily wish to attend ‘pub gigs’. (Jack)*

Participants also acknowledged the importance of being visible to their audiences, with an observation of social media becoming increasingly oriented around images and this giving amateur musicians the power to place emphasis on their live performances;

*“Tube is, you know, hugely important because people really want to see live performances. So at the moment I think YouTube is more important than just the sound recordings. I think the internet’s become so visual people really want to see the artists playing live. Whereas, you know, SoundCloud is great but I think a lot of people would rather watch a video than just listen to a track. So that’s a real priority for me at the moment.” (George)*

Participants described a sense of familiarity and assurance when playing to the DIY Nottingham crowd. This can determine a good gigging experience for the musician in knowing how to connect with the audience through the shared rituals of the space;

*“I think its basically the same, that you've got to try and get your head round doing a good show in the circumstance. and its easier, I guess its easier getting my head round doing a gig somewhere like [DIY Nottingham] because its really familiar and like new places, theres a lot to get settled into and you don't really know what kind of crowd you've got, who you've got on your hands basically. if you start talking to the crowd like theres a venue in London [...] and I find it very hard to connect with the crowd in there. and i think thats partly because they're incredibly hip and i'm not. But also, last time I played there I was like 'ah the lighting' they've got really harsh spot lighting and you can't actually, you can see silhouettes of people but you cant see their faces. and that makes it harder to connect. and i think, you know thats something i've realised has become part of doing shows for me is trying to build a connect with the audience”. (Tim)*

Overall, despite many participants going into detail about their online practices and admitting to the amount of time put into devising promotion timing strategies and social media campaigns when seeking attention for their music making, many were keen to summarise their attitude by placing a focus on their commitment to performing live. Just as Kibby notes how the disrupting of a 'physical line between performer and fan' as a result of recording technology initiated the creating of symbolic links in order to maintain 'a sense of commonality between performer and listener, and create a community among fans', the DIY musicians were keen to offer regular live shows to those audiences regularly consuming music in isolation from others online (Kibby, 2000: 92). This was regarded as the central approach to achieving an intimacy with an audience;

*“Well, actually I think, I'd actually say that the live scene is more important to me than the online. I think I get a lot more kind of reaction from a live performance than from someone, say, watching a YouTube video. But then again it's nice for people who do see me live might go away and watch some of my YouTube videos and then they'll post a comment like saying, I saw you in Cambridge really great, sort of thing and bought your CD. So I guess it helps, if someone does see you live then they can follow you online and then that's, you know, they become a fan that can actually follow you in the long term because you've got the, these kind of, these resources online. So it is important.” (George)*

This chapter has explored the ways in which accessible mainstream online tools for music distribution are adopted by amateur musicians to compliment the live music activities in DIY spaces and encourage their peers and audiences to experience music live. There is a subtle embedding of the digital into their physical music formats to create a link between their live events and online music identities. Also, although mainstream platforms have been adopted for their practical benefit and reaching a larger demographic of listeners, the musicians maintained a lo-fi aesthetic in their music promotion and distribution on these. This aims to create not only a visual continuity of the DIY experience online, but also to distinguish DIY from a dominant mainstream culture. Interestingly, the musicians in this study revealed a shared desire to have their audiences purchase and engage with their music in physical form. This contrasts with a Punk instant culture as it demands a time and space commitment. The musicians also demonstrated how they are prepared to sacrifice the wider-reaching benefits of mainstream models of distribution in order to present their music the way they want to. This reveals how the musicians recognise a social value in the ownership and sharing of music in physical formats and at events.



## 10.0 Managing your network: staying connected to musicians locally

This chapter explores the practicalities of maintaining a network of musician peers and forging connections with other musicians locally. Whilst previous chapters have discussed the typical activities of DIY amateur musicians both online and at live events, this chapter looks more closely at what is involved in DIY micro-production and the value of keeping your music network close-knit.

*“I kind of like it where everyone is in the same boat like these bands just playing around, doing their own stuff and travelling around the country and then that's how everyone gets to know everybody because you go everywhere and everyone is playing with each other or knows each other through somebody else so they've all been recommended cause we were saying earlier like theres a few bands coming over in September and they've been in touch with the whole scene circuit that we would all go to trying to find shows and its like they know that that's the DIY scene so knowing who to contact...” (Carl)*

As many of the promoters and organisers of DIY gigs are musicians themselves, the network of venues catering for local and touring musicians is reliant upon the interconnectedness of bands across the UK who will aim to ensure that ties are nurtured between both the more well-established bands and members of a wider DIY community, and those new to the scene. As Clark and Rothfield (2007) observe, music scenes, 'foster certain shared values and tastes, certain ways of relating to one another and legitimating what one is doing or not doing', and in becoming a member of a DIY community a musician is introduced to its norms of networking. This chapter explores how by communicating regularly with each other online and face-to-face, a maintaining of friendships locally and elsewhere ensures that musicians are able to return to a town and city to play a gig, those newly formed bands are invited to play at other venues based on the recommendation of another band, and the network itself can thrive and persevere as a way for amateur musicians to set up tours and gigs themselves.

Making friends with other musicians around the country helps to boost musicians' confidence especially when going on tour for the first time, preventing a feeling of isolation. The musicians rely on each other for assistance when on the road; having a floor to crash on for example when visiting a city allows the part-time amateur on a low income to travel further afield;

*“Yep, like if there wasn't all that love in the scene you'd be bollocksed. Like I remembered when we first started and we didn't know anybody and we'd be driving around playing shows and you'd be in Leeds or something and you'd be like “I don't know where we're going we've got nowhere to stay, i dont know what the fuck we're doing, we're sleeping in the car” its like fuck that. But then once you know a few people you're like ah, we're crashing on your floor! Sweet! Sweet! And i'd much rather do that than get a Travelodge or something and just kind of sit and go “ohhh that was a good show, lets go to bed” (Carl).*

If several bookings for bands on tour could be made by a space, the musicians explained that a there was a kudos gained from other bands and venues in the network;

*“...we generally like everything a certain tour book will bring our way but its nice to have a few in a row because you then become the guy who can sort it out and there's like some mutual respect for professional practice as well which is cool, we like people who are professional. There's a difference between being like, business like, and being like profiteering like being business-like is making sure that no one, like if the aim is to break even that no one loses money. And we appreciate people who send good emails and labels who send us copies of their releases and then try and book the tours for the bands as well. That stuffs really good because everyone knows everyones on the level already and they know we like the music and they know we stock it, that kind of stuff is really good” (Vince).*

Despite having strategies for mobilising and promoting their events, the musicians we spoke to observed how there is often an unpredictability when it comes to the growth of particular genre scenes and DIY practices in areas of the UK, meaning that they must pick up on growing trends and an increase in popularity of particular spaces by communicating with those in their network. Networking activity is importantly a way of generating 'buzz' (Caves, 2000);

*“its, I don't know, we've kind of all, I don't know, I don't know, it's one of those weird ones where you don't really ever start thinking about it, you just kind of, you see what all the other people that you know are doing and everybody kind of starts following in those cycles and then find out about one place and then all of a sudden everybody starts going to that place and then...” (Carl).*

The shared DIY spaces for recording and performing act as a means of access to economic and social relationships for the musicians (Currid, 2007). A closeness amongst the core members of the community means that a bands unfriendliness is quickly exposed in the DIY space;

*“its always a bit of a shame if a band isn't very welcoming, doesn't wanna say hello but that does happen a lot as well, you know you kind of hope when you turn up that everyone's gonna be friendly and get on and you know I'm always interested to hear what other bands are doing and, you know their experiences as well you know” (Rich).*

Organisers talked of the necessity to *clear the decks* from time to time, asking those bands and musicians causing disruption or proving to be untrustworthy to not return to the venue. This aimed to prevent hostile gig experiences for both the artists and their audiences which may jeopardise the gig night or venue, and weaken the wider DIY network.

## 10.1 Making practices accessible

Whilst encouraging an all-inclusive attitude to inviting musicians to perform in the spaces, those individuals running the spaces aim to maintain the feeling of a close-knit network that enables regular direct contact between musicians and which can be easily maintained part-time. Rather than seeking an increasing trajectory of expanding the network, the musicians at Nottingham DIY keep their network at a manageable size and instead seek to expand their venue's repertoire and cater for new audiences and taste communities; *“I would probably imagine they're just deluged with people 'ah can we come do a show?' and its maybe less fun than 'lets email this guy and see if he wants to play” (Tim).* There is a crucial interplay between a commitment to the managing of a personal network attached to their individual music pursuits, and a contribution to a wider network attached to a DIY collective.<sup>11</sup> The setting up of a DIY space or gig night tends to derive from an organic relationship between local musicians sharing similar values and aspirations. For some of the participants, forging a community of artists involved venturing beyond their local area to a town or city nearby. The in-house and regular musicians using the space tend to comprise of both city residents and those on the outskirts or from the more remote areas of a region.

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<sup>11</sup> This relates to Eikhof and Haunschild's study on the adopting of a bohemian identity by artists Eikhof and Haunschild observe how on a local level in public spaces, this identity management and work also involves a 'typically bohemian combination of individualism and collectivity', with the German artists they interviewed presenting and selling themselves as unique artists as well as referring to their occupational community as 'the theatre family' (Eikhof/Haunschild, 2006: 239).

*“If it was in the centre you might have the wrong kind of crowd passing through the door but because its further out, they're making sure, well it makes sure people are going there for the one reason to see the music which is great.” (Rich).*

The quote above is an example of a sense of escapism experienced by the Nottingham musicians upon entering the DIY space. There is a feeling of ownership shared amongst those attached to the community in their contribution to a hangout for amateurs that offers an alternative to the more strict and immovable nature of the commercial venues in the centre of the city.<sup>12</sup> This feeling of autonomy and liberation from the norms and rules of the city centre can be related to Nancy MacDonald's observations of how the art of tagging in graffiti subculture is to convey “attitudes” rather than a true physical identity, meaning that this activity allows for a momentary departure from the reality of your gender, class or social identity (MacDonald, 2001: 192).

As previously observed, micro-production and distribution can coincide with a 'neo-bohemia' street level culture which can provide the spatial and social conditions to support both cultural and technological innovation (Lloyd, 2002). As Pinheiro and Dowd (2009) observed in their survey of Jazz musicians in the US, DIY groups in the UK can also be described as hidden populations; the size and the boundaries of their population are currently unknown. They are also dispersed across cities and towns in the UK and heterogeneous in their musical style and creative output, signalling perhaps a more disseminated music industry inspired by widely accessible collaborative and social media technologies. Hesmondhalgh (2008) highlights how the decentralisation of media technologies and organisations could act as a way of achieving democratisation, as well as a need for media production to involve 'collectivism, collaboration and co-operation'. This is ultimately challenging the 'commodification of cultural expression' which has enabled only reward and status to a very few in the music business (Hesmondhalgh, 2008: 256). DIY in the digital age allows the global sharing of techniques and resources between artists; the 'How-to-make-it-in-the-music-business' book (which Theberge (1997) described as difficult for musicians to obtain at a local level from their peers) has been democratised and is now constantly updated and added to online through musician networking sites.

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<sup>12</sup> ‘...subcultures are often positioned outside of class, closer in kind to Marx's lumpenproletariat, lacking class consciousness, self-absorbed or self-interested, at a distance from organised or sanctioned forms of labour’ (Gelder, 2007 : 83).

Affordability and in the case of DIY Nottingham, aiming to be accessible to the majority of amateur musicians on the local circuit also influenced their recording, rehearsal and gig venue residence in the city outskirts. Several of the Nottingham musicians in particular commented on the gentrification of music venues that once catered for alternative tastes and offered amateurs a platform for their music. These have now priced out the amateurs who are unable to afford the hiring fees for staging a gig. Participants talked about their searching for affordable and appropriate spaces for rehearsal in Cambridge, with Max explaining how his band was currently practicing in a friend's factory space. Pierre explained how there were individuals known to local bands who were willing to rent out their spaces for bands to rehearse in.

The key bands and musicians running the DIY space in Nottingham spoke of how their efforts to bring bands from elsewhere and build relationships with DIY spaces in other towns and cities strengthened their local music scene;

*"...its not only building up a relationship with them specifically with [DIY Nottingham] its building it across the whole music scene in Nottingham which is, it's a great thing to be at. I don't want to be exclusive with [DIY Nottingham], there is a lot of great things happening elsewhere and its nice to help out with that as well."* (Paul)

However, despite projecting an all-inclusive attitude to the sharing of DIY spaces participants also revealed their efforts to keep their own networks and the regular attendees to their DIY spaces at a maintainable size. As many of the participants and their fellow band members tended to be in multiple bands and projects at any one time, maintaining close-knit alongside a wider network can dominate their time devoted to music practice and so keeping these at a manageable size allowed for more fruitful time spent performing and recording. Alongside this, keeping up-to-date with the status of bands and projects through regular gigging and face-to-face interaction with other musicians is a way of speeding up transition periods such as looking for new band members or starting new collaborations. For example, throughout the study there were examples of bands using live events as an opportunity to share updates with those in their local networks such as if an individual was leaving a band and when they would be available to join another band. This can prove a very successful way of gaining a band member that can be trusted and is already known to the band. This undocumented, live as opposed to remote (online) communication between bands influenced a shared approach to online promotion that drew links to key influential individuals within a network such as promoters or those bands running DIY spaces in order to target key individuals reading their emails and public posts. Eikhof and Haunschild(2006) describe this

kind of camouflaging of networking as part of the lifestyle of a 'bohemian entrepreneur'. A clear example of this was participants attitudes towards the saturated nature of online promotion when musicians are sending multiple emails every day to promoters, aiming to avoid their messages from sounding homogenous and impersonal;

*"It's very easy. It's just whether they're going to open it or if they even click the link. I'm sure some people will never even click the link because they get 100 e-mails every hour. That's the blessing and the curse, because anyone can do it and it's so easy. It just becomes saturated, straightaway... there are lot of people doing that and it's difficult to get yourself heard over that noise. But it's definitely useful. But it's useful for everyone, is the problem."* (John).

Although one participant suggested the possibility of buying the Nottingham DIY warehouse where he works full time as a producer in the recording studio alongside putting on the shows, the amateur musicians in general admitted that they were happy with the number of shows and the healthy sized audience they are able to host, which they regarded as manageable and had no intentions to expand their enterprise beyond the weekly gig events;

*"yeah we serve a niche, were not, were not, I don't think we would want it to be much bigger because if we started doing bigger shows with bigger bands it would become more complicated. And there'd be, we'd need more sound reinforcements stuff, proper monitoring, you wouldn't be able to see, i mean the fact that it's small we can do a weird band on a Tuesday night... Paul: and it'd still be pretty cool Vince: yeah it'd still be alright, it wouldn't seem empty. Or we can do, you know, some of the like even the mid-week hardcore shows we've done, you know its sold out and it's been just the right amount of people. it's never felt too hot or dangerous or anything like that, it's just right. And if I have any reason to think it wont be that way then I go to a bigger venue. But yeah so far its all worked out fine in that respect, we know our limits, like we don't get too cocky about it."*

Sticking to two or three gig nights per week to promote a month in advance was a tactic shared amongst the amateur musicians running the spaces, ensuring a good sized crowd with audience members knowing when to expect future gigs and returning to the venue. Buying a venue was not considered a viable option for most of the musicians interviewed who instead rented their gig spaces. One participant argued that buying would put pressure on the musicians hosting gig nights, meaning that a more commercial, business approach to running the space would need to be adopted, *"you'd have to put on a lot of stuff that you wouldn't want to put on to make it survive"* (Carl). As McLean (2010) observes, for a DIY artist to

become commercially successful, they must acquire business knowledge and experience, thus contradicting a DIY ethos and self empowerment. However, the Nottingham musicians did discuss how they were often tempted to organise larger shows which would require a bigger venue than the grocery warehouse, perhaps funded by splitting the cost with another DIY space nearby. Beyond the evening shows, Nottingham DIY had begun to host record marts in the day and with the expansion of the performance space to include a separate adjoining room, the musicians discussed putting on matinee shows and newer bands there. Throughout this study we found that this is heavily reliant on an open networking attitude.

Looking more closely at the micro-scale production activities shared by the musicians in this study, this chapter reveals how a clearing the decks attitude amongst the participants aims to maintain their close-knit networks. This contrasts with the all-inclusive atmosphere at DIY events and spaces and reveals a dispersed network of smaller groups of musicians spread across the UK and Europe. The maintaining of these involves significant time communicating regularly with each other both online and face-to-face. The participants in this study have revealed in their interviews how the effort put in to maintaining their close-knit networks is rewarded when their close connections assist their tour arranging on a limited budget. Peer recommendation is a key aspect of DIY, allowing the part-time amateurs to visit venues across the UK and gain audiences outside of their local areas.

## 11.0 Open networks

Whereas the previous chapter explored the maintaining of close-knit networks, this chapters looks instead at the growing trend of a more relaxed, open and informal approach to networking. Exploring the participants' discussion of their online interactions, this chapter will discuss how these are influencing this trend and changing the shared identity of DIY in a digital age.

*“So, like here he is on MySpace. Anyone know someone booking gigs in and/or around Innsbruck or Munich? I need to fill a date between Geneva and Vienna in mid-September...suggesting some people that might know how to help him and he's... And, you know, when I first met [him] he was on a first night of a 60-day tour that he'd set up completely based on his reputation and using social networking and went out across Europe.” (Steve).*

This chapter uncovers further how a culture of sharing and openness amongst the amateur musicians is allowing for the continuing growth of a DIY community and the creative opportunities for those practicing DIY part-time. Speaking to bands visiting the Nottingham venues from other UK cities revealed how touring has become a way for amateur musicians to not only connect the dots for their own gigging opportunities beyond their local area, but also to promote DIY scenes and venues elsewhere. One band visiting Nottingham from Liverpool described the Liverpool DIY scene as a reaction to the bigger commercial promoters no longer giving the more alternative acts a platform, leaving “quite a big void”. However the Liverpool scene is still relatively new and a smaller network meaning that those bands were visiting venues in other towns and cities. Visiting bands serves a purpose also for the continual success of spaces who may not have enough local bands to cover all the shows they are putting on leading to repeated shows;

*“that doesn't help those bands because if they're playing too often people just don't want to see them so they stop then having their 'pull' you usually had when booking the shows anyway and its nicer for them to then go out and play fresh shows rather than them just saying oh were just playing down in this venue” (Carl).*

Booking out-of-town bands was regarded as more of a gamble, but their own reputations locally as talent spotters meant that local audiences would return; *“if we book a crap band then, i dunno. theres something wrong, somethings gone wrong! because were very very careful about what we do pick” (Carl).*



Interviews revealed that for the local and personal networks of the amateur musicians and their DIY spaces to thrive, a co-operative model must be adopted. As opposed to either the genre-defined often closed groups of past music communities or the more common permission centred approach to mainstream music sharing and collaboration, DIY is about the open sharing of knowledge and resources between communities for a mutual benefit. As the amateurs communicate often on open networks, this stimulates those with specialised skills and interests to meet; 'It turns out that informal online communities based on trust, reciprocity, and shared social norms can perform a great many tasks more efficiently than markets, and with some measure of social pleasure and fun.' (Bollier, 2009: 127).

Despite often communicating and collaborating remotely, the musicians described this interconnectivity between the DIY venues and musicians as the forming of a close-knit community, a case of "*friends helping friends*" and a true sense of collective identity when visiting other cities. Musicians spoke of insisting on having bands who have visited to stay at their house afterwards, "*because you get to know bands better doing it that way as well 'cause you're making them food and putting them up for the night*" (Carl). This would then be reciprocated when bands on a small budget visit their town or city. For those visiting from other parts of the country, a DIY community will seek out bands they admire to come and play in their space;

*"[we] were a tiny band but we went to [DIY Nottingham] and it was pretty full up and a lot of the people in there knew the words to our songs and they'd come particularly to see us and i think you know as the venues get bigger you kind of have less of that focus. so yeah a DIY venue is more focused and promoters putting them on out of love, you know they've contacted you because they really want you to play there, so they're often fans themselves which makes it you know much nicer to play there because you feel like you're appreciated. so yeah, and its about that sort of love and care that comes from their end, the band will reflect back at their audience and you know vice versa."* (Rich)

Pinheiro and Dowd (2009) note how Jazz musicians who are connected to a 'sprawling' and 'informal' network of musicians tend to make more money than those that are isolated, as well as those who are using the internet to assist their music practice. In the case of Rich, based in Surrey and a more remote part of the country for networking with other bands and musicians, gaining access into a network of DIY spaces resulted in the setting up of a successful Indie DIY label and building an audience through these venues allowed him to pursue his own solo work. The founding of DIY labels often

results from the friendships created through the running of DIY spaces, allowing amateur musicians to quickly and affordably distribute their music physically in different areas of the UK and Europe through multiple labels run by those within the wider DIY community.

