

International Association for the Study of Popular Music, UK and Ireland Branch

**‘Music at the Edges: Peripherality in the Practices of
Popular Music’**

**University of Aberdeen
29th June – 1st July 2026**

Book of Abstracts

IASPM
UK and Ireland branch



Abstracts for Monday 29th June

9:45 – 11:00

PLENARY: The Ethics of Researching Peripheral Music Activity and the Importance of Language Preservation in Research

Chair: Dr Matthew Machin-Autenrieth

Panellists

Ella Beavington (Cardiff University)

Dan Mollenkamp (Oxford University)

Dr Darci Sprengel (King's College London)

This panel examines the ethical challenges and responsibilities involved in researching popular music practices that are situated at the peripheries socially, culturally, linguistically or geographically. In particular, the panellists explore how researchers in popular music studies (and cognate disciplines) engage with minority and minoritised communities, represent peripheral music activities and address unequal power relations in the production of knowledge. The panel asks what ethical responsibilities researchers have when studying popular musics at the margins and how they can move beyond extractive models of research towards approaches grounded in collaboration and reciprocity.

The panel also highlights the role of popular music in language preservation and revitalisation. Popular music provides a powerful space through which minority and endangered languages can be maintained and disseminated. Yet, language and its transmission in popular music may also constitute a contested and political site of interaction. The panellists seek to challenge the cultural dominance of English and to demonstrate that language not only functions as a means of communication but also as a marker of identity and, in some cases, resistance. The panel brings together researchers whose work focuses on a range of case study examples and personal experiences, including: the role of digital spaces in the preservation of minority languages (such as Welsh, Cornish and Breton); popular music and language in Wales; and DIY music scenes and the globalisation of streaming platforms drawing on fieldwork in the Middle East. The panellists address the following key questions, amongst others which we encourage our attendees to also consider in relation to their own work:

- What ethical responsibilities do researchers have when study popular musics that lie at the peripheries or are performed by minority/minoritised groups?
- How can we define 'peripheral' music activity and how does this qualification affect the representation of popular musics?
- How can researchers avoid reproducing unequal power relations when studying the music of minority/minoritised groups?

- How can researchers move beyond extraction and towards reciprocity in their work with communities?
- How does popular music contribute to language preservation?
- How does language in popular music transcend the hegemony of English?
- Why does language matter in popular music research beyond simply serving as a medium of communication?

11:30 – 13:00

Rurality

Chair: Dr Christina Ballico

Musicmaking for the Marginalised Findings from the Community Instrumental Music Service for Rural Scotland CIMSRS research project (Arianna Ranieri, Edinburgh Napier University)

‘CIMSRS’ is a PhD study that explores the impacts of providing accessible music tuition (upper strings) for adults in rural Scotland, who are often under-represented, peripheralized, and excluded due to age (Creech 2018; Cossette et al, 2025) and geographic barriers (Winter, 1989, Bell & Jayne, 2010; Townsend, 2017, Nelson et al, 2021). This presentation discusses the findings of the CIMSRS project in three rural Scottish communities: Millport (Isle of Cumbrae, North Ayrshire), Auchtermuchty (Fife), and Glencoe (Highlands). The findings of the CIMSRS project demonstrate the barriers of adulthood in combination with those of rurality, including a lack of access music tuition (Gibson & Gordon, 2018) bringing a wider problem into light, of just how physically, socially, and psychologically isolated adults living rurally can become. The findings also show how engaging with music improved social cohesion, quality of life living rurally, and feelings of isolation. The theoretical perspectives and methodology are constructivist (Piaget, 1964, Jonassen, 1991; Muhammad & Kinyo, 2020) and interpretivist (Alharahsheh, 2020; Kouam Arthur William, 2024), and critical theory (Bartolomé, 1994; Pratt, 1996) informing ethnographic and fieldwork methodologies. This presentation also discusses how this project has taken action for sustainable impact in the future, including workshops, concerts, and community events.

Popular Brass Music at the Edges: Festivalisation and the Remaking of Rural Peripherality (Bernhard Achhorne, Leuphana University Lüneburg / Stella Vorarlberg Private University of Music)

The growing popularity of contemporary (popular) brass music in Austria in recent decades marks a shift between tradition and innovation, and between rural embeddedness and urban pop aesthetics. Once primarily linked to regional association-based infrastructures and festive calendars, brass music has become a prominent actor in German-speaking popular music and festival landscapes. By breaking stylistic boundaries, it addresses increasingly young and diversified publics and enters new contexts of performance and reception. This paper approaches rurality as a modality of peripherality: not only a geographical condition (small towns,

associations, regional event infrastructures), but also a symbolic position within hierarchies of taste, legitimacy, and market visibility.

Drawing on mixed-method research (media/discourse analysis, festival ethnography, and interviews), the paper analyses how festivalisation negotiates rural peripherality across three interconnected domains: (1) institutional infrastructures (community bands as sites of musical socialisation and as festival organisers), (2) aesthetic configurations (hybridity between polka/march idioms and EDM/rock/hip-hop codes), and (3) regimes of visibility (stage hierarchies, audience participation, and the branding of “rural cool”). Rather than treating these as separate layers, the presentation shows how they co-produce a scene ecology repeatedly articulated in self-descriptions and interview narratives: musical ambition and professionalism are negotiated alongside local embeddedness; Heimat/tradition is stylised while simultaneously reframed through modernisation and image work; and rurality is positioned both against and through urban pop aesthetics. Festivals such as Woodstock der Blasmusik (over 100,000 visitors) function as temporary hubs within this configuration, while repertoires and stylistic signals circulate between small, professionalised bands (e.g., Mnozil Brass, LaBrassBanda, Viera Blech, Meute) and local band practices through arranging, programming, and participation. Rather than depicting brass music’s popularisation as a simple movement from periphery to centre, the paper shows how rural frames—dialect, Tracht, alpine imagery, village sociability—are mobilised to claim authenticity and distinctiveness within a competitive attention economy. It asks how festivalisation reshapes brass aesthetics and reception, and how rurality and urbanity are staged and contested in the self-presentations of festivals and bands.

Peripheralised Voices: Gender and Race

Chair: Dr Matthew Machin-Autenrieth

Funk on the Margin: Stereo Zen Race and Peripherality in Postapartheid South Africa (Dr Marc Rontsch, University of the Free State)

Stereo Zen were a funk-rock band from Cape Town, who integrated funk, heavy rock and hip-hop to a musical sound which they described as “Funkk to grind your teeth with”. Active from 2004 until April 2014, the band’s ten-year long career saw them release two EP’s: Stereo Zen (2004) and Funk Euphemisms (2005). These recordings saw limited release, with the band also releasing a handful of live recordings on YouTube. Most of the band members racially self-identify as coloured, a population group within South Africa that has developed into a cultural construction beyond the incorrect colonial assumptions of origins in miscegenation.

An argument can be made that – due to its geographic isolation from the Anglo-American centres of popular music, and lack of government support for the arts – popular music practitioners in South Africa find themselves on the periphery, unable to access more global popular music spaces. In this paper I argue that Stereo Zen not only found themselves at the periphery of popular music because of their geographic location, but also due to the performance of their racial identity within the complex matrix and race and music within a postapartheid moment.

I consider Stereo Zen's position within the relatively small underground music scene in Cape Town, where bands from multiple genres would perform together, resulting in multi-genre crossover. Contextualising this paper within the overlap between race and genre within South Africa, I argue that Stereo Zen's racial identity created a situation wherein they were doubly peripheral, and consider how the band's music expresses this sense of misplacement and positional angularity.