In a very similar way to the operations of the musicians sharing gig spaces and networks in Nottingham, the Cambridge musicians talked about trading gigs with other bands and artists, or, *'we'll sort out a gig for you in our city if you sort out a gig for us in your city'* as one of the bands put it, who described this as a new system of allowing amateur musicians to help each other get regular gigs elsewhere without the need for promoters, calling it *'other musicians who are playing in other places'*.

Just as Jones (1996) comments on the music industry's ability to exert control over the flow of music, so too must the amateur musicians in their self-distribution decide how and where their music is sold, even if this choice is limited by economic constraints. Participants talked about a mutual support between spaces both locally and internationally involving the sharing of contacts, knowledge and advice about setting up labels and distributing music as well as strategies for organising and promoting gigs and shows. One participant talked about how there is a DIY circuit of bands who will help distribute each other's music when they are on tour as well as stock it in their spaces. Williamson and Cloonan (2007) interpret this interconnectedness of artists as music 'industries' rather than a single music industry. Not tied to formal full-time recording contract rules of when, where and how their music must be distributed, or who they collaborate with, the amateur musicians are able to seize opportunities to create their own labels and share the credit and distribution profits equally with their peers. There is also a relaxing of seeking permission for redistributing music on compilations made by the spaces. This would result in DIY communities making compilations of bands who had gigged at their space, which would then be distributed on the road and online. He further explained how rather than seeking to compete with each other, if they knew another space had already set up services such as a large distro or a record mart that they would aim to assist them, visiting the space to lend a hand rather than seek to replicate it elsewhere. Amateur musicians touring around the UK and Europe rely on this support and believed that this was a defining characteristic of the DIY musician network. By engaging regularly with each other, new knowledge and experiences are quickly passed on whilst a continued interest in the more alternative music scenes in local areas are maintained by communicating with members of the wider community who blog and report on bands' activities. These individuals play an important role in reporting on the connections between bands, labels and spaces.

Alongside popular blogs and zines attached to the DIY network, musicians also relied on a cross-promoting of tours and releases online between bands;

*“bands put a good word in for you online ‘its good supporting other bands you know, tagging them and saying check these guys out, after you’ve done some gigs with them’ ‘it’s a really supportive scene” (Callum).*

There is a diversifying attitude to DIY (Williamson/Cloonan, 2007), teamed with a breaking down of institutional boundaries that define consumer/audience, amateur and professional evident in the open networks model adopted by many of the DIY collectives. This is encouraged on public online platforms that celebrate peer production and do not currently implant a system of proprietary control. As Bollier (2009) observes, this can resemble an ‘organised chaos’, with the openness and transparency of sharing and exchanging information with potential contributors and consumers offering value beyond the personal ‘walled’ network.

Although not directly linked to DIY spaces in and around Cambridge, musicians talked about the essentiality of belonging to a network of DIY distributors and those dedicated to helping those who promote their music themselves. The open network approach to distributing their music can be compared to the original ‘indies’ model of being able to take a song demo as an unsigned artist to an independent record shop and get a record deal here (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). This is now transferred to the virtual DIY community where musicians collectively promote their releases and this is largely influenced by a peer recognition framework. One musician will recommend another through their own site, DIY community or label page, and this will often be reciprocated. This aided one of the participants, who described the ‘different levels of DIY’ to set up his own micro-label;

*“But then it would be also people like [...] Records in Manchester, in Glasgow; there was another distributor called [...] who had a shop but also a mail-order thing in London. And these were distributors who specialised in, kind of, left of centre independent, sort of, niche music; a lot of self-promoted or self-released stuff. And, but also used to use these to send out to labels as well, sort of, independent labels to act as, kind of, demos really. And, yes, having done a couple of these self-released things I, I did, there was a, there is an independent label in London called Bo’Weavil recordings; who, at the time when I was doing stuff, had a specialism, were particularly interested in re-issues of, kind of, classic Folk-side stuff like Shirley Collins and Anne Briggs. But at the same time were, sort of, championing independent or underground Folk music.” (Peter)*

## 11.1 DIY transparency

“Free culture is increasingly the casualty in this war on piracy...The opportunity to create and transform becomes weakened in a world in which creation requires permission and creativity must check with a lawyer” (Lessig, Free Culture, pg. 173)

Many of the participants focused their discussion of promotional tactics on the free resources available online and a sharing economy of skills, experiences and ideas between musicians and promoters;

*“how to market your music, what you could do to...Like here, here’s some stuff. So here’s this thing called the music marketing planning cycle and it basically goes through like the planning, the recording and the online stuff and when to send you stuff onto the radio and stuff. I just found it very useful but they also have a discount section which I am actually in. They had a discount Unsigned Guide, which is why I joined the Unsigned Guide.” (Anthony)*

The importance of media for the distribution of ‘information about different subcultures’ can be seen in the key role the internet plays for DIY in establishing its distinct identity to other existing amateur scenes (Irwin, 1977). Pooling fan bases as a result of making connections with other bands and DIY communities was discussed as not only a great promotional tactic, but also a way of creating friendships with others and gaining valuable feedback. As a source of ‘value creation’, the commons adopts the internet and the amateur musicians talked of the value to be gained from sharing and making openly available both their music and gig practices online (Bollier, 2009). In terms of coordinating, both private and public messaging were revealed as fundamental to mobilising a DIY community. These ubiquitous tools for events mobilisation allow the amateur musician to be selective in their choice of projects and goals. This is supported by an openness to sharing information amongst the amateurs and by strengthening links between key DIY spaces and events the musicians are able to build an identity and sense of autonomy as a dispersed network with its own distinct motivations and norms of practice. Bollier (2009) advocates that this kind of autonomous commons activity is dependent on net neutrality which allows the amateur musicians to adopt forms of online communication on their own terms;

‘...as people’s lives become more implicated in Internet spaces, citizens are likely to prefer the freedoms and affordances of the open-networked environment to the stunted correlates of offline politics, governance and law. Indeed, this may be why so many

activists and idealists are attracted to online venues. There is a richer sense of possibility...’ (Bollier, 2009: 303).

The increased sense of openness in joining a network of DIY spaces and amateur musicians around the world online was appealing to the participants, allowing for the freedom to initiate collaborations with others from diverse genres and backgrounds in a way which is perhaps less achievable when having to coordinate music making activities around location and accessible spaces. Remote collaborations helped amateur musicians to join a variety of networks of artists that would have traditionally involved longer periods of negotiating access through regular visits to and gigging at certain venues and demonstrating an affiliation to a particular taste community. This activity has influenced a more relaxed approach adopted by the DIY spaces when it comes to genre identity, as those running the spaces have benefited from this more open networking activity between artists online.

Alongside this, as non-commercial enterprises the DIY spaces have emancipation from the institutional, profit-driven or bureaucratic constraints typically experienced when working within the professional mainstream music industry. A flexible, freelance (Scott, 2012) attitude to experimenting with styles, being innovative in their ways of coordinating and running events is encouraged amongst the musicians. This includes a more decentralised way of coordinating a DIY network where collaborations can be more transient and membership more loosely defined around collective ideology and instead determined by shared short-term goals between parties. In very much the same way that Bollier observes the activities of commoners mobilising online, the DIY communities did not appear to be hostile towards those with an entrepreneurial approach who attempted to seek commercial success for their music making. In fact, their coordinating tactics reliant on the ability to improvise and collaborate on tasks for running and organising shows around the UK reflected an entrepreneurial spirit amongst the amateurs in the study.

Rather than setting boundaries to access to resources, space and support during the events we observed, there was instead a more egalitarian attitude as there was a feeling amongst the musicians that they had a shared identity as amateurs with limited funds and time to pursue their music making. Sharing was regarded as essential for the sustaining of these spaces and DIY enterprises that allowed for free expression without commercial or industry interference. This attitude extended to the sharing, reuse and sampling of each others music which will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter. Importantly digital technologies have been adopted on mass by the amateur musicians in order to quickly mobilise the community when help is needed during an event, and a way of reminding those

musicians with access to the spaces of their responsibility for contributing to the running of the spaces. There is a more pragmatic approach to the establishing of rules and guidelines for maintaining the DIY spaces, which is dependent on co-operative learning. Participants talked of their reliance on those within their network sharing their knowledge and experience when seeking to set up their own spaces, labels and events.

## 11.2 Committing to projects

Practicing their music in their spare time, the additional labour of online networking and promotion means that our participants were very tactical with their choice of creative collaborations and those that they chose to engage with regularly. For the participants it was 'direct personal connections' which are key to those musicians operating on a DIY level, and must be nurtured and maintained. However, as one participant observed this connection could easily break down when an individual (a venue promoter, for example) pursues full-time opportunities, taking on new priorities and subsequently leaving behind the non-commercial not-for-profit freedoms which DIY affords. In the case of this participant, it was a connection with a venue owner which had previously resulted in regular gig slots at a London venue, but the frequency of these had dropped off once the venue had "*got bigger and bigger and more of a full-time operation*". Similarly, in terms of gaining support from a network of peers involved in a DIY scene there was a hesitancy at times from the participants to seek help from other artists and promoters practicing DIY if they felt that the assistance given would not benefit both individuals.

Although it was often the case that a few individuals within a band played significant parts in promotion and coordinating activities and tasks redistributed if a band member was away, a successful band dynamic required equal effort from the members, with participants describing occasions when bands they had been members of had split up after a lack of commitment from members.

Rather than any formal written contract between DIY artists, promoters and labels, collaborations are more loosely defined and this suits the more unpredictable nature of a volatile DIY music scene in which individuals circumstances and commitments can quickly change. One participant described these arrangements as like a 'gentleman's agreement';

*"it's, like, okay, you'll get first refusal; I'll send it to you first and listen to and if you're interested in it you can put it out. So, there's never been any, anything at all pre-agreed where they will be putting out my new album. It's just, I think that's just the way it operates with,*

*you've got, you know, DIY musicians working with pretty much DIY labels where it's a one or two-man operation. And it's just a case of taking each record on a case-by-case basis."*(Peter).

### **11.3 Informal networks**

The describing by participants of the networking and coordinating efforts between spaces representing a community of friends reveals a more informal approach to creating and experimenting with approaches to their gigging and music-making between the amateurs. Without the focus nor pressure to maximise profits, the amateur musicians are able to create a shared sense of value and achievement amongst their peers whether they are connected to a DIY space, label or wider network.

For the Nottingham DIY space, the successful establishing of a DIY scene in and around Nottingham and the East Midlands had ensured that multiple venues were able to thrive alongside each other. The spaces in Nottingham tended to co-operate with each other when arranging shows, for example making sure that two major acts of a similar genre playing in two separate venues were not playing on the same night.

By supporting each other, this aimed to strengthen the local scene whilst catering for multiple taste communities in the region. If a space could offer the knowledge of a particular music scene or genre, then they could guarantee regular events and a healthy sized audience, and the spaces in our study revealed how bands representing different scenes could ensure that a space could draw in different crowds;

*"lots of different ilks so, erm, when I put on [...], that was really really busy there was also French band [...] played and everyone got paid really well, everyone had a great time, and it was a wicked gig and then a few days later, sorry earlier we booked [...]. which is like just as DIY and just as organised but very on the other end of stuff, coke bust is heavy aggressive hardcore and [...] is soft Indie emo type stuff. But there was a lot of the same people at the gigs, came to both shows and both shows sold out so there's obviously something if you can get both, its not just one thing where its like, and a lot of the Indie pop shows sell out".* (Vince)

Observing Nottingham DIY's connections with other spaces locally and nationally, musicians communicated a *co-operative* relationship between the venues rather than a competitiveness and a secrecy surrounding the organising of events. DIY spaces will assist each other and seek each others support and advice when arranging a

show, with musicians with connections to particular bands and scenes sharing their contacts with other venues within a DIY network. These gestures of goodwill between spaces can often appear altruistic in nature, but perhaps more likely offer a win-win exchange between the musicians attached to these DIY spaces; by offering another space support this would be reciprocated and punters would be drawn to their nights on alternative days of the week.

The immediacy of DIY music performance and production appealed to many of the participants using the DIY spaces regularly. This determined a common desire to speed up the processes of distribution and production as well as the creating of collaboration projects between bands and producers. Without having what they perceived as the inevitable creative constraints when being accountable to a label or other's demands or expectations of how they managed their time between touring and recording, the amateur musicians are able to pursue opportunities to create music or gig with others as soon as these opportunities became available to them;

*"...ideally in the next five years I will do something myself, because of having that kind of DIY approach I guess. I'd just feel a lot more comfortable doing everything myself and then not having to feel beholden to someone else about like, not doing loads of gigs and then them saying 'well why isn't the vinyl selling?' its like 'well I cant really tour again this year because i've done my ten days for the year that I can squeeze in' so you know."* (Tim).

One participant described DIY as an 'instant art culture' (Jamie) similar to the practices and influences of the UK Punk culture which emerged in the late seventies. Collaborators needed to have an appreciation for their own style and aesthetic, meaning these individuals tended to already know and respect them. For one band, the decision to get a friend to produce a music video for their new release was a brief departure from their DIY approach;

*'There's more to it than that (practical, financial reasons behind DIY methods). We don't like giving up any control really. We like to make sure it is exactly what we want to put out. It was quite a big thing for example for us to get someone else to do the video for us, and not touch it at all. And we were really hoping it was what we wanted as we have to put it out with our name on it, and it was.'* (Callum).

Although belonging to a local DIY community involved collaboration with others, participants stressed that they sought to maintain a creative control and sense of independence and for this reason any aspect of their creative output shared with another was carefully thought out.



## 11.4 Co-operative behaviour when networking

*“theres the free shows which I think is just really cynical and like the Playhouse bar and were like oh we've got an acoustic night. It's just, I think its often like free gigs are really bad for me to play cause' the people there aren't music fans they're just like gone out for a drink...I do think that those venues, I think its really unhealthy for music really. erm' because it really de-values it in people's minds...And so, err, theres those but then theres people like the [...] club and damn you and then actually [DIY Nottingham] have kind of popped up and they're doing a similar thing where you go and like they're really nice to you, and its kind of got more of a community feel about it really and people are just very mutually supportive and thats a nice thing like 'oh sorry you know i can only give you 20 quid but..' and its nice and often the people that go to those are more likely to buy music and sort of understand that its useful if they can buy an album off you then its gonna help you out. its kind of part of that kind of way of being a music fan, and when you can tap into that then thats great.” (Tim)*

When seeking to expand their own connections with DIY spaces and labels, the musicians revealed how they must adopt a more accessible and flexible approach to their shared identity, values and practice. In contrast to the constraints placed on an artist when signed to a major record label, DIY communities and independent labels are often non-contractual, meaning that bands are free to leave the community/label if they choose to pursue work elsewhere (Dunn, 2012). This has been a redeeming value held by DIY collectives like the *Fence* label in Fife which has not only created successful careers for a variety of acts signed to their label (with a vital sense of community generated through its website and home produced records), but has also fostered the careers of artists like KT Tunstall who was able to pursue a major label contract without the collective having to sacrifice their collective roots and identity (See Williamson/Cloonan, 2007). A label with similar beginnings to the Fence Collective is the independent label Rough Trade which initially aimed to create a community-based environment with its alternative record store. Reflecting on the work of Rough Trade in the 1980's, Hesmondhalgh (2008) asks;

‘should they embrace the mass market and attempt to become a new mainstream? Or seek to work outside it?’.

Perhaps this is a question which no longer relates to the current work of DIY groups in the UK who are able to exist alongside a

mainstream and sustain production and practice sometimes in collaboration with major new media organisations.<sup>13</sup>

For the musicians attached to DIY Nottingham and other DIY spaces, maintaining a sense of community in these importantly relies on shared co-operative values that ensure those individuals using the spaces regularly contribute to it. The encouraging of a co-operative attitude also assists in keeping costs down, maintaining its not for profit stance and the sharing of responsibilities between the amateurs practicing their music part-time alongside other work and family commitments.

A defining characteristic of DIY practice is the co-operative learning between the amateur musicians. There is a willingness to share skills and knowledge, for example those producers identified as DIY catering for amateur musicians will teach bands and artists the process of mixing and mastering so that they are able to develop those skills and attempt to carry out those recording techniques for themselves. This relates to Finnegan's observation of amateurs progressing their skills through their 'own efforts and experience rather than being instructed formally by specialist teachers' and the majority of participants in her study classing themselves as 'self-taught' leading to peer group involvement with 'rewards seen as self-chosen rather than set by external examinations or outside recognition' (Finnegan, 2007: 137). On a basic level, a self-financing of their part-time music practice is what encourages a sense of community amongst these musicians who rely on each other for support. There is a commitment to commissioning fellow DIY musicians to produce, manage, create the artwork and merchandise, meaning that for those attached to a DIY space things tend to be kept *in-house*. Not only was this a way to keep costs down but it was also regarded as a way of forming a kinship network. Despite the musicians spoken to suggesting that there are limits to the DIY approach, some spoke of a true sense of achievement when gaining radio play or commercial attention, for example.

A sense of ownership and authenticity to have 'done it off my own back' was shared amongst the musicians interviewed. Participants commented on the creative approaches to gigging and recording shared amongst those in the DIY community;

*"I don't know, again it's just people doing things off their own back and its further removed from any sort of money or grossness like that you don't have to put up with, people are there for the right reasons"*

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<sup>13</sup> "The internet has the potential to increase the collective efficacy of those who are economically and structurally disadvantaged" (Baym, 2010: 93).

*and stuff like that. Again Europe is great for that, we've played old abandoned train stations and car factories and things, I just think its just inspiring to see people using those spaces creatively.” (Jamie)*

## **11.5 Cottage industry**

As Finnegan (2007) advocated, rather than a sporadic leisure pursuit without commitment, the amateurs in our study revealed how their regular music practice (which some from the outside may interpret as leisure) was of equal importance and significance to their full-time ‘work’. A cottage industry approach to both the DIY practices in the spaces and their own homes means that the amateurs view the work involved in promoting and producing copies of their music themselves as part of their leisure and hobby time, rather than an extension of their working hours (McRobbie, 2010; Thornton, 1995).

Another key factor influencing the decision to keep it DIY shared by the musicians was their part-time pursuit of music. Many of the participants referred to their DIY music practice as a ‘hobby’ alongside other leisure pursuits;

*“Yeah, I don’t think I’d ever want to do music full time, however much I enjoy it. I think as I enjoy it kind of as a hobby more than anything. I wouldn’t want to take away the enjoyment factor so.” (Jamie).*

According to the interviewees it was a DIY approach which allowed a freedom to dip in and out of engagement within the community and the majority of the musicians interviewed described how this was an attitude shared amongst the individuals regularly attending and using their local DIY spaces; *“I guess there are different levels of engagement with it, and for me it’s definitely i’m very passionate about it but its only one aspect of who I am and what I do” (Tim).* They regard their music activity and membership of a DIY community as one aspect of their identity and that adopting a co-operative attitude as a collective and supporting each other’s practice allows time to be spent pursuing other hobbies in their spare time.

Alongside learning as a co-operative, participants described DIY as involving an adapting to suit theirs and other’s needs and goals at any given time;

*“I really enjoyed seeing all the kind of progression and stuff because it was really learning as we went along and adapting to seeing what we needed and seeing from the first show that we put on to what we do now it’s just, its really nice” (Paul).*

A flexibility to assist others and contribute to projects is encouraged in the musicians taking part, aiming to strengthen the DIY community's position in their local music scene whilst allowing bands and artists to experiment with their own creative abilities and musical repertoire. Despite DIY reflecting the amateur musicians' part-time music making, participants argued that a DIY ethos could still be adopted by those who have now gone full time if they were to continue working within a close-knit network of friends.

For one participant on the verge of going full-time running his own label, the question of whether he would maintain a DIY position relied upon his continual interactions with those musicians practicing DIY;

*“yeah I guess its a blurry line I mean I wouldn't consider myself, i cant see myself coming away from the DIY scene, I will always be, there will always be that connection, theres always going to be a new band on the label I need to go through that process regardless and its trying to, at the end of the day the goal is to try and get further up the ladder. But yeah (laughs) sorry that was a really difficult question to answer” (Ryan).*

There were many examples of musical and artistic crossovers reflecting an adaptable, flexible attitude shared by those within a DIY community. A band from Liverpool had a fellow musician and friend do the front cover artwork for their recent release who had also produced the majority of their last EP. Here, maintaining a DIY identity and practice involves individuals and the community as a whole diversifying into many creative practices. This often means that an individual musician's network of collaborators can remain quite close-knit and in the case of the Nottingham DIY community, in-house production often involves the assistance of individuals who have worked creatively with all of the bands and musicians using the space regularly.

Fundamental to the DIY movement is the encouraging of the trading of skills and resources between individuals. As most of the artists reliant on the affordable DIY recording, performing and rehearsal spaces are practicing music part-time, there is a tangible reward perceived if you are able to volunteer your time and particular expertise in exchange for something which may not be easily achieved on your own. There is an exchanging of a cultural currency between the musicians, for example an individual's local knowledge of a Dance scene can be shared with the community in exchange for a key DIY label contact elsewhere in the UK. A cultural currency exchange market expands the facilities a DIY community can offer whilst enabling an amateur musician to pursue the kinds of music activities normally limited to full-time, funded professionals.