Peripheralised Voices: Popular Music from Millennial Women's Perspective. A Case Study in Tyrol, Austria (Dr Bernhard Steinbrecher, University of Innsbruck)

Popular music in its broad variety offers its listeners a diverse range of affordances to make valuable cultural and aesthetic experiences, to take and ascribe meanings, or to form individual and social identities. In contrast to this diversity, however, the range of perspectives and narratives on popular music is often rather narrow. Austria serves as a prime example of this historiographical narrowness, as both media and academic coverage convey the impression that those who have predominantly been "doing" popular music in Austria are generally male, young, urban, and (Eastern-)Austrian – and musicians themselves.

In this presentation, I want to elaborate on how to unfold an alternative story, of those who are not male and not in their teens or twenties anymore, who live in Western Austria in intermediate and semi-peripheral regions, and who do not necessarily make music themselves. I present a project concept that aims at shedding light on the sounds of popular culture through the eyes and ears of women audiences, including non-female persons identifying as women, whose voices and tastes have so often been neglected and devalued in the popular music discourse. Specifically, the project strives to examine, through an integrated musicological, sociocultural, and historical perspective, the (present and past) experiences, evaluation practices, and discursively important aesthetics of women who belong to the millennials generation and have predominantly lived, over the past three decades, in the Western Austrian state of Tyrol – a traditionally conservative, Catholic state pervaded by patriarchal gender roles, male-led political structures, tourism, and the semblance of rural culture.

In my talk, I will sketch the dominant historiographies of popular music in Austria through a gender-sensitive lens. I will summarise media narratives and scholarly endeavours and suggest methodological tools for adopting an intersectional female gaze on the music-cultural orientations, realities, and memories of Generation Y, set against the backdrop of local and regional conditions, conceptions, and styles.

Feminine Sounds an Exploration into Music and Gender (Riti Sharma, Independent Scholar)

To write about the feminine body (*Écriture féminine*) is to write the body, and to write off/of the body, is one of the seminal takeaways from Helene Cixous in her eponymous essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975). How does one encapsulate gender in the Arts? Is it through the high-pitched scream of the girl child as evinced in Meredith Monk's *Education of the Girl Child*, or is it the burst of colour one is able to resonate with in Laurie Spiegel's *Patchwork*? All in all, music may have come to form an understanding with gender, that which relates to a "horizon of expectations" (Jauss, 1970). Sandra

Harding devises gender as a dimension of personal identity, as a principle of organization of social structures and as a basis for normative value. Given these principles of application one can claim that gender is not simply a social category but an epistemological and ontological one. However, when one pairs such a category with another epistemological and ontological entity such as music, the question of a trans-disciplinary paradigm comes to the forefront.

This paper will be using the works of two musicians, and how they provide through their works entry-points into music terminology and trans-disciplinary paradigm shifts. Laurie Spiegel and Meredith Monk's music has been known to creating 'soundscapes' (Cage, *Experimental Music*, 1957), The idea of embodying sound to any environment is reflected through their works, and is present in their approach to music, which comes from the perspective of not just a gendered aspect, which involves an inverted presentation of 'Dasein' (Heidegger, 1927). The visibility of 'organised sound' (Varèse, 1917) prompts the listener to actively participate in the music making process, that of receiving the sound as a living entity, genre based and open to interpretation. The paper will be locating the works of these musicians in the context of the social structures in which they are seen to be operating, given that both Experimental and Electronic music have been a gender-sensitive space. It will then go on to reading some of the works from the standpoint of understanding the personal identity of the musicians as individuals with specific ideals and perspectives that envelope their work. The paper will be an attempt at reading the phenomena of the 'feminine' through an understanding of the musicians' music-making process, an exploration into their construction of a 'soundscape', and will delve into the ontology of sound and sound mechanisms as understood through their works (Barthes, *From Work to text*, 1971). In conclusion, I would like to submit the theory that the peripheral may be represented through a gendered lens and can provide a reader with the conceptual tools for forming a qualitative analysis of 'reception studies' in the music reading and interpreting process, and navigating the contours of terminology like 'soundscapes' and 'organised sounds'.