The musicians within a local DIY community take on multiple roles and rely on the willingness of other musicians locally to get involved in order to expand the services they can offer. Their weekly activities can involve sound engineering, promoting, producing, managing and record distributing. Although there may be promise of small financial reward for the regular demand for these services (in the recording studio in particular) musicians spoke of the majority of the activities involved as their “social life” and that the opportunity to work with others who they respect as musicians is a driving motivation behind these practices. If you are able to contribute to the support elements of the community then you become better connected within the network, strengthening your own position within it and gaining recognition from your peers. One of the key organisers of the Nottingham space explained that it was a simply of case of once musicians got to know the community and “*understand how it works*” they tend to be willing to lend a hand at busier times and when the key members were away on tour or working.

Importantly, each of these activities also required face-to-face interaction and regular attendance in the space, and duties were allocated once the musician had attended several shows and were then invited to shadow a key member before hosting a gig for example on their own. The key organisers of the space recognise how the amateur musician can feel increasingly isolated and experience a sense of dislocation when they are unable to perform live regularly at certain times of the year and rely heavily on online communication with their musician peers and their audiences. By building trust between themselves and other local artists, the sharing of these local spaces not only seeks to counteract this collective experience, but also to encourage musicians to participate with each other in a project outside of their own music practices.

## **11.6 Sharing equipment**

DIY is as much about access to affordable tools and resources as it is the sharing of different skills;

*“...you end up in a gig and you get put on a bill quite haphazardly sometimes and then you speak to them, maybe a band from Derby, couple of ones from Nottingham, then if you click, you have a chat in the soundcheck and stuff, everyone shares gear which i think helps things initially...everyone has a chat after the gig and swaps details, god knows how it used to work before but with Facebook, Twitter, its easy to keep in touch. Just promote stuff that way really, you can cut out the venues almost entirely” (Jake).*

The sharing of equipment between amateur musicians is a common feature and long-held tradition observed in amateur play (Finnegan etc.). In the case of DIY Nottingham, the storing of equipment in the rehearsal and social areas in the building leading up to a gig stimulates conversation and the opportunity to forge new connections. For those running the space, this was regarded as a key feature of the space and a way of contrasting it with the local commercial music venues. Whereas equipment, rehearsal and social space for performing musicians can be limited in commercial venues, allowing artists to freely store equipment and coordinate with others on a bill before, during and after a show actively encouraged a sense of community, camaraderie and cooperation amongst individuals. Despite a fast-expanding sharing culture of DIY part-time practice in a digital age of blogging and global communication, this was what the participants regarded as a defining quality of the DIY music scene, one which comes from the existing traditions of Punk culture and one which distinguished it from the more remote and dispersed networks of DIY hobbyists sharing their knowledge online. Although this quality is crucially defined by access to space, those participants without shared rehearsal and equipment space talked instead of DIY involving the networking of bands and band members who each bring 'something different to the table' (John). For John, the lack of a broad skill set or access to resources can hinder a band or musician's progress or encourage individuals to seek DIY space membership.

## **11.7 Challenging boundaries online**

Despite most of the participants insisting that they did not intend to go full-time professional, each shared ambitions to expand their repertoire or skills in order to improve their spaces (and gain acknowledgement from the wider network for doing so) or expand their own personal networks of musicians, labels, promoters and venues. For example, many of the musicians revealed how they would often read up about the activity of other bands online in order to perhaps gain some insight into an aspect of their music practice they hoped to improve, or to find ways in which to further their music promotion or distribution. Bands will share their reviews of tools and services with each other online either through blogs or social media, and crucially the popularity of the use of Facebook amongst amateur musicians means that access to these tend to be open. Reflecting on how DIY did not define itself by genre or subculture, participants observed how DIY communities tend to communicate their activities more freely and publicly on social media platforms which contrasted with the tendency for forum platforms to stratify music scenes and promote a more private, closed approach to communication between

their members. Settles and Dow (2013) observe how individuals who interact frequently via community forums online strengthen a bond and trust with other musicians, noting how sharing more personal information on their user profiles can 'promote ties among member who have yet to formally interact in online communities' (Settles/Dow, 2013: 2010). One participant reflected on this change of communication between musicians online;

*“Don't tend to use forums nowadays at all, really. We used to before kind of... so there used to be forums that were kind of very kind of closed circuits for like, you know, kind of some times of music and stuff like that, but this seems to now have very much died out. And I don't really know that there's anything that's kind of... because I don't think... I don't think Facebook pages or Facebook groups work in the same way as forums used to work.” (Pierre).*

Reminder posts leading up to a gig were regarded by participants as essential, and a way of predicting how many and who would be attending their show. Anthony and others described a process of *“learning from your peers”* when choosing the wording of reminder posts and promotional posts, in order to avoid a hard-sell image in particular.

## **11.8 Communities of interest**

In terms of hobbies and communities of shared interest, the practices of handcrafting for pleasure rather than necessity are increasingly pursued by the DIY and maker communities. As Desjardins and Wakkary (2013) observe, it is the 'genuine pleasure of making' which has united individuals across the world and the prevalence of maker communities online. With less emphasis on the end product, communities of shared interest instead seek the value of fulfilling practices that produce meaning and gratification. Meaning is obtained as much in the process of creating and interaction as in the product crafted. The time and effort put into these for collective benefit are carried out without necessarily the expectation of financial reward. These crafting activities are detached from a concept of

'work' in a capitalist economy sense and centre more on informal co-operative leisure pursuits.<sup>14</sup>

## 11.9 Co-operative values

As we have observed more broadly in the local and global networking activities of amateur musicians, a willingness to put aside some of the more traditional tribalistic boundaries of subcultural styles and music scenes is a strategy employed to broaden their scope for new creative approaches and collaboration opportunities. The negotiating of shared physical spaces for gigging, producing and distributing their music requires a mutual assistance amongst the musicians who have established a rapport with each other based on shared goals and values. This means that in a DIY Nottingham agenda to create a local community of amateur musicians there is an establishing of fixed rules of practice which correlate more strongly with the live music scenes of the past (Thornton, 1995). Although negotiated in the DIY spaces, these rules extend beyond the boundaries of the space to the all-day and one-off events hosted by the DIY promoters elsewhere.

*"...this is what were gonna do. We'll have this space, we'll all rehearse there, pay a bit of money each month, I'd obviously pay a bit more because i'm running it as a recording studio as well, and then we've got a space to rehearse, a space to put shows on and a space to well, record as well. And i kind of sent a massive email out to everyone kind of saying this is my dream, this is the plan and it all came together, everyone really pulled together which was incredible."*  
(Vince)

The key gatekeeper musicians interviewed stressed how there is a responsibility in protecting these spaces in terms of their safety and what they intend to provide to a local community, as well as their continued existence dependent on their abiding to curfew and noise level rules set out by the city council. This means that although inclusivity is on the whole strived for, those who are seen to threaten the norms of the spaces are excluded. Alongside this, there is also a preoccupation to protect a sense of *exclusivity* (in terms of providing

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<sup>14</sup> In 'work-based societies', a strong work ethic has always been favoured as a way of encouraging mass production through the rewarding of those productive individuals by elevating their social status within a community (Gorz, 2001). Working more rather than less has therefore always been advocated as the key to social achievement. With significant changes in the business models for various work sectors meaning that mass production is no longer dependent on increasing labour or that 'producing more means working more', challenging alternative economies and activities through cultural action begin to emerge (Gorz, 2001).



for audiences and musicians not catered for by the commercial venues) and intimacy for both audiences and musicians attending the space, which as we observed in our study influenced who was invited to perform at the venue. Those catering for the more niche, unusual taste communities not represented or regularly welcomed in commercial venues in the city were therefore favoured when considering line-ups for gigs. With performance and distribution intimately connected in DIY Nottingham, shared DIY ideology was key to inner circle membership as there is a commitment amongst the majority of musicians interviewed to keep their community activities underground and distinct to a mainstream; conscious of how past successful subcultural scenes have eventually been assimilated into a mainstream and blurring for audiences the distinctions between the DIY origin of that sound and its commercial imitation (Debord, 2012).

## **11.10 Remaining on the fringe**

With a desire to remain on the fringe, a 'co-operative' attitude is therefore regarded by the participants as essential to maintaining a space with a limited budget and reliant on the voluntary work of the musicians who rely on the resources the DIY Nottingham community provides. This is an ideology that is promoted by those gatekeepers offering access to amateur musicians. Alongside the promise of fairer payment for the musicians on a DIY bill, interviewees commented on how musicians were generally more willing to share equipment, offer to play for another band if a member was missing and because artists were given more time to set up and rehearse prior to a show compared to the typical commercial venue, musicians are more likely to watch each others sets. The opportunity to meet and talk to other bands in the space often resulted in collaborative projects between bands on record and tours. The DIY space can thus act as a forum for local artists, and a vital one for those who are new to the scene and are aiming to establish themselves within an existing network of artists from a similar genre of music. When I first talk to Paul and Vince who run the DIY Nottingham space together, it is midday on a Tuesday and both the performance/rehearsal and recording spaces are bustling, there are bands coming and going, with one band rehearsing downstairs and another arriving with equipment ahead of a gig in the evening. Despite the outside of the space looking rather non-conspicuous, on entering the side door entrance there is usually a face ready to greet visitors and on this occasion a few individuals attached to a local independent record store visit to discuss a gig they are helping to organise in the venue.

As a co-operative, the musicians and the audiences are mutually dependent on each other to sustain a DIY scene which advocates an

active, do-it-yourself approach to improving a local music scene by diversifying it, bringing new ideas to the table and maintaining a sense of creative autonomy and control. It is the *active* aspect of DIY which is fundamental and demands healthy attendance at gigs. This is what drove the original Punk scenes of the past and continues to influence the ways in which DIY scenes and artists interpret and engage with their audiences at live performances;

*“I think the more people that kind of, I think it’s the, when people want to have the responsibility then they do a good job so because its there rehearsal room its now becoming their venue to use, they of course want to maintain it in the way that we do. So we don’t want to let people use it and then be like actually you know, think this is not a proper venue, someone drops a beer like ah don’t worry about it mate, we want the kind who will get up and do the kind of thing we would do and say can you put it in the bin please or wade in with a mop and give them evils. Which is what’s happening so i’m hoping that all these different little promotion kind of teams that have appeared from [DIY Nottingham], and a lot of them only do shows at [DIY Nottingham] as well you know, they will be able to be trusted in the next, well hopefully by the end of the summer. Because it means that we can deal with more of our own stuff. We have more time to build”. (Vince)*

A shared responsibility is reflected in the democratised, counter-hegemonic style of the gigging and rehearsal spaces. There is a relaxing of the conventional hierarchic set-up of a commercial music venue and a more welcoming of audiences to contribute and influence performances and gig experiences. With the norms governing the practice in a standard commercial music venue, it can be interpreted straight away by both the musician and the audience member that there is a distinction and a hierarchy, particularly in terms of the conventional layout of the space. This is not the case in the DIY Nottingham space as efforts are made by the musicians and organisers to create a feeling of equality and thus distinguish the DIY gigging experience from these commercial venues and their norms of practice. This ultimately influences the attitudes of both parties during a performance. The musicians perform on the same level as the audience and there is no defined stage area, creating a sense of shared social status and a lack of differentiation between all those present in the space. Participants drew upon this as a key characteristic of DIY with a willingness amongst the musicians to ‘engage’ with their audiences as much as possible. For some, there was an animosity towards those artists playing in DIY venues who maintained a distance from audience members and suggested a superiority, both in their online activities and live at the DIY events;

*“Ray: they pretend they're bigger than they are. you know what i mean, i just don't understand it. i find it silly, cos i mean obviously the people who like your band you want them to feel like they can kind of engage with you as much as possible. which i think is really important*

*Mark: and theres the cliches of stadium Rock concerts people kind of parody on where you'll say 'hello wembley!' its like, but you're playing in a pub. we have time in the set to address the audience, it doesn't make sense to*

*Ray: it just doesn't make sense to create that divide.*

*Mark: to pretend that it is a friendly, well its meant to be, a friendly thing, its a separate point but a related point, theres a lot of, one of the good things about DIY that doesn't necessarily happen elsewhere is the idea of inclusivity and safe spaces and things like that*

*Ray: yeah exactly because, you know, people should be able to go to a gig and not feel threatened by anything and just enjoy it. because you're not going to get that at the O2 academy you know what i mean,*

*Mark: yeah no one is going to throw a plastic cup of piss or grope someone. i mean it happens, but you hope that*

*Ray: it does happen but you hope that the community would deal with it”.*

A shared ideology amongst both the musicians and their audiences has strengthened a sense of community, as there are rules of practice and thus a collective sense of responsibility and ownership. Those musicians who had helped to found DIY Nottingham revealed how they had initially been motivated as gig goers themselves looking for social spaces not oriented around alcohol consumption for amateur bands from alternative music scenes. Just as the warehouse party promoters of the late eighties had taken over disused city buildings stripped of their industrial heritage and social identity, the DIY musicians can be seen to reclaim similar city spaces and give these *new meaning*. As is the case in Finnegan's (2007) seminal study of local music making, although the practices of DIY Nottingham and the amateurs in Cambridge can be viewed as a minority in the wider sense of 'leisure' pursuit in society, there is a seriousness in the cultural contribution and mobilisation of different skills in the local community;

'It is true that local music-making in the sense of direct participation in performance is the pursuit of a minority. But this minority thus turns out to be a more serious and energetic one than is often imagined, whose musical practices not only involve a whole host of other people than just the performers, but also have many implications for urban and national culture more generally' (Finnegan, 2007: 6).

Their world comprising of labels, gig spaces and recording studios includes the work of music enthusiasts and those with particular talents willing to contribute to the DIY effort in their spare time. The willingness and ability to coordinate these separate creative factions perhaps represents a more recent public celebration of crafting and creating, driven by a sharing of such activities online. It is sharing experiences and organising their projects autonomously through online communication which as Castells (2015) puts it, allows social movements applying counter power to thrive in an internet age.

A unity amongst the musicians and audiences in the need for spaces to share and create alternative music had encouraged a co-operative culture as well as a desire to protect those spaces. The interpretation of the stage area, and how this impacts on a relationship with your audience was a theme running throughout the interviews. Often appearing to the outsider as an organised chaos, bands choose the parameter of their performance area themselves and the ambiguity of this during a performance can result in a live negotiation between audience and musician;

*“...for me I personally like it because its the way if we are playing shows I much prefer playing on the floor. I don't like the whole, were up on the stage staring at down at you, its a weird thing to kind of look at it like that, considering well that that's the point you're making music so that people are coming to see you playing music but you don't want them to be necessarily just looking at you...you feel the energy more as well when you're in the crowd and everybody's like right up in your face, its just more intimate and its a lot more fun.” (Carl)*

The negotiating of stage area during a performance gave DIY gigs a unique feel. Whereas it is expected for an artist to use the raised stage area when offered a gig in a commercial music venue, gigs in DIY spaces offered an alternative experience for the artist;

*“I think its authenticity as well, thats a big issue for people. Like its much more real like seeing people a couple of feet away, I can't imagine what its like playing where he (Jake Bugg) plays. but talking before about playing at venues on a stage, sometimes where the lights are you cant see the people in front of you, how many people are in the venue. and often there's not many ha ha, but at [DIY Nottingham] you can see everyone and they're looking at you, they're concentrating, they're into it. and I guess for someone like Jake Bugg returning to play at the maze it's somehow related to that.” (Jake)*

This influences an attitude of shared responsibility. In this sense, the relationship between the musician and their audience is symbiotic as

they must co-operate together to achieve a sense of community and belonging in the space;

*“I always like playing on stage initially as it feels more of an event, i think that was that way for a long time, go on stage to impress people and blow them away or slack jawed because you've got lights on, sound guy, pass and stuff... it feels really nice for a while but then after a while, complete opposite at DIY Nottingham where everyone is mingling, we appreciate that much more now. just the contact you have, the us and them. Much more a collective experience.” (Jake).*

This *collective experience* is something pursued by the bands and artists performing in and running the DIY spaces and which draws other musicians to the DIY scene. This is reliant on an active audience which in turn is dependent on an engaging performance from the artists on the bill; *“ so between songs if you're talking you can see who's with you and who's sitting there and your ratio of like folded arms to the smiley faces can really effect how you feel about doing the show”. (Tim)*

## **11.11 Acts of reciprocity**

Whether on the road or playing gigs in their local area, amateur musicians will seek to attend each other's gigs regularly and make sure to offer their support. A reciprocal sharing of contacts, skills and amenities is common amongst the bands running and promoting the DIY gig nights, and for those wishing to join a local community a sense of responsibility for the maintaining of ties and a diverse local scene is encouraged alongside the offering of advice and support to those new to the scene or seeking knowledge for a new project.

Although working within the existing live scene norms of practice in Cambridge, the majority of the musicians could be seen to be challenging the often genre-oriented nature of the opportunities for separate music scenes to collaborate, coordinate their practices and support each other. For the musicians and audiences there is a shared set of values or ethos to rejecting a mainstream status-quo;

*“I think a lot of time its not about the music its about the fact that its somewhere to go that's a bit different. I think we cater to people who, wouldn't necessarily want to just go to a Rock club. That's in atmosphere as well as the musical content, so we'll put on something thats slightly weirder...”. (Vince)*

Through this there is a desire to connect and communicate with each other locally through the music in this shared space, ultimately

shaping a more close-knit community with a strong sense of shared identity. As a number of musicians had described during interviews, local music scenes tend to be influenced and driven by a select group of bands who are willing to organise and promote regular gigs and venue spaces for amateur bands wishing to gig regularly and generate a hype around their perhaps more unusual style of music which would not gain the attention of mainstream promoters and venues in a town. When there is enough demand amongst amateur musicians in an area, a network or 'scene' (with some reluctant to call it a scene) is usually established quickly. This is how the current DIY network of spaces has been fostered, with the aid of accessible and affordable digital communications. One interviewee described how the scene in an area can quickly fragment and disappear if a key promoter chooses to quit and another individual is not able or willing to take their place. This decision to quit often comes as a result of the scene getting 'too big' and therefore too much time and responsibility for one individual to undertake. One musician talked about how a scene in a town dies after a few key musicians and promoters who ensured regular gigs and spaces throw the towel in, perhaps because it gets too big (bigger than they had intended it to or imagined it to) and they themselves have more life commitments. It is typical then for the scene to fragment, with bands either going elsewhere or tweaking their style to suit a more mainstream audience. The use of digital technologies to promote local shows online is far faster and more efficient way for musicians and promoters to get an audience for their shows alongside their other everyday responsibilities. One interviewee commented that he did not know how this was once done or achieved in the pre-internet past;

*"I dread to think. I don't know how you would even begin, sitting with a phonebook looking for venues. Imagine? i don't know how it would work". (Carl)*

Promoters tend to find that they are able to more easily target their DIY audience through online social media platforms than with the traditional gig poster or flyer, which they now find can be a waste of time and resources. These platforms make the role of the promoter or musician organising regular shows more manageable and efficient, and the ease of networking with other bands and DIY spaces online has encouraged the growth of a network and the prevention of local scenes breaking up. There are now more hands on deck, bands will quickly gain assistance when sending a public request for help through a social media post. When a band or musician is struggling with the managing of gig nights in an area, a network of local bands and promoters communicating regularly online are able to organise the sharing of some of that responsibility with others, as Carl found when he was juggling the promoting of

multiple gigs each month alongside his own music practice. Not willing to give up his role in the scene which he generally found a pleasure to do, Carl teamed up with another DIY promoter in the area and focused on organising and promoting one monthly gig night in the well-established DIY Nottingham space. By emailing and responding to emails from bands wishing to play at his nights, and with the use of social media to promote the shows, he now finds the role manageable and rewarding.