Technological Peripheries

Chair: Dr Jo Hicks

Writing in the Margins: Centre Periphery Dynamics in Digital Age Music Writing (Dr Jennifer Skellington, Southampton Solent University)

This paper examines the shifting position of popular music journalism within the wider cultural and media landscape, arguing that the field is once again moving towards the periphery, echoing its countercultural energy and decentralised practices of the 1970s. Drawing upon ongoing qualitative research, including interviews with music journalists, marketing professionals and digital content creators, the paper interrogates how contemporary practitioners understand their own professional identities, value systems and relationships to the music industries they mediate. Early interview data suggests a growing sense of dislocation from traditional centres of journalistic authority, accompanied by a renewed embrace of scene-based, community-oriented and platform-specific modes of cultural production. Whilst digital and internet technologies

have eroded some of the traditional barriers between the centre and the periphery these are seen as structural rather than cultural losses and whilst the job title of ‘music journalist’ is less stable, the work persists and the appetite for commentary from the periphery remains.

The analysis is grounded in three intersecting theoretical frameworks. Centre–periphery theory provides a structural lens for understanding how legitimacy, visibility, and cultural capital are unevenly distributed across the field. Digital platform theory illuminates the algorithmic and economic forces that increasingly shape the circulation of music writing, often privileging metrics-driven content over critical depth, while scene theory will help to conceptualise emergent, localised, and affective forms of music discourse that flourish outside institutional centres, particularly within online micro-communities and hybrid professional–fan spaces. Drawing together the research evidence and conceptual frameworks, the paper argues that peripherality is not merely a marginal condition but a productive and increasingly strategic position within contemporary music journalism. Interviewees describe a landscape in which legacy publications no longer function as stable centres of authority, while independent newsletters, podcasts, Discord communities, and TikTok creators cultivate new forms of influence from the edges.

Différance as Authenticity: Poststructuralist Perspectives on Digital Cultural Consumption (Bailey Rudd, University of Newcastle)

Authenticity is theorised as a significant factor in how music is valued. Dominant (core) discourses of authenticity frequently draw on sociological theories that frame authenticity in terms of ‘originality,’ emphasising artistic innovation. Academic texts, journalistic discourse, and casual conversation often focus on formalistic analysis of musical output, considering how works deviate from their predecessors. This paper reframes Derrida’s concept of *différance* as a peripheral perspective to argue that ‘authenticity as originality’ is becoming less significant as an analytic category in popular music studies. Instead, scholars must account for the rise of ‘authenticity as intimacy,’ increasingly articulated through parasocial relationships between audiences and artists.

Digitality has drastically changed how audiences interact with cultural products. Online platforms facilitate the remixing, manipulation, and recirculation of information, while algorithms promote ‘trends’ designed to capture attention through familiarity. ‘Performative intervals’ are increasingly compressed, allowing audiences to rapidly digest similar information and redistributing perceived authenticity away from ‘originality.’ Artists can instantly distribute innovations – that were once geographically and institutionally limited to the peripheries of popular music consumption – to global audiences whose media literacy is sharpened by collective learning within digital environments. This paper argues that audiences are potentially becoming used to the unusual, gaining the cultural capital to decode new media quicker.

Viewing digital media through *différance* enables scholars to account for variation in audience experience that cannot be captured by the analysis of artistic innovation alone. This paper highlights how internet technologies simultaneously build and collapse barriers between popular music consumption and artistic innovation. It reframes how musical value is produced and circulated within digital environments, ultimately bringing audiences towards the centre of musical markets. *Différance* can subsequently illuminate contemporary perspectives on how authenticity can be discussed within digital music consumption, repositioning artist/audience intimacy as a key site of cultural value.

Temporal Collaboration as Forensic Re-enactment Reconstructing Lost Studio Knowledge through Practice as Research (Dr Anthony Meynell, London College of Music)

This paper challenges production studies' core-periphery assumptions by demonstrating how forensic re-enactment recovers tacit knowledge embedded in 'peripheral' recordings: knowledge invisible even to the original creator. Using my Smash album project as case study, I apply the same methodology developed for analysing 'core' 1960s sessions (The Beatles at Abbey Road, The Byrds at Columbia Studios) to investigate my own 1985 four-track demos, creating what Lorde describes as "hearing yourself as a virgin": production decisions made through instinct before industry consciousness intervened.

Temporal collaboration positions my present self as forensic investigator interrogating my past self's practice. This creates a methodological paradox: I possess embodied memory of the original sessions while temporal distance enables analytical rigour typically unavailable to practitioners studying their own work. Systematic re-enactment reveals that constraints dismissed as technical limitations (inadequate equipment, minimal resources, isolation from professional practice) generated coherent sonic signatures through unconscious pattern recognition and problem-solving that I couldn't articulate at the time.

The investigation uncovers surprising connections: sounds I "just liked" reveal links to canonical recordings through accidental technological parallels; workarounds created under resource scarcity produced timbral qualities current production styles actively prize. The demos weren't preliminary sketches requiring proper studio realisation, they contained production intelligence that subsequent professional contexts obscured rather than enhanced. As Lorde notes: "once you're in the box you could be AI...you want to prove you were there at the front end." This methodology democratizes production scholarship by repositioning the bedroom archive as legitimate archaeological site. The box of cassettes under your bed becomes as significant as Abbey Road's tape library, challenging assumptions about where production knowledge resides and who possesses authority to analyse it.

14:00-15:30

Music Production, Domestic Spaces and Social Media

Chair: Dr Paul Harkins

Bedroom Producer: Exploring the Construction of Songs in the Reimagined Home Studio (Ashley Stein, Edinburgh Napier University)

Building on McRobbie and Garber's theory that girls bedrooms are sites of identity construction, writer Rose Coffey states that due to 21st century living situations, bedrooms, while still spaces of personal development and experimentation, have expanded into other areas of the house, spanning 'private, public, personal, and professional domains' (Coffey, 2023).

Every bedroom I ever had, everyone I ever shared with my sister, a cousin, a best friend, each of those spaces and the experiences I had within them sit on the periphery of my mind, inspiring my artistic work. In order to pull these memories to the centre where I can use them in my creative practice, I have created a transformative songwriting space by turning my home studio into a bedroom; walls covered in posters, shelves displaying childhood trinkets, old photographs lying on the floor beside my first keyboard. Here, I am writing an album that explores my experiences with gender identity and songwriting. As part of my practice as research PhD, I am creating a songwriting methodology concerned with memory and place. Using what Annette Khun calls 'memory work' in her paper on Photography and Cultural Memory, I am using my studio bedroom and the objects within it help me to 'restage the past' (Khun, 2007); to bring my past, memory, to the present, place, and use what I find to write songs. By putting myself in this room, out of the way, I am re-embodying the gendered experiences of living on the periphery that have made me who I am as a songwriter. For my presentation I will detail the construction of this room and the songs written there, intertwining academic research on girls' bedroom culture with autoethnographic findings from my own research.

Live from my Living-Room, the Living Room is Live: Coronamusic Versioning the Song and the Stage (Lou Aimes-Hill, University of Leeds)

As COVID-19 and its associated lockdowns disrupted the world of music production and consumption, and social experience became a solely online endeavour, pre-pandemic music behaviours followed suit, finding new virtual lockdown residences, that showcased the lounges, balconies, kitchens, and bathrooms of artists worldwide in a practice that Hansen et al (2021) have termed, Coronamusic.

Australian artist, Delta Goodrem was one of the many established performers who engaged in 'coronamusicking'; livestreaming a total of 37 weekly 'Bunkerdown' performances from her home arena. Performing a mix of original music and cover versions inspired by online requests, Goodrem has described the sessions as an opportunity for connection, supporting the notion that covers 'enable a sense of collectivity' (Jennex 2018), and that in these unique circumstances, covers acted as a

musical ally of the lockdown message, becoming a ‘pandemic-perfect [...] bonding tool for musicians [...]’ (Powers 2020).