The tactic of getting different individuals to host separate regular nights in the space is something which DIY Nottingham has found to be a successful way to ensure that gigs in their space are regular, diverse and do not require the responsibility to fall onto the shoulders of a few. Multiple tastes are also catered for with this method, with each promoter bringing his or her own knowledge of a particular network of artists from a particular genre. The DIY scene in the UK appears to thrive on this model of gig promotion, projecting an image of inclusivity, an 'all are welcome to contribute' ethos with a rather open-minded approach to the running of DIY spaces. The influence that the tastes of a prominent promoter or group of promoters in a DIY space has on which bands are approached or given the opportunity to perform on a night hints however that there are barriers of access to the live DIY scene;

*"its usually specific dates they're looking for so they ask about Monday or Tuesday and it's like you didn't look to see what were doing, were putting on shows the last Friday of the month. its like "can you help us on this Monday?" No! or 'oh we play as a pop Punk band' I don't put on pop Punk! i don't think i've ever put on a pop Punk band. I really don't" (Carl).*

## **11.12 Sharing audiences**

The art of sharing audiences was discussed amongst participants as essential to the health of a local DIY amateur scene. For one participant whose band was hoping to secure gigs in London and gain an audience there, being able to guarantee ticket sales to pay for a venue is crucial;

*"So we're just relying on other bands' audiences liking us, because if there are six bands on the bill, say, and everyone has to bring 25 fans at least, then we're guaranteed quite a nice, big audience. And so, hopefully, some of those will go away with us in mind and like us and then that's how it spreads. But at the moment we haven't done our first gig yet and we're relying on friends and friends of friends to*

*just come, because we have to confirm that we're definitely going to be able to sell tickets, to get the gig." (John)*

Ryan also reflected on the numbers at DIY gigs and that lower turnout than a commercial gig did not necessarily mean a lower financial return for a band, as for example the typical DIY audience were more likely to buy merchandise at the gig;

*"...they sold out of merch. on the night as well. So it's the whole thing like if you can put on a cheap night for 4 people, cheap beer so that they can get drunk and they spend money on buying music, the products that the bands have brought with them which is kind of what it's all about for them. So that's why I like doing these gigs...we've done a fair few commercial ones, trying to think of a memorable one...not sure if it's gone now, but it's a big big venue. and it was probably about half to capacity so you're probably looking at around 300 people. got paid 20 quid. nobody bought any merch. yeah (laughs) that kind of set the tone right." (Ryan)*

John explained how they had struggled to create a sizeable following at the venues in Cambridge leading to their decision to instead focus on pursuing gigs in London with other bands where they were 'guaranteed a big audience'. Participants talked of the power of social media and the sharing of posts between friends and musicians expanding their reach beyond followers and their existing fans and audiences;

*"So the more interesting things we post the more it will get shared around and even if someone does it because their friend liked a status that we did that makes us sound interesting..." (John).*

Re-tweeting aimed to draw more enduring links between bands and audience members. Pooling of fan bases means that musicians will share a sense of responsibility for their audiences as well as an identity;

*"I've struck up quite a few friendships with bands, with people we've played with in the past. That's a great way of like pooling your fan base really, if you play gigs a lot then the potential is that you'll start off with four different fan bases and if you play together a lot then you won't just get one big one each." (Anthony)*

Whether collaborations are reciprocated to return the favour or these are one off occurrences for fun or "for the pleasure", these are treated equally to face-to-face music-making when acknowledgements are made online and on physical releases.



Participants talked about the linking online between artists and a connecting of networks as a result of remote collaborations;

*“I, kind of, give him an acknowledgement and put a link there through to his own Bandcamp so people can go and check out his stuff. It’s just a, kind of, you know, it’s, I’m not sure if it’s done him any good, but it’s just acknowledging that some... this guy has given his time and his skills to us as a favour or for the pleasure. So, I’m just trying to be a bit reciprocal there.” (Peter).*

Kev & Dylan chose to set up a competition that not only aimed to gain more audience members through re-blogging but also create a bit of hype online leading up to their tour; *“... we’ll look at who’s reblogged it, shared it, and liked it and tagged their mates, and then we’ll put all those names into a hat and then pick out one person who will win two free tickets so they can take a mate with them” (Dylan).*

Jack’s band chose to generate hype surrounding their latest album by setting up a funding campaign on their website;

*“We did a, kind of, like, a little fan funding thing. We didn’t use any fan funding sites; did it all through the website.” (Jack)*

These activities offer audiences the opportunity to contribute and gain a sense of ownership, which seeks also to get audience members involved in contributing to ways in which to sustain a DIY approach to music making.

This chapter has focused on how a sharing culture encouraged by the amateur musicians’ interactions online is expanding the creative scope of a DIY community. Whilst the participants in this study are better connected to others practicing DIY through online networking, they are contributing to a co-operative attitude amongst DIY communities sharing their knowledge and resources for mutual benefit. This can be related to the cross-promoting activities of our participants who are pooling their fan bases. Whereas past observations of DIY have highlighted the influence of genre and subculture identities, this chapter has explored the egalitarian attitude to networking amongst DIY communities in a digital age. The acts of reciprocity across separate music scenes and subcultures observed in our study reveal how DIY identity is more widely related to its practical approaches to part-time music making, rather than its historical connections to a Punk scene.

## 12.0 Sustaining the space and DIY activity

This chapters summarises and relates the various aspects of DIY explored in the thesis, focusing on the key motivations for DIY practices and the challenges the amateur musicians face when funding and supporting their micro-scale music making. Whilst there are benefits to keeping their peer networks close knit as discussed in chapter 8 and their practices distinct as discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 7; there is also a desire to embrace the practical benefits of accessible mainstream platforms online and a more informal, open approach to networking explored in chapter 9. This chapters look in more depth at this conflict, considering previous observations of amateur music practice and drawing together the various practices of DIY music revealed by our participants.

With a limited performing schedule, participants talked of doing research into local venues first to ensure that they are, *“...going to be playing to the right type of crowd and its gonna be worth your time because most of the time you aren’t getting paid”* and that the promoter is not going to offer a *“rip-off deal”* (Rich). Value is placed on the gig experience the venue has to offer for the artist, which is heavily reliant on the promise of an attentive audience and a sense prior to the show that they will be treated with respect by the venue promoters. Aside from the common ‘open-mic’ nights which dominate the opportunities to play in local bars and pubs, participants spoke of how a select few local bands who could afford to regularly book a venue tended to inevitably dominate the commercial music venues in their area making it impossible for any younger, newly established bands and musicians seeking an audience to gain a commercial promoter’s attention. For the majority of the part-time musicians spoken to with a smaller but devoted audience this made the hiring of a commercial venue room a costly and undesirable choice. Participants explained that the cost of the hiring of a venue would need to be made back from ticket sales, and with a smaller audience this often meant that the room booking would come out of their own pockets. A popular option for many bands is to pool their small but devoted audiences and hire commercial venues together, revealing the continued role of these music venues in helping amateurs establish themselves locally;

*“put something on DIY without then having to say well it’s gonna cost you £250 to hire a room and then you need to pay for your sound man on top of that. So how are we going to pay any of the bands anything because the moment we do that every penny is riding on that, and... you just can’t do it that way”.* (Carl)

This can be related to Becker's (1963) observing how an alternative subculture created by Jazz musicians aimed to distance themselves from a commercial music marketplace, although depended on commercialism to sustain their music practice. However, in seeing the money-saving and emancipatory potential of setting up their own local venues, DIY communities comprise of networks of local artists who have chosen to seek out and acquire their own, often non-commercial venues to host regular nights and give amateur musicians with little live performance experience a local platform. Amateur musicians turned DIY promoters have found that if they are able to share the cost of the hiring and upkeep of a space, they are then able to retain 100 percent of the ticket sales made rather than having to share those takings with a commercial promoter. The recent growth of a DIY cooperatives and spaces run by artists in disused city buildings has been partly inspired by the introduction of the Live Music Act, removing the licensing requirement for amplified music taking place between 8am and 11pm in front of audiences of no more than 200 people. The experience shared by many of the musicians spoken to who had chosen to host their own DIY gigs and run the spaces alongside other part-time bands was the continual disappointment of getting a reasonable sized turnout at a commercial venue and then the monetary reward not reflecting this;

*"it was probably about half to capacity so you're probably looking at around 300 people. got paid 20 quid. nobody bought any merch. yeah [laughs] that kind of set the tone right...its not very good for artists". (Ryan)*

With a 'bring-your-own-booze' model adopted by these non-commercial venues, the musicians organising events do not have the same pressures of ensuring a healthy sized crowd which the commercial promoter must always first consider when selecting bands and artists to perform on a night. This means that the more unusual and hybrid music tastes can be catered for in a DIY venue, and ultimately a fairer sharing of the takings on the door for each musician. It is also an image of *inclusivity* which those musicians who organise and promote the DIY shows adopt as a way to attract a variety of popular performers across genres to approach them for gigs, ensuring a continual diversity and a way to tap into a plethora of taste communities locally. One regular performer at a local DIY venue described how he had recently weighed up the benefits of playing the free acoustic nights in the bars in the city centre; *"oh yeah yeah I'll do that it'll be good exposure' or whatever and actually it's not, its presenting yourself as someone that they can just use as kind of a free way of drawing in more punters"* (Tim). This realisation had motivated his decision to seek out other DIY gig opportunities locally and across the UK. Two musicians stated that in their opinion many amateur musicians crossing genres or challenging genre conventions

don't have a *'saleable sound'*, so don't have the time, confidence or opportunity to go full-time, choosing instead to pursue gigs in DIY spaces or set up these non-commercial spaces themselves.

## 12.1 Remaining alternative and small-scale

What Ross (2003) interpreted as the 'industrialisation of bohemia' can be seen in the DIY musicians challenging of a throwaway, homogenous online culture of music consumption and a capitalising in offering an alternative. In promoting an alternative experience to the typical commercial gig, the DIY musician/promoters are known to offer free snacks and hot drinks to audience members as well as the musicians themselves, creating a sense of community and shared ownership to all those present at an event. This not only serves as a way to promote a sense of value amongst attendees but also encourages audience members to contribute to the DIY scene and purchase the musicians' music after a gig. There is an attempt to capitalise on the 'alternative' and 'authentic' as a desirable commodity, with for example a focus on the 'materiality of the music and the actual experience of listening' when promoting their music (Dolan, 2010). Participants explained how by creating a friendly, fair-priced, inclusive gig experience and with the musicians running the space themselves, DIY punters feel that the musicians themselves are approachable, they are more personally connected with the musicians and they feel a sense of ownership of both the space and the music played in the space. As Ryan acknowledged, this often means that DIY gig-goers are thus more inclined to purchase their music and merchandise at a DIY event and if the musician has self-released they take home 100 percent of the profits made.

Just as McRobbie (2010) noted on new creative workers, the DIY musicians rely heavily on informal networking to sustain their music practices. Once a band or musician has established themselves within a DIY network and are deemed trustworthy and reliable by the musicians turned promoters, their attachment expands both their online and live audiences. By maintaining regular contact with DIY spaces they will be guaranteed regular bookings during the busy autumn and winter months, with offers to tour with other bands in the spring and summer months. By creating a circuit of DIY venues across the country, the musicians turned promoters can offer weekly gig nights without the fear that the musician is going to turn up to an empty venue or a lacklustre crowd.

For many of the amateur musicians interviewed, this negative gigging experience was considered a more common occurrence in the city venues who put on bands every night of the week and as one DIY promoter commented, *"to the detriment of at least three or four bands*

*a week!” (Carl).* For many of the musicians spoken to these DIY gigs were pursued alongside commercial ones, including festivals in the summer months. It was the opportunity to become an ‘in-house band’ at a local DIY space however that could ensure a healthy income through monthly gig offers.

The limits of a small-scale DIY approach to music making and performing were debated by many of the musicians, with the opportunity for amateur musicians and their local DIY communities to host gigs in large well-known commercial venues whilst retaining a DIY ethos put into question. Despite the accessibility of free online services for sharing your music with a wider international audience, financial backing was still considered an essential component for the touring band wanting to play larger non-DIY venues, with corporate sponsorship as opposed to the traditional record label route enticing many of the current amateur musicians practicing DIY. However, this would require a full-time commitment to music and many of the amateur musicians interviewed expressed their desire to remain part-time and enjoy the creative freedoms which an attachment to a community of local DIY artists and spaces provided. This creative autonomy could be stifled, as one participant reflected on, if a musician was signed to a label contract, *“with a load of label money that you would have to then pay back” (Jake).*

## **12.2 A co-operative effort**

The organising of DIY gigs (the main source of income for the DIY musicians) involves the sharing of responsibilities between the promoters and musicians on a bill. To ensure that the musicians performing at a DIY gig get a decent sized crowd and some financial reward for their set, several factors are taken into account:

- The time and date of the show (a Friday night is often favoured for drawing more punters in)
- The equal ratio of top billing artists to less well-known ones as well as of visiting musicians to local in-house bands on the bill
- The choice of artists and their music styles
- The number of artists on the bill

Those musicians who are promoting the event are eager to ensure that each artist on the bill gets an equal set time and an equal share of the profits made on the door. This is what they believe distinguishes the DIY gig from the commercial gig, and ultimately makes the DIY gig a very appealing proposition to the part-time amateur musician. Whereas a musician may fight to get equal billing, promotion and attention at a commercial venue, this is a universal

standard expected by artists when visiting a DIY space anywhere in the UK.

*"Its just to help each other isn't it, its not like you know, because if were going to do a record we're not gonna pay someone loads of money to the cover, we'll probably do it ourselves or we'd ask someone who we know likes our band to do our cover for us, and then probably try and pay them some money for doing it, interconnectivity really." (Ray)*

This reflects Oliver's (2010) interpretation that DIY artists focus is 'nurturing talent, being creative and having fun' rather than significant financial reward.

*"the thing is, like, you know, most promoters as well at that level do it for the love because they lose money pretty much on every gig as well." (Pierre)*

Whilst many of the interviewees were keen to state that the predicted amount of money to be made on the door of a venue or event did not effect their overall gig experience or influence their decision whether to play a gig or not, some of the musicians talked about the strategic pooling of audiences between bands and preference certain gig nights to guarantee a larger audience and share profits made (Neff, 2005). For John, this decision to pursue gigs in the more commercial venues in London also made sense as a way of expanding their live audience beyond Cambridge;

*"No; because every band on the... on these two gigs in particular, every band who plays has to bring 25 fans, to get the gig...It's not a very nice way to do it. If we sell all the tickets we make a profit. If we don't sell tickets we've made a loss. It's a gamble. But it's for the audiences, because we want to be able to play gigs where people are listening and break into London a little bit".*

### **12.3 "Mutually supportive"**

A shared sense of community and cooperation extends beyond the musicians themselves, with the audiences attending DIY gigs more inclined to contribute to the scene by purchasing bands' music;

*"...and sort of understand that its useful if they can buy an album off you then its gonna help you out". (Tim)*

*"Then it comes out and they can't go on Spotify and listen to it. They have to buy it so we can get some money from that." (Jack)*

Participants described a “*mutually supportive*” atmosphere, which perhaps stems back to the original thought behind the idea to hire a venue explained by those bands who were running spaces; a group of bands pulling together and sharing the costs of the rent and upkeep of a space intended for them to each rehearse, record and perform in. Doing it for yourself had become a necessity for these bands who could not afford the hiring of larger well-established venues and saw the value in exchanging contacts and sharing the costs of a space *as a collective*. One of the key promoters of a space whom he shared with his fellow band members believed that it is the lack of exchanging money in a DIY space which encourages those using it to chip in, bands lending each other a hand and a general feeling of goodwill experienced between artists and audiences which can often mean attendees are regretful to leave at the end of a night.

Bands sharing the space will contribute their own gig earnings to the general maintenance of the venue; *“if we need some new bins or if we need paint or something all of that is generally covered with the cash that we get from the gigs”*. For the musicians reliant on the space it made perfect sense to offer their financial assistance and if the frequency of gig nights inevitably meant that there is wear and tear. The musicians talked of buying each other’s music after shows in order to show their support and knowing that the money was going to someone deserving of it and would go straight back into continuing their DIY practice. Many of the participants had been inspired by the DIY spaces they had visited and performed at in Europe, where attendees were encouraged to give donations to bands and the money from the food cooked for audiences alongside donations were put back into the venue and shared amongst bands performing. Defining a co-operative spirit amongst musicians running and using the spaces, one participant stressed that rather crucially it was a feeling that they all were *“on the same level”*;

*“its a case of we don't have the money to say were gonna hire this big fucking venue and were gonna get loads of people in and then were gonna pay the bands nothing because all that money is going to the venue. Use a DIY space, have a DIY atmosphere, everybody has more fun, everybody's on the same level and everybody wins.” (Carl)*

Another key aspect of the co-operative approach is the recommending of bands, producers and promoters amongst the musicians. This mutual respect initiated collaborations between bands and artists and results in the exchanging of experiences and contacts, rather than the exchanging of money;

*“Paul was fantastic, set everyone up, made everyone feel really comfortable. the attention to detail, because you've got someone*

*who is generally a fan, he wanted to record us. i think we came to some agreement with money but it was negligible really. he just did it for a favour and he wanted some experience i suppose and again feeding into the whole scene we have recommended him to other people and we now know others who have recorded with him, 'peers I suppose'". (Jake)*

The participants talked of their gratitude towards those who recognised and supported the music of amateur musicians with a DIY approach and offering their services such as mastering and recording work for reasonable fees. This attitude then influenced the participants supporting of other amateur musicians;

*"if there's something that I listen to a lot on Spotify I will then go and buy the LP, basically, just because that gives them support. So that... say on the day of the release you had your album streamable entirely on Bandcamp then a lot of people might have bought the album will just basically just stream it a couple of times and that's it. So I think we'd probably, you know... because, I mean, we're not trying to make some money, really, we're just trying to not lose money is basically what we're doing" (Pierre).*

## **12.4 Funding a leisure pursuit**

DIY promoters are still keen to make an adequate return to maintain the space and offer a reasonable fee especially to those visiting musicians who have travelled to the venue. If they can guarantee this then they know that musicians will return, and the space will be recommended to other musicians and gain a respect amongst the network of musicians touring across the UK and Europe. The promoters must therefore be tactical in their approaches to promoting and organising nights.

For example, three of the promoters spoken to explained that despite a genre-inclusive attitude to their regular nights and shared gig spaces, in their efforts to make a local DIY scene consistent for both performing artists and their audiences they will *not* book every artist who gets in touch and favour certain styles of music to others which they know could draw in local crowds with a particular taste. This they felt was not only a sensible strategy for ensuring a sizeable audience but was also fair to the artist who had contacted them, as their keen knowledge of the local scene made certain that they would not turn up to play to a disappointing crowd. They are then able to suggest other promoters they could get in touch with who better catered for their genre. The DIY promoters however are not profit driven, they aim to offer their audience a fair price for a night of live



music, with an average of four bands on the bill; “£4 entry so a pound per band!” as Carl put it.

Participants talked about the determination required in the early days of forming a band and gaining a local following, when gig audiences tend to comprise mostly of your own friends, they are smaller and offer little financial return. Both the Cambridge and Nottingham musicians agreed that they did not expect individuals to invest in the band until they had performed enough gigs and contributed to a local scene, and for John this also reflected a change in the way in which amateur musicians must operate within an existing commercial live music industry; *“I’m not expecting to make money from it right now, because they don’t know us and I don’t know if I can expect people to invest £4 in a band they’ve never heard of anymore, the way the industry has changed. So give them out for free and then they might become a fan and then come see me in the future and spend money in the future.”* Local networks of amateur musicians will share their knowledge of ways to work on a budget and gain funds to get by when releasing their first EP or LP online.

Just as the DIY musician who chooses to give away their music online or burn their own CDs and tapes to sell at their gigs, so too must the DIY artist rely on free and economical methods for promoting their nights. There is a heavy reliance on social media platforms to spread the word about an event quickly and cheaply and this has so far proven to be a very successful and convenient way to expand a the DIY scene in the UK. The sharing of music online offered ways to save money, such as providing a more affordable way to send out a press release to reviewers without having to post physical copies. For many participants, contemplating what their promoting activities would have been like before the internet is unfathomable.

Despite many supporters of a DIY scene or approach to amateur music making, the musicians still find themselves working within a traditional system of promotion and distribution, working out inventive ways to play within that system on a small budget. For some who would rather not compromise on funds set aside for recording, flyers would be produced on postcards to save money, or the promoting of a gig or release would be coordinated entirely online. The period after producing an album can be tough, with participants describing the process of paying back those they owed by working overtime and then waiting slowly for any returns to made from album sales. This can then delay the further pressing of their self-released CDs and vinyls or merchandise.

Retaining a small-scale model, a few of the participants talked of recently being able to go full-time, gaining a steady, but by no means

a high-earning income by offering production, management and promotion services to other part-time musicians. At the center of DIY Nottingham and the labels and events inside and outside of Cambridge and Nottingham are those individuals who promote the scene and find the cheap resources and spaces for the musicians. McRobbie (2010) views these individuals as 'cultural entrepreneurs' and they often act as key figures in their local DIY communities, providing affordable production and studio time, rehearsal and jamming spaces and regular gigs to part-time musicians in their local area as well as inspiring other musicians; *"lately we've started to record ourselves so inspired by what Paul's done...you think well I could sit here with the tools and do it myself. Or get a friend to help out"* (Jake).

## 12.5 Cultural entrepreneurs

For these individuals, a steady income is needed to maintain their DIY recording, rehearsal and performing spaces as well as their own music-making activities. To make extra *"petty cash"* at busier times of the year they will find ways to sell old merchandise stock, for example by cutting out the logos on old stock t-shirts to make sew-on patches.<sup>15</sup> But these activities never challenge their co-operative DIY values of putting back into their local spaces and never selling things far beyond the costs of production. All of the Nottingham and Cambridge musicians talked about the success of selling physical copies of their music at gigs, but these were never pushed as a profit-making strategy. Many of the participants argued that this was a very unethical and cynical practice carried out by some amateur musicians they had come into contact with whilst on the road, the antithesis to their own DIY non-profit driven ethos.