When Goodrem’s twice postponed world tour eventually reached live audiences in 2022 she took her ‘coronamusicking’ practices with her, versioning both existing songs and her own lounge. Complete with the now familiar bookshelf and its contents, her piano, and livestream technology, she recreated the mediatized, live performance style that became a source of comfort and community for so many during isolation, narrativizing her quarantine experience. This paper explores Auslander’s concepts of dominant and non-dominant forms of cultural economy, examining the liminality and peripherality of live performance in a mediatised culture. Further, it suggests that the isolation imposed by COVID-19 lockdown bestowed ‘[...] presence, prestige and power’ (Auslander 2008) upon the domestic stage.

Dancing to the Beat of My Own Drum Machine: The Producer Entrepreneur Eurodisco and its Generalised Other (Dr Carlo Nardi, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano)

In the Seventies, many European countries saw significant advancements in civil and workers’ rights. These were accompanied by profound cultural changes involving consumer lifestyles, increased mobility also for leisure, sexual liberation, and drug use. In this presentation, I investigate the historical, economic and cultural conditions that made it possible for Eurodisco to emerge as a productive force capable of competing with the US music industry. First, I highlight the role of discotheques and the entertainment economy associated with them. Secondly, I illustrate the changing dynamics involving independent labels and music producers. In this regard, I show how producers such as Moroder, Bellotte, Cerrone, Farian and Costandinos managed to take on roles previously performed by different individuals, providing a new model of producer that would gradually become dominant.

Finally, I consider elements that contribute to forming a unified identity for the continent in order to overcome differences between countries. Among other things, I will show how this identity is often constructed using Orientalist and Exoticist tropes, thus concealing forms of appropriation and exploitation. This study, focusing primarily on continental Europe during the second half of the decade, is a detour from a study of Giorgio Moroder’s *From Here to Eternity* (1977). This album has historiographical value both from a stylistic point of view, being almost entirely based on synthesized sounds and early forms of sequencing, and for the circumstances surrounding its distribution, which highlight the growing role of DJs as mediators between producers and consumers.

Political Peripherality

Chair: Bernhard Achhorne

'He Lied to Us Through Song!' JL Austin in Springfield (Thom Andrewes, Queen Mary University of London)

What kind of utterance is song? What can it do, and how? These are some of the questions underpinning my current project: an attempt to construct a 'song act theory' from within performance studies, to bring fresh tools to the analysis of situated musical action. Such an approach might involve asking how the 'felicity' of the 'illocutionary act' (as described by Austin) is affected when a given locution is sung instead of spoken. What happens when we sing a promise or bet or apology, or even just a statement, rather than speak it? In the world of everyday life, this would, I suggest, at the very least raise the question: 'Are you serious?' Thus, breaking into song may be the simplest, most efficient way to make speech 'non-serious' in Austin's much-debated terms: the 'sea-change' in special circumstances, which makes a performative utterance 'in a peculiar way hollow or void'.

Fortunately for the budding song act theorist, much of the theoretical groundwork has already been laid by the writers of Seasons 3–8 of *The Simpsons*. Among the many gifts proffered by this—the 'golden era' of the greatest TV show of all time—is an interrogation of the modes of action music is supposed to facilitate, and the criteria determining its efficacy, via the fictional representation of extra-ordinary situations that 'call for song'. Crucially, *The Simpsons* is a situation comedy in which song is used to stage the comedic failure of the speech act situation. Using six such moments, I will tease out some of the first principles of a possible 'song act' approach to a general aesthetics of musical performance: a (serious) project that inverts prevalent aesthetic frameworks by placing at its core the least 'serious' of musical phenomena.

American Idiot Edgy Musical Theatre and Being on the Political Periphery (Catherine Warren, University of Liverpool)

Musical theatre scholar Raymond Knapp has suggested that American musical theatre is "almost always concerned...with constructions of America" (Knapp, 2005, pg. 103). However, when 2003, when 43rd President of the United States George Bush launched his military offensive in the middle east under the guise of a 'War on Terror', many felt as though their "construction(s) of America" had splintered. Based on the American rock band Green Day's concept album of the same name, *American Idiot* (2009) explored the feeling of mass disillusionment and political frustration, straying from topics that musical theatre typically explores. In this paper I will examine how *American Idiot* embodies musical theatre on the periphery despite its mainstream success, and whether this is due to the use of what might be regarded as an 'edgier' genre of music within the context of musical theatre.