However, the selling of digital downloads via their own personal band pages reveals a more formal monetary based exchange in contrast to the more informal, non-commodified practices between individuals in the spaces. Although these individual band pages demonstrated DIY exchange practices through split records and acts of reciprocity in giving thanks to contributions from musicians to tracks and albums, a focus on recordings and tracks on these free commercial platforms popularly adopted by the amateurs has perhaps influenced this focus on monetary exchange for downloads, contradicting an attitude towards the selling of physical records in person at gigs.

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<sup>15</sup> Ellmeier's (2003: 6) description of a cultural entrepreneur as 'multi-skilled, flexible person...unattached to a particular location who jumps at whatever opportunity there is to be had in the field of art, music, or the media' can be applied here.

Working on a tight budget does not deter amateur musicians from pursuing the kinds of activities normally only associated with those practicing music full-time. The majority of the participants chose to press vinyl copies of their albums despite this being a rather expensive format. These are often done on a limited edition release to limit a loss of profits made and in the case of one participant finding an unusual format to achieve this which suited his budget;

*“I found a pressing plant in Norway... I was looking at different options first before, what kind of format would be cool that I could afford to do, and actually doing a 7 inch vinyl is quite a lot of money, talking about minimum 5 or 600 pounds...so i found these guys that do clear square laser cut records and i think the laser is slightly different to vinyl, so its a bit more of a low fidelity sound but they did them in small runs of 20” (Rich).*

Another participant talked of the strategies shared by musicians within DIY for releasing music quickly and cheaply, with artists often choosing to first release on tape or burning CDs for example. There is an essential music trade network existing between friends and part-time musicians running their own record labels in their local area, allowing individuals to support each other's releases by each taking, *“a hundred or couple hundred copies each and then they'll just distribute it either by wholesale which is about £2 a record...no kind of profit. Or trade with other like-minded record labels” (Jamie).* The once defining of music label districts in cities which created tight-knit communities specialising in particular styles of music (Florida/Jackson, 2009) can be seen in the interconnecting of DIY labels and spaces online, ultimately lowering the costs of travel and networking in the same way.

Although distributing their music on a micro-scale meant for most that making a considerable profit from sales is neither a goal nor main priority, gaining return from online and physical sales was welcomed by the musicians as a way of sustaining their practice. The DIY communities have benefited from the way in which the internet allows for the enlarging of the market 'for niche producers by eliminating geographic constraints on marketing and distributing' (Florida/Jackson. 2009: 313). With many of the participants offering a 'name your price' for digital downloads of releases, these are sometimes available alongside fixed price physical and digital releases. In terms of profits made between collaborators, one participant explained how the decision whether to charge listeners for downloads and to release on one of the musician's pages can make the sharing of sales not such a straightforward negotiation;

*“there was a bit of a thing when I put the album up on Bandcamp; she doesn't have a Bandcamp page, so, he was, like, so what's*

*going to happen to the money then? If you sell something through Bandcamp is that just going to you or are you going to share it with me or what?" (Peter).*

The including of a 'donate' button on the musicians' Bandcamp pages raised debate as to whether there was an expectation that listeners would make a contribution, and whether this was a desirable or even a required gesture;

*"Some people are nice like that and they will say... because now they know they like it, they're happy to contribute to it... And then lots of people hear it and like it and they've already got it so there's no need to pay for it. Which is fine; that's normal, I guess. But some people do donate... We're not like begging for money on the Internet. We don't go on Facebook saying donate, please." (John).*

It is unclear whether the including of a button by the platform creators has forced this interaction between amateur musicians and their audiences, and whether the musicians would offer a similar option to the public either through online download or physical sales. For Pierre, discovering that online listeners were rounding up their donations was very gratifying;

*"It's kind of been interesting to see how the people who've bought digital have been actually overpaying on purpose, kind of saying... it's like, say, something is like £2 or give more, and a lot of people have just kind of rounded it up to £5 or something like that, which is kind of very nice".*

In the case of those participants who had only recently formed a band or released their first material, there was a shared belief that offering their music for free was both a successful promotional tactic for getting their music shared and passed on between fans, and a fair decision as their music was new to the scene and yet to be reviewed by the wider community. There were many examples of participants allowing selected tracks of their upcoming releases to be downloaded and/or streamed for free, but then either naming a price for the full release or suggesting a donation to listeners. A good example of this is one band's decision to allow the streaming of their upcoming release as one long track so that listeners would need to pay for the downloading of those tracks as separate;

*"And the separate songs aren't on SoundCloud; it's just one long... the whole thing has all the songs. Obviously, on Spotify and iTunes and stuff it's separate songs. So I will pretty much do the same thing for the next one. It's one long track first. The first thing I do, so people can just do it as one thing. And then... because I don't mind people listening to that for free because they can't download that one. You*

*can download that one for free; I gave that one away for free because...you can't download that one for free. So people can listen to it and share it and then a couple of weeks later I think I arranged it to be bought on the Internet and on Spotify, as separate tracks, obviously. I quite liked that and I think I'll probably do that for the next one, as well. So you can listen to the whole thing, stream it on line in full and then get it if you like it."* (John).

For many of the amateur musicians who regularly perform at DIY spaces, money tends to be a necessity for those wishing to tour beyond their local areas but it is not considered a prime motivation. With the little money they make from gigs and the music and merchandise sold, the musicians are able to sustain their part-time gigging and music practice, paying for petrol, travel costs and helping to fund studio time. Many of the musicians chose to play solo during quieter periods of the year to fund their band's touring and studio time and two of the musicians found this to be particularly lucrative in Cambridge; *"I can play by myself, earn a little bit of money. It's also a good way to try out new songs before you develop them with the band"* (Anthony).

For musicians on tour in the UK it is often a case of connecting up the dots, and arranging to play at a venue close to another whilst on the road. As Ray explained, *"you don't really want a night off because you're not earning money, and obviously it costs money to do this"*, there is often a reliance on a network of promoters and venues able to put you on the bill at very short notice. For band members who live in separate parts of the country, there can be added benefits in being connected to several local DIY scenes, but the travel costs can determine how often they are able to play together. Once a strategy for obtaining a steady income from their shows is established, every effort is made to maintain this rather than to then consider ways in which they might increase their profits. For many who regarded their music practice as a hobby, it was a matter of financially sustaining their current touring and studio time practices rather than to expand on these. A recurring statement in the interviews conducted was, *'hey, if we wanted to make some money we wouldn't be doing this'* and *'you've got to truly love what your doing, you are doing it for the love of it rather than the promise of any financial return'*. This passion and determination to record, release and perform their own music in their spare time often meant funding their practices themselves, budgeting to go on tour and for some taking on lower paid full-time jobs with flexible hours so that they are able to go off on tour at a moments notice (Becker, 1982). As a DIY co-operative, there is a mutual acknowledgement and experience of financial hardship amongst these part-time musicians, as well as a shared respect for the risks involved in DIY music practice;

*“you have to really believe in what you do really to think this is gonna be okay...because i’m gonna be broke but it’s okay” (Rich).*

For those running a DIY space alongside a full-time job a collective sense of responsibility is encouraged amongst the musicians using the space who can step in to support it’s management; *“It can get kind of stressful sometimes...if I for example need to work I have to work because I need to pay the bills whereas it might mean that I wont be able to help out at the show and therefore that show becomes more stressful because everybody else is doing it. That kind of stuff can be a bit tricky but it gets a lot easier the more people get involved and as people understand how it works as well” (Vince).* This study reveals that it is this shared circumstance amongst the musicians which heavily influences a co-operative model within the DIY spaces and a sharing of skills and resources.

## **12.6 Promoting DIY spaces alongside personal promotion**

The activities of amateur musicians have often been hidden from public view (Finnegan, 2007) meaning that their influence have often gone ignored or under-researched. The sharing of music and gig information between musicians on open social networks online counters this, giving amateur communities a more visible identity in mainstream popular culture. Despite the desire to remain niche and offer a more unusual gig experience in contrast to the commercial venues in the city centre, Nottingham DIY were keen to promote their shows on the more mainstream social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Here there is evidence of cultural entrepreneurship but also an acknowledging of the value of a subcultural capital (Thornton, 1995). Just as Hip-hop relied on the work of break-dancers, MCs and graffiti artists who helped to define it as a culture (McLeod, 1999), DIY also relies on similar individuals within the community who are not concerned with making money but want to promote DIY culture, often via social media. Carl described mobilising these as essential for the DIY promoter, and Paul recognised the benefits that exposure through these channels could provide, referring to one occasion where he was pleased to discover how one of the more established well-known musicians who had recently performed in their space tweeted that it was the best venue in the UK. He regarded this as a real achievement.

DIY musicians and promoters have multiple Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and webpages, alongside the sharing of their music in digital formats on platforms such as Soundcloud and Bandcamp. The maintenance of these can be a time-consuming task, but the benefits

tend to outweigh the burden of this new addition to the day-to-day activities of the amateur musician. Particular audiences are more easily targeted, a successful timetable for promotion can quickly be devised and repeated without the need to hand out and put up physical flyers and posters around a city as was the only way to get exposure in the past. However, with a similar attitude to the running of the space, the DIY promoters I have spoken to have no intention of increasing the size of their audience and with a *peasant* economy type approach to their enterprise, have no incentive beyond the need for a reasonable sized audience per show and therefore would slow down or stop their social media marketing campaign once this need has been met.

Although each of the participants discussed the benefits of online promotion and coordination, they were also conscious of how increased social media presence and the inevitable regular updates of platforms meant more of their spare time spent maintaining their digital profiles. Describing the workload of adopting a DIY method to their music promotion and distribution, participants revealed how this does impede on their time devoted to music-making;

*“So that’s why the thing I would most going forward is actually a manager, because I think that would take a lot of work off my back. You would obviously get a lot of the contacts and a lot of the work would be taken off and I could focus on actually... and I don’t know, doing stuff that I enjoy more.” (Rich)*

Keeping up with a transient social media world where platforms frequently update and alter their services and public popularity for different services shifts creates added work for the musicians;

*“They say you should concentrate on the one thing, I guess. The more I read about the more I think that no one knows anything, because it’s ever-changing, isn’t it, and not only is... well, it’s not only a medium [?], but relatively it is, and it’s ever-changing, so it doesn’t... it’s not the same from one week to the next, is it? I don’t know.” (Bill)*

All of the participants tended to post something at least once a week, even at quiet periods and this reflected a shared belief that your activity online gave the impression as to whether you were an active musician in the real world and engaged with a music community. This meant there was a shared concern between participants when there had been a period of inactivity on their social media profiles;

*“ haven’t posted anything in my total reach and people talking about it has gone really low. In fact it’s completely flat lined so I should probably post something.” (Anthony).*

In the case of personal promotion, this concern had encouraged participants to release music more regularly than they initially intended to keep audiences engaged online;

*“If there’s just one song that’s quite good people might like that song, but then they’ll forget quite easily if there’s not enough to keep them coming back. So if you try and have lots of stuff you can get into it more...” (John)*

Participants reacted to what they regarded as an increased responsibility for noncreative tasks and a feeling of being ‘lost in the noise’ when creating their digital profiles and promoting their music online.

*“But, then I think you can become a bit kind of lost in it and I don't think it's really healthy either. I don't think so. It can... you can become, like, almost a full time admin kind of on computers and I hate it, really, to be honest” (Dave).*

For amateur musicians practicing their music in their leisure time, online communication can speed up the processes of coordination and gig arranging with the click of a button, but competing with a worldwide amateur community online meant that participants turned to fee paying services for faster results and to allow more time for their music practice. Despite a reaction to digital labour impinging on their leisure time, the participants viewed a digital presence and knowledge of promoting strategies as now an essential part of amateur music practice.

*“It’s just, you’re almost paying them, partly, I guess, for their existing relationship with some of these people and then also because it is just, you know, sitting there doing a job. It’s, like, the same as paying someone to stuff envelopes or something because it’s a monotonous kind of sending out these emails and then phoning people up and going, hiya, I just sent you an email a couple of days ago; did you get it;” (Jack).*

Whereas activities on their laptops centred around their own homes and in isolation from their bandmates and amateur communities, participants revealed how they increasingly preferred the use of phone apps to promote shows, communicate and coordinate with others. During the study there were examples of them coming up with ingenious ways to utilise phone apps and technologies to assist in their limited time available to promote their music; *“really cool*



*because I can do everything from my phone.”(Jack)* These were particularly useful when on the road or time in-between performances at a live event and allowed the musicians to keep up-to-date online without having to leave performance spaces or disrupt live interactions in order to do so. This was a key example of the methods adopted by the participants to ensure that their digital profiles were worthwhile and did not impinge on creative time.

*“... it would be more like, okay, we need to do this, how can we do it in the easiest and least painful...?” (Pierre)*

The consideration of the timing of promotion and the frequency of public posts at certain times of the year was also a strategy for ensuring these activities were fruitful;

*“...actually releasing content at regular intervals means that people kind of just... you're more likely to be picked up by more and more people. So making a video or releasing some tracks...it kind of has to be timed as well so that it's not too close to together” (Pierre)*

Etiquette, continuity and how promotional posts created an impression of their musician identity to the public was also something that participants deliberated over. For many, maintaining an air of mystique and a laid-back attitude was their approach to public promotional messaging online; *“I think it's about not coming across too much like you think you're it.” (Steve)* A feeling of not wanting to appear profit-driven (despite adopting mainstream social media platforms) was also reflected in participants discussions of online analytics and their authenticity. Making connections between an online and a live audience was debated by the musicians, with a more positive view of the validity of interactions online post-gig. However, the often faceless nature of their online audiences was not something they dwelled on and for many the relatively small numbers visiting their sites or purchasing their music means that analytics services provided by social media platforms are futile;

*“it's not something I'm going to spend a lot of time wanting to find out; I'm just, I'm just glad that someone, whoever has been interested enough to actually purchase something...you know, to be frank the traffic that comes through my various sites is so minimal that, you know, you could... it's very easy to make the connections. I'm not, I'm not dealing with tens or dozens of requests per day, it's, you know, it's a case of one or two a week, sort of thing...[on analytics] it may be useful somewhere down the line but, you know, the scale at which I'm operating, my demographic is practically anybody who's interested. I'm not marketing to anyone, anyone in particular” (Peter).*

A few of the participants however talked about their attempts to target a particular demographic and gain exposure elsewhere with the aid of analytics alongside their tagging in tweets and posts;

*“see, it’s most popular in the United States. You can change the parameters or time. So, even before anyone listened to us... there are 22,000 plays. You can see where we start to get... we released our EP and then Friends and then that’s when we got blogged about by quite a good blogger... I can look around and see oh, I’ve had a 107 [?] plays in Portugal, or 199 in Korea, Republic of. It’s a nice... I think... that shows the top 50. And the last one, China, 33. So 33 times it has been played in China. Nice idea. So I’m fond of it.” (John)*

When targeting both new audiences and musicians they had not met face-to-face, participants were mindful of not gaining a spamming reputation amongst fans and other artists, *“morally, it’s not the nicest thing to do” (John)*. A gradual migration by amateur musicians promoting from private mail-outs and messages to the public social media announcements revealed how the musicians felt that social media was now regarded as a softer approach to promotion;

*“It’s funny it feels like mailing direct to people’s emails now is a lot more of a, kind of, intrusion into, kind of, you know, people’s... if they are that interested they’ll be on, they’ll have a look on Facebook or through... there’ll be some other media they will use, yes.” (Peter)*

## **12.7 Authenticity in online promotion**

As they were skeptical of the authenticity of social media posts made by mainstream musicians in particular, they also contemplated whether they could convey an authenticity through these platforms to potential new audience members. This made many skeptical of the success rate of posts made online in terms of whether they were able to gain more followers and larger audiences in the real world as a result of the work put into online promotion;

*“It’s really hard to get exposure anywhere really, because... especially on the internet just because, you know, people will literally just look at it, just glance at it and keep on going.” (Kev)*

Directing audiences during shows to their online profiles and Bandcamp pages where they can purchase their music, the amateur musicians attempt to convince those less familiar with their music to explore more of their material available online. Interpreting their audience online via page statistics and analytics would then influence their set lists;

*“I think especially on band camp you can see the statistics of how many people have downloaded on it and how many things you've sold on it, and then how people got to the page, which is probably the most important feature of it and obviously how many plays you've got on certain things but i think thats really useful for us as you can pinpoint which ones people like” (Ray).*

The online browsing and purchasing activities of audiences pre or post-gig and how to get audiences to return to their gigs was interpreted by most of the participants as dependent on their own genre or style of music, or the tastes of the audience member. The online consumption patterns of audiences were viewed by participants as more conventionally genre-driven and thus their strategies for getting new audience members listening to their music and attending their gigs via online promotion reflected this. For one participant who had recently gone solo after being in a successful Indie-based DIY band, approaches to obtaining a new audience for his more acoustic-based solo music was important to him;

*“...for me I want to find a new audience so it would very much be you know coming out to the same audience again as stagecoach so you kind of want to find new people with what you do definitely so that it feels like you're moving forward. so i guess i have been conscious of that as well em you know, trying to get onto different blogs or get different DJs to play it you know, because it is a different type of music” (Rich).*

Although the participants believed that the regular attendees of DIY gigs tended to be a more *niche* demographic, online provided the opportunity to tap into audiences not accustomed to a local underground music scene but curious. The boom of online music consumption has meant that Indie and DIY music has become more accessible to the masses, offering the opportunity for the faster establishment and expansion of DIY labels now dependent on spreading the word through online promotion. However, our study reveals that online promotion came second priority to all the musicians who still regarded regular gigging as the unrivalled method for expanding their audiences;

*“The best way to get exposure is just to keep gigging, like every... if you could do it every week then that's just the best way. There's no doubt about it.” (Dylan)*

The art of targeting an audience online was regarded as often a far more time consuming activity than speaking directly to audience members at live events. A saturated online amateur community

alongside a culture of pursuing quantity of followers meant that many questioned the validity of their online audiences;

*“There’s so much stuff on the Internet that no one will find it. Even if it’s the best song in the world no one will find it unless you share it around. That’s the only way I’ve got about 2,000 followers, by doing that. I’m sure a percentage of those are people who just follow back and never listen to it, and people who are doing what I’m doing. Just following me, hoping I’ll follow them back. But it looks good to have lot of followers and those comments, so I’ll take it.” (John)*

There was a preoccupation with encouraging those who came across their music online to attend their shows and thus see their time put into promoting online reflected in their growing gig attendance. Linking sites such as separate gig information and tickets to websites and social media pages was something which appealed to many of the participants particularly as a way of encouraging individuals to attend their live shows; *“if anyone still, kind of, wants to, they haven’t gone here thinking, oh, this music sounds all right. I wonder when his next gig is.” (Jack).*

## **12.8 Transient identities online**

In comparison to the Nottingham musicians, the Cambridge participants had separate band(s) and solo work social media profiles and websites, meaning that they were maintaining many identities every day online, but then the decision for many of the participants to share and mention their separate music releases and media on their music platform pages and sites contradicted this identity separation strategy. In terms of a shared identity with those they were currently collaborating with, the Cambridge musicians would create shared names to indicate a community in a very similar way to the DIY Nottingham musicians. These could be transient, representing a one-off event or collaboration, and multiple names can be meaningful to those within an inner circle of artists working with each other and their audiences, whereas appear meaningless to an outsider. For example, Harrison and Bill talked about using amalgamations of their stage names when working with others, whilst Peter explained how he was using the same ‘blanket name’ shared with anyone he was collaborating with at any one time.

With the popularity of group pages for particular taste communities, the participants acknowledged how individuals shared interests online as groups in a very similar way to the real world and would seek out new audience members by posting on these;

*“Facebook, and then on group pages where you think they might be interested in members of the group, like, you know, whatever it is, like, psych-sounding 60s things, or, you know, this mod, sort of thing... mod groups and stuff; just group... power pop groups, and then we just post up on these things.” (Frank)*

Managing multiple profiles online alongside everyday project commitments means that the musicians are having to consider how these will inevitably intersect at times even if this would sometimes rather be avoided. This particularly has implications when either a project ends, a relationship between artists breaks down or a band member leaves. Many of the participants contemplated this particularly in terms of the sharing of passwords, profiles and websites with others online;

*“... I think if it did happen, I don't know what I'd do because it would be, like, a real pain because you have to re-do all the photos and stuff, but then I guess you probably wouldn't...” (Jack)*

*“I kind of de-added myself as an Admin on the Facebook page because I was just getting e-mails every week going, nothing has happened and no one has been and it was a bit like, well, because I'm a secondary member of the band anyway, it's kind of up to the guys what happens.” (Steve)*

In terms of displaying their shared projects and relations with other artists, there was an interesting distinction here between their online profiles and their live performances. Where there was a desire to make a distinction at gigs shared amongst the participants, in contrast to this identity management stance they were more inclined to display all of their separate collaborations and projects in one place online; *“For myself it all... I try and present it all as part of the, the one thing. I mean, as you can see here the Hladowski and Joynes is up here under my site here. I've put out stuff under other names, for example, the singles are coming out under this name, CWK Joynes and Restless Dead” (Peter)*. This was an act of documenting their practices alongside a promotional strategy. Participants had a sense of pride when presenting their websites during the interviews and felt that a culture of sharing online allowed a freedom to de-compartmentalise their often separate music identities in a live context.

## **12.9 Non-creative digital labour**

Choosing to not release certain promotional material due to its poor quality was something a few of the participants admitted to, which suggested a seriousness when it came to both an online identity and

a legacy; *“But I think it’s important that you’re really happy with it and it really shows kind of the best that you can do. I don’t just put anything out there, you know, if it’s a low quality recording I’ll think twice about it. Maybe I’m mistaken with that but I think it’s important that you’re kind of consistent with your standard at least, you know.”* (George). However, whilst some of the participants embraced the creative freedom of a personal website compared to the standardised display of social media profiles, others complained that the constant upkeep of these further distracted them from their music practice;

*“I don’t have the time, I don’t have the patience and I don’t really have the interest in updating a site. You have to update everything manually. I just don’t really know what to put on there, I’m really not interested at all. I don’t think anyone goes to websites, I don’t go to websites.”* (Anthony)

Distinguishing creative DIY practice from the non-creative, for many a DIY approach was a case of necessity particularly when it came down to promoting and distribution, rather than a reflection of their own creative ethos;

*“But at this stage, obviously, you have, you kind of have to do a lot of it yourself. And I think it’s probably a good thing getting, at least getting experience of it. But it is difficult.”* (George)

Many stated that they were concerned they were spending too much time on their online profiles and communications;

*“...I do worry that I’m doing too much and I should just kind of take a step back...so you kind of have to weigh it up really but... Which is difficult as well sometimes.”* (George)

Participants were then wary when services pushed a hard-sell, marketing approach on amateurs who are not preoccupied with seeking profit nor regard their music practice as a way to make money;

*“...lately I’ve been getting e-mails from ReverbNation going, oh, you’re in the top ten Folk artists in Nottingham, so why not buy these marketing things to reach more fans and get more... And it kind of assumes that you’re this really rabid self-promoter that would... like has like a considerable budget and it just all feels a bit like I’m not really seeing what this is doing for me and it’s only there because that was the only way to get the music on the Facebook page.”* (Steve)

With these online promotion activities being carried out by the musicians themselves, there is an expanding of the term DIY, what it involves for the amateur and ultimately how it reshapes existing social practices;

*“Yes, I think I could be doing more but sometimes you feel like then you should be focussing on actually practising, rehearsing, playing live, writing, rather than the promoting side, so... Yes, I think, as an independent artist these days you kind of, you’re expected to do so much on your own. Well, not expected but you can. So, you know, you have an artist that’s a singer/songwriter/graphic designer/manager/promoter and doing everything so it’s quite difficult to make time for everything and prioritise as well.” (George)*

In sustaining their activity there is a blurring of work and non-work time (Gill/Pratt, 2008). The observation made by Finnegan (2007) and Stebbins (1977) in a pre-digital age that the ‘amateur’ musician is not easily separated from the ‘professional’ continues to be a contested debate, arguably further complicated by the blurred boundaries of work and leisure activity centred around or determined by online communication;

‘The term ‘professional’ musician earns his or her living by working full time in some musical role, in contrast to the ‘amateur’, who does it ‘for love’ and whose source of livelihood lies elsewhere. But complications arise as soon as one tries to apply this to actual cases on the ground. Some lie in ambiguities in the concept of ‘earning one’s living’, others in differing interpretations about what is meant by working in ‘music’, and others again – perhaps the most powerful of all – in the emotive overtones of the term ‘professional’ as used by the participants themselves’ (Finnegan, 2007 : 13).

Just as Finnegan noted in her study of amateur musicians, there were many examples in Nottingham and Cambridge of a mix of both full-time and those practicing in their spare time in any one project, label or DIY space and were treated alike. Many were more easily defined in the ‘grey area’ as Finnegan describes it between the ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ making the observation of their practice distinct and ethnographically interesting.

*“So, I think people pick and choose what level of self-promotion they’re comfortable with and then... I’m generally not that comfortable with it but it’s kind of a necessary evil that... And I think it’s a trap that some people fall into, that they get a bit like me, me, me, me, me...” (Steve)*

## 12.10 Maintaining an authentic online profile

Overall, there was an observation by the musicians of a *hyper-sociality* in social media interaction, which as a promotional strategy was perceived as 'tacky' and a way of boosting online music sales and gaining more followers. As the amateurs were organising smaller venues and events that are more affordable and manageable to run themselves, they were not in search of large audiences online but rather tapping into particular niche taste communities, staying in touch with regular attendees to their shows and reaching out to audiences familiar with certain DIY bands and spaces who live outside of their local areas when promoting their tours;

*“Ray: no but we play quite a niche sort of and were happy within that niche*

*Mark: and also it wouldn't be as fun if*

*Ray: you were doing it every day,*

*Mark: the idea that it would feel like a job, or that you'd be distanced from you know the circles you're moving in”*

Many of the suggested strategies and tools for audience expanding online were therefore seen to contradict this smaller audience with richer engagement approach and were deemed useless by the majority;

*“... you're throwing a net very wide just to try and catch one small fish...” (John)*

Whilst linking was about shared identity rather than profit making, the DIY spaces and their personal profiles had separate purposes. However, these needed to compliment and sync with each other, as participants revealed their priority to maintain a coherent voice across these. Their personal profiles tended to focus more on their music releases and creating a visual identity, whilst the DIY spaces profiles were events oriented, with a far more stripped-down approach to sharing news and information and were solely active on Twitter and Facebook. This gave the two distinct identities and purposes, creating a distinction in the musician's mind of the work involved in maintaining these;

*“Because it's just too much information. I want to be, like, as sparse as possible.” (Jack)*

Participants were all too aware of how there are elements of deception in the embellishing whilst repressing aspects of your identity via social media and how their own increased public exposure on multiple music and networking platforms meant there



was a concern of deceiving people about their music practices both in and outside of the DIY spaces. The musicians were aware that their decisions to link, or not to link different bands or projects to each other on these profiles alongside how regularly they updated them could effect how the public perceived their music. Just as Thornton (1995) distinguishes 'subcultural capital' from Bourdieu's cultural capital as dependent upon the media as a definer and distributor of cultural knowledge, there was an awareness of the power of media and social media in particular for shaping a public's view of what might be considered high or low in 'subcultural capital'.

This was regarded as a normalised system of identity management largely perpetuated for commercial interests. However, an act of resistance in the way that Hebdige (1979) theorised to a dominant culture of music distribution can be observed perhaps in our musician's individual challenging of the profit centric nature of a mainstream music industry and its monopoly over platforms in which to distribute music. Rather than putting too much thought into how their online promoting of DIY spaces and events linked to their personal music promotion, the majority instead chose to focus on their tangible live audiences and rejected many of the profit-centric promotion services online that promised larger audiences. This was also an attempt to distance themselves from what they termed as '*brand pushing*' activities and a fabricating of success, instead suggesting an authenticity in their live performance and face-to-face interaction.

## **12.11 Maintaining traditions of amateur community practice**

Online interaction is importantly adopted by the musicians to devote more time to local creative practices. Observing the daily interactions between musicians on the DIY space Facebook pages, Twitter and personal blogs and websites, these primarily involve an information sharing between musicians and their audiences rather than direct, rich communication. The dissemination of details for an upcoming gig is made a fast process online, giving the musicians hosting the gigs as well as the performers more time to focus on their music-making. This is largely favoured over the handing out of flyers or physical posters primarily for this reason, but also because they find that their niche audience is much easily pinpointed online. Whereas the DJs and musicians of the late eighties and early nineties would discretely publish phone numbers on advertisements in music magazines and wait for word to spread amongst rave goers, the DIY musicians create Facebook group pages with rather unassuming names that only those 'in the know' (Bourdieu) or who have visited the space would know to search for. Thornton interpreted this approach as a

way of obtaining 'subcultural capital' (1995) in creating an air of exclusivity amongst regular attendees to events in being 'in the know', observing how the obtaining of subcultural (rather than Bourdieu's cultural) capital is converted into financial reward by all personnel including musicians attached to a club scene. This is as a result of 'hipness' and individuals roles in defining and creating a subcultural capital.

Throughout the study, there were examples of musicians embracing social media and an all-inclusive attitude to promoting their events and sharing their knowledge and experience with a wider community of music fans. However, participants either running gig nights or spaces revealed their aim to keep their networks and gig attendance at a *maintainable size*, which influenced their attempts to make their events and communities obscure if one was to search for these on a search engine or social media platform. Alongside this, all participants were keen to keep their own personal networks at a maintainable size and would review those they kept in regular contact with. As observed in the past, amateur musician networks demand a certain level of commitment from members and in the case of sharing spaces being able to demonstrate that they can be trusted and share responsibility. This also extends to audience attendance and commitment to a particular live music scene.

Socialising activity in the spaces and at events continues to act as an essential way of securing future work (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2002; Ursell, 2000) and sustaining the DIY scene in the UK and locally. There was reflection during discussions of social media and online networking that these might disrupt existing conventions of how amateurs interpret each others commitment to their music practice and the promoting of DIY spaces when mapping out their personal networks. This concern related to a more general observation of being 'lost in the noise' in a saturated climate of amateurs promoting their music across multiple platforms online, potentially devaluing the uniqueness and niche quality of separate underground music scenes which set them apart from a mainstream industry, and discovery of these scenes. Observations of participant's strategies for coordinating their gigging and interaction with other musicians in closed networks whilst adopting public online communication tools to negotiate events and promote their music reveals how bonding social capital processes continue to influence amateur musician practice alongside online bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001; Leadbeater/Miller, 2004). These are interconnected in the everyday activities of the amateur who is hoping to connect with others within a wider amateur community of differing interests and pursuits, but is at the same time maintaining ties with those within a tighter network sharing things that are not shared publicly or with the wider network. This is how a level of exclusivity is achieved alongside the more

public online promotion, networking and distribution activities that put their music practice on a global platform.

Participants adopted ways in which to explore new networks through a combining of online and live networking, and a process of both bonding and bridging social capital (Leadbeater/Miller, 2004). Touring can involve a lot of travelling meaning that focusing on one area can be a tactic deployed, meaning that only contacting musicians and promoters in a specific location can allow face-to-face meeting and establishing richer dialogue between individuals whilst helping to reduce travel costs. The participants talked about the benefits of being offered gigs whilst on the road;

*“sometimes, gigs come in, like, a week before or two weeks before. Especially when you're on tour, because you might, like, meet someone at one gig and they say, oh, well, what are you doing next Thursday? Come and play at my bar or whatever.” (Dave)*

This helped to maintain existing traditions of amateur music networking conducted in live settings alongside their online activity. Participants talked of the ways in which mediated communication online altered the stages of acceptance of a new band member; (Baym, 2010)

*“...you have to prove yourself with a few practices before you're allowed into these echelons. Like a couple of bassists where we tried them for a few times and one of them the attitude was wrong and one of them just couldn't play bass very well. So they never got to this stage. I just texted them and personal messages when we had practices and stuff. We work up to when they get let into this, when they show that they want to do it and really can do it and they will do it...None of the bassists we've had in the past who didn't work out ever got to the stage where they were given Dropbox. They have to prove themselves before I'd need their opinion on things.” (John)*

Alongside this, an inevitable time delay in sharing news or updating others via asynchronous communication media alters how the amateur musicians manage their identity. There were examples of a clash in the ways in which the musicians dealt with the departure of a band member either face-to-face or remotely and the conventions of de-linking or removing individuals from shared online profiles and platforms. Whether a band member leaves of their own accord or is asked to leave, participants revealed how the social etiquette expected would be that that individual no longer turned up for band rehearsal or even perhaps at the same venue or DIY space. This however was a trickier scenario online, with negotiating access in particular to file-sharing groups altering this convention of severing ties;

*“...she’s still there and I don’t know why. Because I feel too cruel to delete her from it. I didn’t [pause] there’s no reason for her to still be [pause] I don’t know why she hasn’t left, herself. So she can see all of the stuff we’re doing; she’s a past member and she just hasn’t taken herself out of the group” (John)*

Traditions of social etiquette in social spaces are not mirrored in the online file-sharing activities, altering social practice between the amateur musicians. Participants also reflected on how there is also a delay in updating the members or the identity of a band across profiles. Multiple accounts across platforms online means that the departure of a band member can be a lengthy process of updating and informing separate online audiences. This can mean that musicians will take a more relaxed approach to transition period of their band than they would do in the real world;

*“Hasn’t done yet because he hasn’t quite left. But when he does leave, we’ll have to change our profile and biography and things like that on a couple of sites and introduce a new member of the band, when he joins, with a photo and stuff like that, I suppose. Yes. So not a massive impact; it’s only the bassist. [on access to sites and sharing files] Oh, I see. I wouldn’t bother. If it was acrimonious then I might but it’s not, so we won’t bother changing passwords or anything. We’ll probably take him off the administrators’ list, you know.” (Max)*

A delay in updating and informing the public and their peer networks when a project changes can create a divide between their audience in terms of how they access information about them and perceive their identity at any given time. For example, whereas at a live show a band’s new lineup or repertoire might be instantly acknowledged, this may still be unclear to those networking with a band and browsing a band’s profile online at the same time; and vice versa. This division is further complicated when musicians are in multiple bands and separate these identities online.

‘Regardless of how we present ourselves in digital environments, in most encounters others will have fairly limited cues with which to interpret us, and may or may not make of them the meanings we had intended...In mediated environments, where there are so many blanks to fill in, people make more out of others’ small cues than we might face to face (Ellison, 2006 in Baym, 2010: 119).’

A feeling of a lack of control over identity management (often due to the ever-changing social media environment) experienced by our participants has its consequences for authenticity. However, despite many of the participants sharing their feeling of powerlessness when it came to how their own digital footprints were spread across

multiple sites and platforms and including older material or projects, the participants each discussed their regular attempts to draw connections between venues and other bands and musicians in order to provide a richer, more detailed and authentic picture to those audience members more regularly consuming their music online rather than attending live shows. These tended to be periodically updated and perceived as a way of presenting real-time connections to social media users when promoting events or releases on transient pages meaning that de-linking or ending these connections would not be so dramatic as they would appear in a face-to-face scenario. The sharing of information in 'reduced cue environments' has its implications for traditions of identity making, with on the one hand online meetings increasingly normalised meaning they are very similar in method as those taking place in the real world, but on the other the sharing of sources of information of the self not intended to be so making it harder to present an 'inauthentic self' (Walther & Burgoon, 1992 in Baym, 2010).

## **12.12 Authenticity and exclusivity**

Both an authenticity and exclusivity is pursued by the amateur musicians when promoting their live gigs and essentially the unrepeatable music experience. This is extended in the musicians choice or preferred music format when promoting and distributing their music, with the nostalgic mix-tape, vinyl 12 inch and split 7 inch dominating discussions. Just as there was a wish to maintain the context distinction between music scenes and traditions through live performance and shared spaces in cities, there was also an observing of the commodifying of these distinct practices which give music experience authenticity and reward those who attend live events rather than solely consuming music remotely online. The reappropriation of subcultural styles into mass culture (Terranova, 2000) continues to be something which is challenged by the DIY practices of amateur musician communities.

In a digital music age which sees the transformation of mechanical production into digital production, consumers increasingly extract, reappropriate and reproduce culture; duplicating sounds, styles and images on the internet through blogging activity and also extrapolating existing (digitally reinterpreted) images and sounds published online. This encourages a more all-inclusive, participatory culture in music experience but it also increases the ambiguity of a music's authentic source, context and background, making the legitimising of a piece of music by both artists and audiences a more challenging activity. Acknowledging this cultural shift of multiple-sourced music consumption, DIY artists are seeking to reclaim the direct modes of communication with their audiences through blogging

activity, thus placing authenticity again at the top of the pile for judging the quality of a music experience. In giving authenticity a higher status as a legitimacy tool, DIY artists seek to question the often dislocation of music and artists from their audiences in mass production, mass consumption and the manufacturing of sound and genre identity. By promoting live events and links between live performance and face-to-face communication and the digital world, their audience then feels they are getting an authentic experience of the DIY scene and its artists (see Grazian, 2004) so the authenticity processes are negotiated both by the artist and their audience. With the undefined stage area at DIY events, this is a unique live experience for the audience in which the musician aims to break down a physical and ideological barrier often observed in larger music events where the artist and their stage props are the spectacle. In this instance, it is DIY culture which is the spectacle, and the opportunity to celebrate live music as something happening in a single time or space (in a digital world of often isolated communications) is adopted as the core value of the DIY local music scene. However, in terms of authenticity as an outsider this can also be viewed as a subjective, narrow interpretation of the 'authentic' live experience which is shared amongst DIY musicians and their audiences resulting in collectively constructed norms of performance practice. MacKinnon (1994: 81) observes an 'elaborate construction of informality' in the natural, spontaneous and immediate performance values of the UK Folk scene. These subtle performing conventions can perhaps be viewed in DIY music live events, and DIY's attempts to legitimise their work through sharing an interpretation of the authentic live sound and performance style.

Connell and Gibson (2003) argue that there has always been a dialectic relationship and a tension between 'music as a commodified product of an industry with high levels of corporate interest, and simultaneously as an arena of cultural meaning' and it is these tensions between the small-scale production of music displaying the importance of music in everyday life and then the larger scale distribution and consumption of music which 'reveal tensions about how sounds circulate as both economic and cultural value' (Connell/Gibson, 2003: 6). There is perhaps then a dialectic relationship in the pursuit of both economic and cultural capital by aspiring DIY musicians and grass-roots music collectives, which is a relationship which can be observed as existing as early as the production of sheet music and the use of recording technologies to found a 'music industry' had been established in society.

This chapter has explored how the amateur musicians in this study share a desire to remain niche and promote a gigging experience that makes DIY music unique, yet at the same time embrace some of the promoting and distributing benefits that the adopting of

mainstream platforms online can provide. There is a tension here between a desire to retain subcultural capital whilst adopt an entrepreneurial approach to their micro-production that suggests a departure from some of the Punk identity and traditions of DIY as discussed in chapters 2 and 3. On closer inspection, this tension relates also to the discussion in this thesis of the expanding network of DIY via online communication, yet a commitment shared by our participants to keep their personal peer networks close-knit. This chapter has also explored how digital promotion, networking and distribution has become essential for sustaining DIY practice, yet the participants are aware of how this non-creative digital labour impinges on the time they are able to devote to their music activities.

## 13.0 Result and Contributions

### 13.1 Lessons for Sociology

#### Counteracting a 'lost in the noise experience'

This thesis reveals how the predominantly solitary nature of online activity can encourage a shared establishing and preserving of face-to-face social activities surrounding music-making, and a more enduring sense of identity and belonging that material artefacts can create. There was an attempt to counteract a sense of disconnection from local musician communities and audiences or even a work replacing 'the social' (McRobbie, 2002) by promoting these activities through the shared DIY spaces and the exchanging of artefacts at live events. Challenging a normalisation of remote consumption of live music that threatens the sustainability of hosting live events particular for amateur music, here the promoting of physical exchanging of music can be viewed as an act of resistance. But perhaps rather than a military and radical form of resistance, this is more along the lines of Widdicombe and Wooffitt's (1995) concept of 'everyday resistance'. Whilst there was a collective aspect to the handcrafting creating a symbolic identity for DIY, it was importantly a very personal and individual activity. Contributing to an existing Sociological observation of an everyday resistance by Widdicombe, Haenfler, Scott (1985) et al., this thesis suggests that it is perhaps also an example of a more discreet and personal resistance, seeking through their individual handcrafting activities to open debate and create an alternative forum and medium for expressing ideas amongst members of the public rather than to create a revolution that wholly rejects a mainstream culture of remote digital music distribution.

Rather than rejecting the opportunity to widen their audience and peer-to-peer sharing of their music to a global audience online, the musicians instead have sought to create a sense of a close-knit amateur community by supporting local and live events whilst contributing to a global network of musicians online. A reimagining of urban spaces is a key aspect of their attempt to counteract a sense of disconnect from the social and physical aspects of music, allowing individuals to reshape the meanings of spaces and commodities (Levi-Strauss). This thesis offers a unique Sociological observation of DIY practice that supports Clarke and Hall's rethinking of Gramsci's hegemony in viewing the reclaiming of abandoned public spaces as their own and a winning of both cultural *and physical* space (Hall, 1993). Their description of working-class subcultures correlates with our observations of DIY Nottingham who focus around 'key



occasions of social interaction...[developing] specific rhythms of interchange, structured relations between members...[exploring] 'focal concerns' central to the inner life of the group' and adapting material objects and reorganising these perhaps into 'distinctive 'styles' which express the collectivity of their being-as-a-group' (Gelder, 2007: 97). Alongside an ideology, DIY in its live events and shared spaces is very much a 'concrete, identifiable social formation', and this is importantly determined by a collective attempt to counteract a 'lost in the noise' and a wholly remote music-making experience in a digital age.