Beginning with wall-to-wall screens of news footage of 9/11 and the Iraq war, *American Idiot* takes Green Day's sentiment of America being on a political precipice and evolves it into a musical theatre narrative. I will begin by the impact of using rock and punk music and what the use of these genres means in a musical theatre context. I will then

examine how specific songs depict various ‘edgy’ topics, such as war, drug abuse and mental illness. This will conclude by expanding this to discuss what this indicates regarding the possibilities held by musical theatre to explore topics beyond our expectation of what the genre can depict.

Language, Heritage and Peripherality in the Popular Music Cultures of Aotearoa and Cymru

Chair: Dr Caroline O’Sullivan

Panel Abstract

Within Cymru (Wales) and Aotearoa (New Zealand), the minority languages Cymraeg (Welsh) and te reo Māori (the Māori language) occupy peripheral positions. While both are official languages of their respective countries, their marginality is writ large in their presence within everyday life. Since 2016, legally all road signs in Cymru must be bilingual while concurrently the 2021 UK Census highlighted a decrease in the number of Welsh speakers. In Aotearoa, te reo words such as mahi (work) and kai (food) are used broadly by Māori and Pākehā (non-Māori New Zealanders) when conversing in English, but since 2023 the New Zealand government has sought to roll back advances in the use of the language in official contexts.

Artists from Cymru and Aotearoa have achieved international success while singing in their minority languages: in 2025, the band Adwaith widely toured the UK and Europe following the release of their third album, Solas, while Marlon Williams drew international recognition for his first album entirely in te reo, Te Whare Tiwekaweke. Consequently, music has proven to be an important medium for language revitalisation and indigenous cultural expression for musicians from both countries, acting as a powerful tool in the expression of identity and cultural reclamation not only in traditional contexts but also those where the performance of popular music draws evident influence from Anglo-American styles.

This panel brings together four researchers whose work engages with the theme of peripherality in relation to musical culture in Cymru and Aotearoa. Together, these papers take a long view of the cultural histories of the countries and how they impact upon notions of identity, meaning, and heritage in the composition, performance, and mediation of popular music in their bilingual contexts. This inherently intersects with cultural policy and the capitalist machinations of the Global Music Industry.

Hearing ‘Hiraeth’: Popular Music and Place Identity in Cymru (Ella Beavington, Prifysgol Caerdydd/Cardiff University)

The word ‘hiraeth’ is one of several words in Cymraeg with no direct English equivalent and is frequently mistranslated as a general sense of ‘longing’, ‘nostalgia’ or ‘homesickness’. Such approximations do not account for the deep cultural meaning of a word which is effectively inseparable from the nation of its origin. Hiraeth articulates how Cymreig (Welsh) identities are produced through a symbiotic relationship of land

and language, functioning as a sonic expression of an otherwise intangible sense of belonging. Equivalent terms in other Brythonic Celtic languages – ‘hireth’ in Kernewek (Cornish) and ‘hiraezh’ in Brezhoneg (Breton) – suggesting a historical interconnectivity between language, landscape and sound across Brythonic cultures.

The isolation of the Brythonic Celtic nations – by means of physical peripherality and social marginalisation – was foundational in developing hiraeth as a tool of resistance against cultural and linguistic homogenisation. This paper investigates how popular music functions as a current expression of hiraeth, operating both as a tool of resistance against such homogenisation, and as a living archive of cultural and linguistic memory. Using Cymru as a case study, this paper identifies specific musicians who engage with a sense of place, being, and belonging to assert a distinct national identity that directly confronts linguistic and cultural homogenisation.