## **Exclusivity Capital**

Although we can view these alternative practices as a way of challenging the hegemony of a dominant commercial music culture, my findings would suggest rather that these aim to co-exist alongside rather than be in direct conflict with a commercial mainstream. This supports Hall's observation of subordinate cultures as negotiating spaces and gaps within a dominant culture (Hall, 2006: 5). In this respect, the term 'alternative' can be put into question, particularly as all of our participants were funding their music practice via more mainstream, commercial means. Although the spaces projected a countercultural standpoint to the profit-driven live and recorded music industry, individually the musicians were distributing and promoting their own music via commercial platforms online. If we were to view DIY as a 'subculture' and subcultures as the antithesis to mainstreams (Hebdige, Mungham, 1976) then this contrasted many of the online public practices of the bands and musicians with their real-world anti-profit practices at the DIY events and spaces.

DIY's accepting of mainstream when distributing their music online would also suggest a lack of counter-hegemonic action according to the Birmingham CCCS sociologists understanding of subcultures existing out of the mainstream. Subculture is arguably less distinguishable from a mainstream when it is more commonly visible and identifiable. Despite adopting commercial tools online, our participants revealed how both as individual artists and DIY communities they still aim to appear 'alternative' or niche to their audiences and those outside of their communities in order to retain what Thornton defined as a 'subcultural capital' (Thornton, 1995).

Although obtaining subcultural capital or perhaps even an alternative status in DIY is perhaps not as class-bound as cultural capital (supporting Thornton's concept), DIY is not so dependent on media coverage for its high or low cultural status, therefore an understanding of an obtaining of a cultural capital in DIY must sit somewhere between Thornton's and Bourdieu's analysis.

Observing how the DIY musicians aim to distinguish themselves from a digital throwaway culture, this thesis contributes to a current Sociological understanding of subcultural capital by suggesting that it is perhaps rather an *exclusivity capital* that DIY musicians obtain in both the unique tangible artefacts that cannot be duplicated and the one-off music events. By personalising their gigs and handmade record sleeves for audiences, the musicians seek to convert an exclusivity capital into an economic capital. This was particularly successful when (as the participants acknowledged) a recent revival in rare and old music formats like vinyl or tape particularly amongst niche and omnivorous audiences strengthened an opportunity to profit from making their music exclusive on a limited press supported by small DIY shows whilst increasing a sense of uniqueness.

Interestingly, despite many claiming during interviews that this was a quest for 'authenticity' as all the participants also made most of their music available for streaming and download online, this was a tactical approach targeted at those music audiences in search of the unique or even subcultural and with an aim to retain an alternative image, rather than a core value held by all of the musicians. This gives DIY two identities, the more open and free DIY shared online, and the exclusive 'in the know' identity maintained by the limited-run distribution and small-scale events. As well as seeing the economic advantage of distributing and promoting their music internationally online, the musicians also recognised the *social value* of exclusivity.

Although a tactical use of exclusivity capital challenges a 'relatively sans economic capital' (Scott, 2012) view of DIY, maintaining an exclusivity was revealed during interviews to be a practical choice for the part-time musician (hand-making as the economical option and the affordability of keeping gigs small) and a way of creating a link with DIY's Punk past. In the case of both Nottingham and Cambridge, a framing of their practice as 'alternative' is reflected in their carefully crafted lo-fi sound and aesthetic, the makeshift spaces they run and offer to local audiences and more broadly in placing value on personalisation as opposed to throwaway mass-production for quick profit. Although many of the handcrafted sleeves and physical records were sold internationally by the musicians online, these helped to create a mythical element to DIY and the feeling to the purchaser that they were in on a secret.

It is this maintaining of an *exclusivity capital* which also influences how the musicians in our study seek to preserve boundaries and access to networks and their spaces despite a free culture of sharing online challenging these. This can be contrasted with the make-up of a commons model recently observed in similar amateur music communities widely described as 'alternative' (Bollier, 2009; Lessig,

2008). Despite taking part in more informal, open networking on public social media platforms online, the amateurs revealed their desire to withhold access to the privileges of being within an inner-circle of artists from those new to the scene and/or not seen to possess the right credentials or commitment level.

### **Global/Local: Keeping networks at a manageable size**

The perceived benefits of social and cultural capital to be gained from keeping some of their knowledge and real-world activities exclusive influenced a rejecting of some of the informal, public networking approaches encouraged on social networking platforms. For example, the DIY musicians in this study were still adopting norms of social hierarchy and expected those they invited into their networks to abide by certain social etiquette. There continues to be rules to entry despite an observed greater openness and transparency in those communities networking online (Bollier, Lessig). In particular, a desire to keep networks focused on a particular scene that could draw in crowds on Friday evenings into the DIY space on the edge of town revealed a tactical maintaining of inner circles that could be perceived as counter to the 'all-inclusive' and democratised stance to DIY. The fear that with too many reliant on the network that these scenes would collapse, unravelling themselves and losing their unique identity and focus.

In exploring individuals engagement with a wider amateur community online, our study reveals how a relaxing of networking barriers has encouraged a community of individuals with different levels of contribution, and varying motivations for their practice. This in turn influences a loosening of some of the more strict disciplines associated with a 'Punk' ethos or 'alternative economy' stance synonymous with music subcultures of the past. This perhaps supports Irwin's (1977) describing of subcultural practice as more a lifestyle choice rather than a form of deviant behaviour.

With a contribution to existing Sociological observations of the networking of amateur musicians online and in real world settings, this thesis observes more closely DIY musicians' shared spaces and real-world interactions, detecting that there continue to be barriers to gaining entry to DIY circles. This was also revealed during interviews in the aiming to '*remain niche*' and '*can be quite cliquey*' comments from our participants. The wanting to keep their audiences in the spaces at a 'reasonable size' and the act of 'clearing the decks' suggests a desire to remain underground, on the fringe and perhaps crucially to ensure that those attending and performing at their events have an allegiance to the community. The complex, multi-layered aspect of subcultures not just reacting stylistically to a mainstream

society as observed by Haenfleur (2004) can be viewed in DIY with both personal and political motivations with perhaps the personal dominating the fabric of the community; at one end there is a more open DIY definition to their community, at the other there were hints during the interviews of tribal behaviour amongst particular music scenes present in DIY spaces.

Maintaining the sizes of networks also perhaps demonstrates a commitment to a micro-scale and local production of amateur music alongside the opportunities for collaborating remotely with musicians across the globe. Our participants revealed how the digital can support these local music practices, but there is a balance to be achieved as to how open their networks can be without compromising an exclusivity and uniqueness. Just as Thornton (1995) uncovered in her study of Dance clubs and raves, we also revealed how the DIY spaces tend to have distinct demographics despite appearing all-inclusive to the outside observer. Our study supports Thornton's critiquing of the Birmingham structuralist idea of the 'winning' and 'appropriating' of space as mystifying subcultures; we suggest rather than a challenging of social structures of exclusion and stratification, DIY is more about the winning of urban spaces for leisure pursuits.

### **Defining DIY in a digital age**

Contributing to existing Sociological observations of DIY music practice and its relation to Punk (Hall, 1993; Bennett, 1999), this study reveals a broadened definition of 'DIY' in a digital age as not just a political statement but also an entrepreneurial approach and a leisure pursuit with a particular focus on handcrafting activities. In its looser definition today both our Nottingham and Cambridge participants revealed how DIY in its digital phase is not so easily defined as political, entrepreneurial or more traditionally a hobby or leisure pursuit alongside other craft activities. Rather, it is perhaps a combining of these and in its digital phase is not so easily defined. DIY itself is quickly becoming a 'catch-all term' in the media for amateur practice in the same way Bennett (1999) viewed the term subculture attached to any practice carried out by young people. The amateur musicians revealed how DIY can mean many different things to different individuals; it can be used very loosely to describe part-time non-contractual music practice or it can be used to define an ethos and community with a particular style and approach to amateur music-making. This definition can also shift at different times of the year for one musician, when either they are very strongly attached to a local space or international network with a strong DIY identity, or they are carrying out activities for their own independent music-making themselves.

In the case of a more individual, personal aspect of DIY revealed in these practices away from shared spaces or collective practices both online and offline, our study suggests that these can be perhaps just as political as collective practices and styles, contributing to some of the existing observations more aligned to a communal subcultural understanding (Hall, etc.) of DIY music practice and its affiliated Punk origins. A resistance practice of actively challenging the profit driven online music platforms perpetuated by a dominant mainstream (Hebdige, 1979) was shared by the musicians in our study whether they were active in a DIY space and interacting with other amateur musicians or not. There is perhaps also more evident a striving for individuality in the ubiquity of DIY and its approaches rather than a 'collective challenge' as Haenfler puts it, supporting the need for a broader understanding of resistance that considers individual standpoints.

Our study reveals a more free, fluid movement of individuals between differing music practices, tastes and DIY spaces, suggesting collective music scene identities that are more temporal in nature allowing for a reconstructing of identities between sites of collective expression (Shields, 1992). Where scenes were observed as more coherent and separate (Cohen, Savage, Thornton etc.) in the past, our study suggests there is a new fluidity to local music communities networks and creative practice supported by international networking between musicians online; identities are more in flux, they are multiple and they go through transitional stages when one project ends and another begins. This fluidity and the looser defining of DIY amongst the musicians in our study appears to reflect an adopting of DIY as an enabler for part-time, independent music making over the more traditional subcultural boundaries of style. It is also the looser and transient defining of music projects and the less personal interconnected networks of artists collaborating with each other that aims to determine a more viable and sustainable alternative to a music mainstream in DIY.

In much the same way as the Punk scene in the 1970's (Savage, 2005) we see a mixing up of 'subcultural' styles in the DIY communities and the musicians' personal music projects. It is also the transcending across styles, social class and professional status boundaries that makes DIY distinct to the more commonly known stylistic subcultures observed in the past. Wulff (1988) uses the term 'microculture' as opposed to subculture when describing the activities of which 'seems to capture a more contingent sense of shared experiences and tastes. The fluid nature of DIY's identity in our study supports this defining of a microculture rather than a subculture, however there are also parallels to be drawn with both our observational and interview data of the DIY spaces and Bennett's

(1999) study on neo-tribalism and Urban Dance music. Bennett notes how interviewees admit to attending different music scenes and having a diverse taste in musical styles. In DIY we noted the same despite these scenes (as the interviewees reflected on) continuing to appear on the outset as distinct, and often closed 'tribes'.

This makes DIY difficult to define in one unified concept; in consideration of past concepts it is perhaps a collection of microcultures, subcultural styles and neo-tribes. In the case of the latter, it is Maffesoli (1988) and Shields (1992) discussion of these as 'inherently unstable' and maintained through 'shared beliefs, styles of life, an expressive body-centredness, new moral beliefs and senses of injustice, and significantly through consumption practices' which applies well to our observations of DIY (Shields, 1992: 92).

## **13.2 Lessons for HCI**

Taking into consideration Dourish's (2006) discussion of the role of ethnography in HCI, my thesis has aimed to not just simply provide an account of what goes on in DIY music settings and thus 'save the reader a trip', but it aims to provide models for the HCI community to consider those settings and the activities that take place in them. As such my thesis aims to contribute to future HCI research into, and consideration of technologies for, the amateur musician community.

This section will highlight the key practices of DIY musicians that have been explored in this thesis that might 'bring technology into being' (Dourish, 2006). These aim to contribute to existing HCI knowledge of amateur musicians; in particular the technologies they use to support their music activities and the unique ways in which they adopt these technologies. In seeking to further assist amateur musicians' practices, HCI must consider how digital technologies are shaped around their social practices. HCI may consider the social practices explored in this thesis and I will now draw attention to those key social practices for HCI consideration.

### **Networking in real time**

The DIY musicians in this study revealed their commitment to networking face-to-face with their peers and audiences in live music settings. However, the participants also shared a preference for the use of online social networking tools during these meetings and shortly after. This ensured that connections were quickly established without delay, and with limited digital labour required. Key examples of these real time online networking practices were the arranging of impromptu gigs whilst on the road and the subsequent practical arrangements, such as finding a place to stay or access to rehearsal

and music equipment space. Real time networking ensured that the DIY musicians are able to establish a connection with others immediately after meeting them. This allows for quick coordinating of impromptu gigs or recording time to follow a live event, with the negotiating of the sharing of knowledge and connections then happening away from the meeting venue.

Contributing in particular to Cook's (2009) research on the attitudes towards participation and contribution in online creative communities, this thesis builds on this discussion by shedding further light on the distinct needs and approaches of DIY musicians when making connections with other musicians and considering the levels of commitment and trust involved. There was a commitment amongst the DIY musicians to ensuring that their online networking activities did not disrupt their rich face-to-face interactions and live performances. This meant that the participants favoured tools for quick real time online activity when in a live setting, and were keen to keep the more time consuming creating and maintaining of digital profiles away from these social gatherings. Although pre-gig, interval and post-gig activities at the DIY events do involve the use of online tools for networking, there was a shared commitment to knowing when these networking technologies need to take a back seat and not disrupt live performances and face-to-face interactions during an event.

### **Live, real-world performances**

All of the participants in this study stated a preference for live, real-world performances as opposed to online ones, meaning that they focused their promoting activities on ensuring these live gigs were financially and practically achievable. Although participants discussed their use of online broadcasting tools for promoting their music and collaborating remotely with musicians outside of their local areas, these tools were not used by themselves during the live DIY events. This was a value rather than a practical choice; although the musicians could access and use these technologies during their live gig performances they chose not to. Interviews further explored this decision, revealing a concern amongst the participants that online networking and broadcasting tools should not disrupt live shows and that these technologies should not seek to replace these valued social practices (Dourish, 2006). This study contributes to Benford et al. (2012) and other recent HCI research (Aoki, 2005) exploring the use of online communication technologies to discreetly support rather than replace or disrupt face-to-face live performance. Providing an account of the DIY community, this thesis further supports a HCI understanding that these technologies should seek to support these

real-world events, acting as ways of promoting live events and making these performances both accessible and playful.

### **Face-to-face sharing and distribution of music**

Alongside a commitment to promoting and sustaining their live performance spaces and events, the participants also shared a preference for the physical distributing of their music, as well as group experiences of music recordings in live music settings. Observations revealed how amateur musicians continue to favour the distributing of their music in physical format as a way of engaging with their audiences face-to-face and encouraging the public to attend live events in order to purchase limited edition copies of their music. There was also discussion during interviews of the desire to get their audiences experiencing an entire album, rather than single tracks as promoted via online streaming platforms. This requires both a time and space commitment from audience members, whilst encouraging them to engage in discussion about their music at live events.

Contributing to Ahmed's (2012) findings of the value of the tangibility of music media, this thesis builds on this discussion, providing an alternative insight into the social value of the physical sharing of music between peers. The DIY musicians were choosing to produce physical copies of their music not just for their sound quality but also to support the discussing and experiencing of their music face-to-face and in real time. Whilst online distribution of music was a quick and affordable way to get a wider audience engaging with their music, physical distribution help to promote their live events and DIY spaces. These also promoted one-off music experiences. As a social practice, the selling of their music in physical format at 'distros' also promoted their DIY spaces and the initiating of face-to-face meetings between musicians and their audiences.

### **Remote DIY recording activities**

Although there were examples of solo music-making at home with the use of recording technologies, many participants talked more of their practices of making music *with others* away from the recording studio. Despite a favouring of real-world meetings between musicians to record music, there are obvious practical and financial benefits to the adopting of remote recording activities when musicians are unable to meet up face-to-face. The participants aimed to continue to collaborate with other musicians outside of their local areas or when they did not have the time to visit or access to recording studios. One of the key benefits of this practice is the ability to collaborate with musicians across the globe and contribute to more



unusual and lengthy music projects that would be practically and financially unfeasible without access to remote recording technology or cloud file-sharing tools.

By focusing on the more subtle distinctions and interplay of online with real-world interactions between DIY music collaborators, this thesis contributes to an existing broader HCI understanding of leadership, balanced effort, status and transitioning roles of successful online collaborations (Settles, 2013; Bryant, 2005; Burke, 2011; Luther et al., 2010, 2013). Although face-to-face performance was favoured by the musicians, their approaches to remote recording practices with the unique use of digital technologies aim to ensure these collaborations are rich, meaningful and fruitful. Despite a shared adopting of these remote recording technologies, participants revealed a desire for digital technologies to further support the ability to share their music composition with collaborators in *real-time*.

## **Implications for Design**

Rather than make specific implications for design, I will now highlight some key high level areas of digital innovation that could be considered from the social practices I have detailed in this chapter. When considering the further design of digital technologies to support amateur musicians, these are the innovation areas I feel that my findings shed further light on and may contribute to future HCI design;

## **Materiality and handcrafting activities**

To further support the physical distribution activities of the DIY musicians in this study, HCI might consider the subtle embedding of the digital into both handcrafted artwork and music formats (Hoare, 2014). Although there have been recent developments in HCI discussion (see Benford, 2016) the findings of this thesis suggest how the social value and popularity of handcrafting music formats and artwork amongst amateur musicians could be further supported. HCI might consider in particular how digital could further support amateur musicians' desire to make their music formats unique and distinct through both limited edition and ephemeral music experiences.

Reflecting on these data findings, the CHI paper (Hoare, 2014) makes design recommendations, including ways in which to embed mechanisms for musicians to harvest feedback from their handcrafted musical products, adding limited-edition value to purely digital distribution of music and considering how amateur musicians

may benefit from tangible interfaces and the embedding of the digital into handcrafted music formats.

## **Online networking for music communities**

HCI design might consider the online networking activities of the DIY musicians in this study by considering how their unique adopting of networking tools could be better supported. In particular, how online networking tools might better support existing networking practices of amateur musicians and their audiences in the real world. One of the key findings of the DIY musicians' online networking practices was the use of social media to replicate face-to-face production and promotion networking strategies, contributing to McGrath's (2016) study of the distinct practices of amateur and pro-am music production.

Although the DIY musicians were adopting the more widely accessible mainstream online networking tools, HCI could consider how tailored networking technologies could better assist the existing real-world social practices of amateur music communities explored in this thesis, such as establishing trust and rapport through face-to-face meetings. These meetings continue to act as a way of establishing shared values amongst amateur musicians, and HCI must consider how digital might better cater for nuanced approaches to networking between DIY communities. For example, this thesis explored the complexities of amateur musician's digital footprints when there are regular changing of relationships between musicians when a musician leaves a band or a musician plays a more informal role in a band or project. HCI design could further consider how in these instances amateur musicians want to stay in contact and have a visible connection with different projects but at the same time make it clear which of their projects they are currently committed to.

## **Nuances of local amateur music**

This thesis explored how DIY musicians are keen to promote and preserve the nuances of their music practices that are distinct to their local DIY spaces and traditions. HCI might further consider ways in which to support the preserving and maintaining of these nuances and the producing of music on a micro-scale. For example, although both of these case studies demonstrated how amateur musicians are finding ways in which to create DIY spaces and events in their spare time, there may be ways in which digital design might better support the ability to set up DIY spaces quickly and affordably. This study has contributed to Kuznetsov and Paulo's (2010) study, providing a key example of a 'Modern DIY community' and the need to further support creative spaces for '...open sharing, learning, and creativity

over profit...” (Kuznetsov, 2010: 1). There might also be ways in which HCI could explore technologies that encourage distinct ways of recording, performing and distributing amateur music. These could aim to counter a current ‘lost in the noise’ experience when sharing their music online. Although the participants in this study were able to fund live music performance space and equipment as communities, HCI might further consider how technologies might better support these affordable live events without compromising on quality and allowing for more improvised and impromptu performances.

### **Amateur Play**

This study reveals how face-to-face interaction continues to play a key part in gaining an audience and honing their craft through more playful and improvised music practices. Drawing on a growing HCI understanding of play (see Hoare, 2014; Benford, 2016; Huizinga, 1955), HCI design might further consider how to support real-world amateur play through technologies that encourage improvisation and the creating of new styles of performance. There might also be a consideration of ways in which HCI design might further assist the establishing of informal creative spaces and the serendipitous discovery of live music experiences by both amateur musicians and their audiences.

An observation and discussion of amateur handcrafting activities alongside DIY music making in this thesis contributes to a growing HCI literature concerning amateur creative and hacker communities (Kuznetsov, 2010; Miller, 2007; Roibas, 2007; Rosner, 2009). Music is often viewed as an exemplar of innovation, and this thesis has shed further light on the novel creative practices of amateur musicians beyond their music making. HCI might further consider how amateur musicians affect other broader concerns, such as amateur play, the HCI significance of hacker practices and democratising the processes of design (Tanenbaum, 2013).

## 14.0 Conclusion

Through ethnographic study and in-depth interviewing, the thesis has addressed how amateur musicians and communities are adopting DIY practices in a digital age. Focusing on the very distinct practices of DIY music both online and in the real-world, the thesis has revealed some of the complexities of both the social interactions and the music-making practices of amateur musicians. An exploration of both their real-world and online DIY related activities has shed light on the ways in which amateur musicians adopt digital technologies and reshape existing traditions and identities of DIY and amateur community practice.

This thesis has aimed to contribute to both existing Sociological and HCI literature exploring the practices of amateur musicians in a digital age. With a focus on the DIY music community, particular attention has been drawn to the ways in which amateur musicians are able to sustain and expand upon their music activities in their leisure time. This builds on existing HCI literature on the networking activities of amateurs with a DIY approach to the digital production and distribution of their music. The empirical study of the distinct face-to-face practices of DIY musicians also reveals a continued importance of local identities and handcrafting in music making. In addition to a HCI contribution, this offers a Sociological contribution to existing theoretical understandings of cultural identity and production.

Although there is extensive Sociological literature concerning the subcultural and meaning-making practices of amateur musicians and communities, there is limited understanding of the 'DIY' practices of amateur musicians in a digital age. This thesis has sought to shed further light on the shared activities of amateur musicians and their approaches to promoting and creating music with the aid of online networking tools. This thesis has contributed to existing Sociological understandings of how online networking has impacted upon the traditions of local amateur music making and a broadening of the term 'DIY'.

There is a contribution to the current exploration in HCI research of the nature of the amateur musician in a digital age. In particular, the embedding of the digital into tangible artefacts and existing physical handcrafting activities contributes to a growing HCI discussion of how electronics may be integrated in material craft practices (Benford, 2016; Buechley, 2009). Although the amateur musicians were embracing some of the opportunities for sharing their live music and handcrafting practices online, there was an underlying tension here throughout the thesis findings. With a contribution to HCI, the

complexities of amateur practice in a digital age explored throughout this thesis were recently presented at the international CHI conference (Hoare, 2014).

## **Limitations of work and future challenges**

Due to the time and funding constraints of the thesis, there have been methodological limitations that have determined a micro-scale observation of the wider DIY community in two UK city settings. In particular, this thesis has provided a micro-scale observation of the ways in which amateur musicians are closely connected to each other and seek to foster and maintain these connections. Future work would need to provide alternative insights in order to further uncover the wider networking practices of DIY communities and amateur musicians, particularly in consideration of remote music making and collaboration. There is also need for further in-depth Sociological and HCI observation of amateur musician's online activities when considering the impact of digital technologies on both DIY and more broadly amateur music practice.

A key contribution to Sociology has been the identifying of *exclusivity capital* in the practices of these DIY musicians. Future Sociological research might seek to further explore whether a quest for exclusivity extends beyond these two case studies by investigating if this phenomena is evident in the wider DIY community and whether it is a hypothesis that can be used more broadly to understand other forms of amateur music and cultural practices in a digital age.

Alongside the opportunity to further investigate exclusivity capital, this thesis has also shed light on how DIY musicians attempt to promote and facilitate their amateur play both through online and real world activities which should be further explored. Whilst the thesis has detailed the ways in which DIY musicians celebrate the ordinariness and organicity of amateur play, HCI might further explore these practices in terms of hack tools, hack communities and the adapting of creative tools to support amateur experimentation and facilitate amateur play. Sociological research might more broadly explore how digital labour impacts upon social practices and whether, as this thesis has revealed, creative activities within local communities are seeking to counteract a sense of displacement and promote the more traditional practices of spontaneous creative gatherings.

In particular, there is a need for further research on the *challenges* faced by amateur musicians in a digital age as they seek to promote and preserve amateur play traditions. Whilst future Sociological research may consider the wider networking activities of amateur

musicians beyond the UK, HCI design might further explore the embedding of the digital into handcrafted music formats and face-to-face music experiences. As this thesis only provides a contribution to generalised understandings of DIY social practices and settings for HCI intervention, future HCI design and research might consider ways in which to involve DIY amateur music communities in design through participatory design workshops and technology probes.

This thesis has only provided a snapshot of the expanding DIY phenomenon and the practices of amateur musicians in a digital age. DIY itself is an evolving community and set of social practices, meaning that further Sociological and HCI research is required beyond the findings of this thesis.

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## 16.0 Appendix



# School of Computer Science Research Ethics Checklist for PGR students & staff

- This checklist must be completed for every research project that involves human participants, use of personal data and/or biological material, *before* potential participants are approached to take part in any research.
- Any significant change in the design or implementation of the research should be notified to [cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk](mailto:cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk) and may require a new application for ethics approval.
- It is the applicant's responsibility to follow the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of the study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.**
- Completion of this form confirms that you have read and understood the guidelines at [www.cs.nott.ac.uk/ethics](http://www.cs.nott.ac.uk/ethics) regarding:
  - what is defined as *personal data*;
  - what is required for *valid consent*;
  - the key requirements of the Data Protection Act
- The supervisor/principal investigator is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement when completing Section VI of this form.
- **Sections I to V should be completed by the student or researcher undertaking the study. Section VI should be completed by the supervisor/principal investigator.**
- The **supervisor/principal investigator** is responsible for emailing the completed form to [cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk](mailto:cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk), and for providing feedback to the student/researcher.

SECTION I: Applicant Details	
1. Applicant's name	Michaela Hoare
2. UoN Email address	Psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk
3. Status	<b>PGR Student</b> (delete as appropriate)

4. Student ID (PGR students only)	<b>4159499</b>
5. Supervisor/PI's name	Chris Greenhalgh
6. Supervisor/PI's email address	<b>Chris.greenhalgh@nottingham.ac.uk</b>
<b>SECTION II: Project Details</b>	
1. Project title	<b>DIY Music Communities in the online age</b>
2. Proposed start date and period of study	<b>March 2013, period of study March 2013-August 2014</b>
3. Is this a re-submission?	<b>No</b> (delete as appropriate) If Yes, please give details of how the project has been revised in response to the reviewers' comments below.
<p>4. Description of Project, including aims and objectives. <i>Please include any information which may affect the consideration of the ethics involved, eg location of study, unusual circumstances, age range of participants:</i></p> <p>This research aims to explore the performance norms, practices and repertoires of one pre-selected music organisation based in Nottingham. Their events are organised in one venue space. The research will involve overt participant observation of artist's performances in the venue, observations of their public online activities to organise events (with the artists' and promoters' approval) and follow up semi-structured interviewing (audio recorded) with each of the artists who have agreed to take part in the study (hoping to interview 5-6 artists and promoters).</p> <p>Interviewing will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore the relationship between the individual artist's expectations, needs and reasons behind performing live in a shared venue space, and then compare these to the expectations, needs and practices of the wider community (through observation data and online analysis).</li> <li>- Interviewing will also aim to explore the preparations leading up to a gig (including online promotion work). With the artist's permission, this may also involve iterative observation and analysis of their online public activities (that are connected to their music practice, e.g. band profile page and band personal website).</li> </ul> <p>The study location is in a music venue in Nottingham run by two promoters. The age range of the participants is 19-45. Access to interviewees and the venue will be negotiated through these promoters (who are also regular performers at the venue) and the other artists who will be interviewed. I will be sharing details of the research aims with the promoters and artists, providing a consent form detailing how data will be stored and their right to anonymity.</p> <p>To clarify, I will be observing within a public venue (with members of the public present) but I am interested solely in the artists within the space. The artists (who are also promoters and organisers of the event) are also key audience members throughout the events. It is these artists who I will be observing. There will be other audience members as it is a public gig in a public venue but I will not be collecting data on members of the public, only the artists I have consent from.</p>	

4. Will personal data or biological materials be collected, recorded and/or analysed?

**Yes** (delete as appropriate)

*If Yes, please give details of the data or materials and the methods to be used and describe how safe storage will be maintained according to the Data Protection Act:*

Both audio and visual recording will be collected of the participant throughout the study (visual in the form of photos and/or video). The analysis methods adopted for this data will be a combination of qualitative coding analysis (audio recordings transcribed and then coded using NVivo software) and any photos or video recording will be analysed qualitatively with a grounded theory approach (visual recordings will act as prompts and visual aids when presenting the findings of online public activities and performance activities in both the thesis and presentations).

Direct access to the data is limited to the research team. Copies of it will not be passed onto others. The data will be stored in secure digital environment at the University of Nottingham (UoN) and on a password secured computer when used offsite (e.g., when presenting findings at conferences). The data will not be placed on the Internet at any time.

Data collected will be held in a secure and safe manner in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. You have the right to request that your personal data be destroyed at any time. Any reports produced using your personal data are owned by the author, but you have the right to review reports which make use of your personal data prior to publication.

<b>SECTION III: Research Ethics Checklist (Part 1)</b>	
<b>Please answer all questions:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g., children, people with learning disabilities, prisoners, your own students)?	no
2. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for the initial access to the groups of individuals to be recruited (e.g., students at school, members of a self-help group, residents of a nursing home)?	no
3. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)?	no
4. Will the study involve the discussion of sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity, drug use)?	no
5. Will participants be asked to discuss anything or partake in any activity that they may find embarrassing or traumatic?	no
6. Is it likely that the study will cause offence to participants for reasons of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or culture?	no
7. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g., food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	no
8. Will body fluids or biological material samples be obtained from participants? (e.g., blood, tissue etc)	no
9. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	no
10. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	no
11. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing for each participant?	no
12. Will financial inducement (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	no
13. Will the study involve the recruitment of patients, staff, tissue sample, records or other data through the NHS or involve NHS sites and other property? If Yes, NHS REC and R&D approvals from the relevant Trusts must be sought prior to the research being undertaken.	no



### SECTION III: Research Ethics Checklist (Part 2)

Please answer all questions:	Yes/No/ NA
1. For research conducted in public, non-governmental and private organisations and institutions (such as schools, charities, companies and offices), will approval be gained in advance from the appropriate authorities?	NA
2. If the research uses human participants, personal data or the use of biological material, will written consent be gained?	Yes
3. Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving explanation?	Yes
4. If data is being collected, will this data be anonymised?	Yes
5. Will participants be assured of the confidentiality of any data?	Yes
6. Will all data be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998	Yes
7. Will participants be informed about who will have access to the data?	Yes
8. If quotations from participants will be used, will participants be asked for consent?	Yes
9. If audio-visual media (voice recording, video, photographs etc) will be used, will participants be asked for consent?	Yes
10. If digital media (eg computer records, http traffic, location logs etc) will be used, will participants be asked for consent?	Yes
11. If the research involves contact with children, will the researchers have appropriate CRB checks?	NA

- If you have answered 'No' to all questions in SECTION III Part 1 and 'Yes' to all relevant questions in SECTION III Part 2 the project is deemed to involve **minimal risk** - go to the signature page.
- If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the questions in Part 1 or 'No' to any of the questions in Part 2 the project is deemed to involve **more than minimal risk**. Please explain in SECTION IV why this is necessary and how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised.

**SECTION IV: If the project involves more than minimal risk, please explain why this is necessary and how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised**

## RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST – SIGNATURE PAGE

<b>SECTION V: Applicant Declaration</b>	
<b>Please confirm each of the following statements:</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>
The project is deemed to involve <b>minimal risk</b> as defined in SECTION IV	<b>yes</b>
I confirm that I have read the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics	yes
I confirm that I have read the guidance documents listed on page 1	yes
I confirm that the information provided in this application is correct	yes
Signature of applicant*	Michaela Hoare
Date	27/11/2013

<b>SECTION VI: Supervisor/PI Declaration</b>	
<b>Please confirm each of the following statements:</b>	<b>Yes/ No</b>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate for this research project**	<b>yes</b>
The procedures for recruiting participants and obtaining informed consent are appropriate**	yes
The data collection and storage methods are in accordance with the Data Protection Act	yes
Signature of supervisor/PI*	Chris Greenhalgh
Date	27/11/2013

\* For email submission, please type your name in place of a signature.

\*\*All applications for projects involving human participants (or their tissue) must be accompanied by an information sheet and consent form.

- The **supervisor/principal investigator** is responsible for emailing the completed form, together with any information sheets and consent forms, to [cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk](mailto:cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk).
- The **supervisor/principal investigator** is also responsible for providing feedback to the student/researcher following Ethics Committee consideration.

<b>SECTION VII: For completion by a School Research Ethics Committee Member</b>	
Name of REC member	
Comments or suggestions	
Decision	<b>Approve</b> <b>Reject</b> <b>Revise</b> (delete as appropriate)
Signature of REC member	
Date	

On completion, an email confirming the decision should be sent to the **supervisor/principal investigator** with a copy to the student/researcher. The completed form will be kept by the School Office.

# Research Consent Form



**Privacy and confidentiality.** The participant’s personal identity will not be made public in written work, discussions, or presentations. Where it is necessary to refer to the participant then it will be done anonymously in order to preserve the participant’s privacy and confidentiality.

**Objectives of the study:** The purpose of the study is to understand the ways in which musicians collectively adopt DIY techniques, involving the sharing of resources, venue space and skills as part of a network of fans, artists and promoters. In addition, the study will investigate how artists currently use digital services to organize events as well as promote and share their work with audiences and other artists. It can be viewed that digital music platforms offer a ‘Do-It-Yourself’ opportunity for artists who might not seek to profit from their work or perform full-time. This study will aim to explore the importance of a sense of authenticity in artist’s expression and recorded/live/digital output, as well as how they distribute their music in digital format online as well as handcrafting physical copies of their music to be sold at their gigs, and whether they feel there is any aspect of these practices which could be improved or developed in collaboration with musicians in the UK.

**Data to be captured:** The study will gather a range of data to address its objectives. Specifically, and with the participant’s agreement, an audio recording of an informal interview (between 40 and 90 minutes long) along with fieldnotes produced by the researcher. An iterative analysis of participant’s online public activities may also be collected with the participant’s permission. Interviews may then also involve the collecting of visual data (photos/video) when the participant is explaining to the interviewer their everyday online activities relating to their music practice. With the participant’s consent, interviewing in both public (music venue) and private (participant’s home) may also involve recorded observation (in the form of fieldnotes) of the participant’s music, audience attendance and performance practices at the music venue and promotion activities. If you are happy for this data to be captured, please place your initial next to each of the following:

Audio .....  Fieldnotes .....  Video/Photo.....  Online public data .....

**Use of the data:** The data will be used by the researcher to empirically discuss the practice of DIY both online and offline and it will also be potentially implemented into design sketches and prototyping for proposed handcrafting tools and services. Anonymous quotations from the audio recordings may be used as examples in design workshops, research reports, academic publications, and at academic conferences to elaborate findings of the research.

**Reuse of the data:** The data may be reused in future research projects.

No  Yes  Only if my permission is obtained again

**Who has access to the data:** Direct access to the data is limited to the research team. Copies of it will not be passed onto others.

**Storage of the data:** The data will be stored in secure digital environment at the

University of Nottingham (UoN) and on a password secured computer when used offsite (e.g., when presenting findings at conferences). The data will not be placed on the Internet at any time.

**Your rights:** Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation and any personal data will be erased from our records. Participants are free to withdraw before, during or after an event observed or interview undertaken. To withdraw, participants can contact the researcher via email – [psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk).

Data collected will be held in a secure and safe manner in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. You have the right to request that your personal data be destroyed at any time. Any reports produced using your personal data are owned by the author, but you have the right to review reports which make use of your personal data prior to publication.

I want to review reports that make use of my data prior to publication

I do not want review reports that make use of my data prior to publication

**Name:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Address:**

**Contact phone number:**

# Information Sheet



## Musicians who are adopting DIY methods, recording and performing in DIY spaces

**The purpose of the study** is to understand the ways in which musicians collectively adopt DIY techniques, involving the sharing of resources, venue space and skills as part of a network of fans, artists and promoters. In addition, the study will investigate how artists currently use digital services to organize events as well as promote and share their work with audiences and other artists. It can be viewed that digital music platforms offer a ‘Do-It-Yourself’ opportunity for artists who might not seek to profit from their work or perform full-time. This study will aim to explore the importance of a sense of authenticity in artist’s expression and recorded/live/digital output, as well as how they distribute their music in digital format online as well as handcrafting physical copies of their music to be sold at their gigs, and whether they feel there is any aspect of these practices which could be improved or developed in collaboration with musicians in the UK.

### **The interviewing and observations conducted will focus on:**

- The handcrafting of Vinyl/CD/Tape sleeves and merchandise sold at gigs
- The sharing of digital copies of tracks and albums online
- The sharing of skills and resources with other artists
- Everyday networking activities to promote their music (both online and offline)
- Any artistic values shared by musicians with a ‘DIY’ approach
- Gaining feedback from fans and other artists

**Use of the data collected:** The data will be used by the researcher to empirically discuss the practice of DIY both online and offline and it will also be potentially implemented into design sketches and prototyping for proposed handcrafting tools and services. Anonymous quotations from the audio recordings may be used as examples in design workshops, research reports, academic publications, and at academic conferences to elaborate findings of the research.

**Participant’s rights:** Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without explanation and any personal data will be erased from our records. Participants are free to withdraw before, during or after an event observed or interview undertaken. To withdraw, participants can contact the researcher via email – [psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk)

Data collected will be held in a secure and safe manner in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. You have the right to request that your personal data be destroyed at any time. Any reports produced using your personal data are owned by the author, but you have the right to review reports which make use of your personal data prior to publication.

### **Lead Researcher contact details**

Michaela Hoare  
PhD Student

Mixed Reality Lab, Jubilee Campus, University of Nottingham  
Email - [psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:psxmh3@nottingham.ac.uk)

**Operations manager contact details**

Felicia Knowles

School of Computer Science, Jubilee Campus, University of Nottingham

Email- [Felicia.Knowles@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Felicia.Knowles@nottingham.ac.uk)

Telephone number - 01158466780

## Interview guide

### Introduction

- Introduce myself and the purpose of the research
- Info sheet and the ethics form
- Any questions? Explain the purpose of audio recording

### Background

- Tell me about your music background - how you got into music?
- Tell me about your music practice - perform with others?
- How do you practice? Where?
- How would you describe your music?
- How often do you play gigs? Does the frequency of gigs vary or has there been a recent increase in gigs? Where do you play?
- How do you manage time devoted to your music pursuits?

### DIY activities

- Tell me about how you are connected to the DIY space?
- How did you find out about the DIY space?
- Tell me about your music activities at the DIY space
- How are you sharing your music with others? At gigs or record marts? Online?
- Are you signed to a label? Tell me about the label
- How often do you play or record at the DIY space?
- Are you sharing gigs and performance space with other artists? How does this work?
- How do you get gigs? Are you connected to other spaces? (nationally/internationally)
- How do you share responsibilities for looking after the space? How does upkeep of the space work?
- Do you have a particular approach to your music? How would you describe it?
- Are you collaborating with others? If so, how do you manage your time between different projects?



- How are you sharing skills and resources with others?
- How are you keeping in touch with your fans?
- What do you enjoy about performing and hanging out with other bands and music fans at the DIY space?
- How is a gig organised with others? Explain the process
- How are duties shared on the night and the preparation? How do you rehearse beforehand and where?
- How would you describe the DIY space gig experience?
- Tell me about your fans and your typical audience - how do you get feedback from them and keep in touch with them?
- How does the gig space work? And interaction with fans during and after? Selling your merchandise?

#### **Questions for interviewees who share The DIY space management roles**

- How did you get into putting on gigs and set up recording space?
- What was involved in setting up the space? Did others help?
- How do you source the records you sell at the distro? How does selling the records and splitting the profit work?
- Tell me a bit about how you assist bands in their promotion (both online and live at gigs and record marts)
- How are roles and duties shared?
- Who is in charge? Are their leaders?
- How is equipment, tools and use of the space shared? Are these for shared benefit? How are these sustained?
- How do you keep in touch with the bands and other promoters and spaces?

#### **Handcrafting and sharing music with others**

- Tell me a bit more about your merchandise and music sales, are these created by yourself? The artwork and the packaging? Tell me about the style of these things you sell
- How important is the style of these things? How they express your music? Their physical style? Is this an artistic choice?
- How do these relate to your work at The DIY space? (Recording, performing)

- How does distribution of your music work? (How many are you producing and how are you selling these?)
- Where do you distribute your music?
- How often are you releasing new music?
- How about sharing these things online? And how physical sales online relate to any digital copies you sell?
- Tell me a bit more about the digital sharing of your music - streaming/download quality?
- How do the physical copies relate to the digital stuff you put out? Are they connected and do you release these at the same time?
- How does your digital stuff relate to putting on gigs and promoting them?
- How do you get feedback from those who buy your music and merchandise?
- How important is a sense of legacy to you in producing copies of your music and sharing it with others?

#### **Music method and approach**

- How do you keep in contact with your fans?
- How does your DIY space activity relate to your communication with your fans and gig goers?
- How important is it that you manage each of the aspects of your music activity yourself? (distribution, organising gigs, promoting)
- Do you have an approach for this?
- How important is the medium/channel for your music? (the style of the recording, the venue, the artists you work with)
- How do these methods to your work relate to the methods of the community?
- How would you relate your methods to those of your peers? And a mainstream approach?
- Tell me about your collaborations/different projects you are working on
- How about your relationship with other promoters and bands? How do these relate to your artistic choices? (your style and methods)
- Would you say you have common goals or values? How important is this?

- How do you manage your identity? (online/offline) How does this work with others (being a part of The DIY space) or other projects you work on?