Cultural Heritage and Music Festivals in Aotearoa (Alice Lintern, Aston University)

Music and heritage policy often utilises phrases such as ‘unique identity’ as a tool for economic growth. These policies can position heritage music and indigenous languages as having symbolic roles within dominant Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). Such discourse can generate heritage dissonance where lived realities become peripheral as they conflict with interpretations of the past. Connection and prestige are vital for the sustainability of practices yet dissonance challenges this. Urban music festivals, however, are temporal spaces that sit at the periphery of conventional heritage frameworks. Festivals have the potential to disrupt dominant narratives through challenging forms of historical and present-day sociocultural invisibility. This research asks how cultural policy supports, or constrains, the safeguarding of music practices and how participation in music heritage may facilitate heritage dissonance within sustainable music ecologies.

This comparative case study of Wellington (Aotearoa) and Cardiff (Cymru) investigates how festivals negotiate tensions between policy, industry perspectives and festivalgoer experience. Drawing on policy analysis, semistructured interviews, and ethnographic fieldwork, this project examines how festivals may negotiate identity, safeguard cultural practices, or reproduce dominant AHD. By foregrounding peripheral perspectives, we explore how festivals may function as critical sites of resistance, rearticulation, or compliance within contemporary heritage and musicindustry ecosystems.

Dislocated by Spotify: How Digital Streaming has Forced Minority Languages to the Outskirts of Popular Music (Dan Mollenkamp, Oxford University)

One cannot discuss peripherality in the United Kingdom without acknowledging the minority languages native to its constituent member nations. With over half a million speakers of Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish, alongside extreme minorities of languages like Manx and Cornish, speaking one of the UK’s minority languages means existing in a linguistic periphery constantly battling for recognition. Likewise, one cannot discuss peripherality in music without acknowledging the mediative power of the Global Music Industry. Of course, ‘global’ could more accurately be replaced by ‘entrenched,

western-based corporate interests', largely represented – theoretically and legally – by streaming service providers.

The crossroads between linguistic peripherality in the United Kingdom and creative peripherality imposed by the Global Music Industry provides fertile ground to interrogate streaming's impact on minority-language artists: How has streaming dislocated the connection between music, language, and place in nations like Wales and Scotland? Does this dislocation have greater impact on artists performing in marginalised languages? Or do artists find power being part of a wider-reaching group, minimalised in favour of profit and power? Artist accounts, interviews with language educators, and a quantitative analysis of Spotify's financial impact examine these questions alongside the central question of how music can amplify voices who too often have been kept on the sidelines.

'It's always a Fruit Salad of Music': Genre, Minority Languages and Community in Aotearoa and Cymru (Joe O'Connell, Prifysgol Caerdydd/Cardiff University)

Several points of connection can be observed between the experiences of popular musicians from Aotearoa who use te reo Māori and those from Cymru using Cymraeg in their work. While the cultural, social, and political perspectives of each country differ – most notably in experiences of colonisation – the research which underpins this paper has observed ways in which the uses of minority languages act as markers of belonging, difference, and opposition in the face of peripherality.

Drawing upon data from fieldwork interviews and workshops conducted in 2023 with musicians in Aotearoa and Cymru, this paper examines the negotiation, navigation, and diversification of genre by speakers of te reo Māori and Cymraeg who write and perform popular music in Aotearoa and Cymru. While popular discourse around this musical work may denote language-based 'scenes', especially given the genre fluidity of musical bills at language-centric events, this paper argues that the co-operative activities of musicians within language contexts suggest closer proximity to notions of 'community' despite musical stylistic variety (Straw, 1991). These communities offer opportunities but can also present barriers to progression, especially when certain genres are perceived as more welcome than others in cultural spaces.

Abstracts for Tuesday 30th June

9:00 – 10:30

Music Mapping at the Edges: Data Peripherality and the Re-territorialisation of Music Ecosystems

Chair: Carlo Nardi

Panel Abstract

This panel examines how contemporary music ecosystem mapping reveals shifting relations between core and peripheral cultural infrastructures across the UK and beyond. While the music industry is often framed as a globally centralised sector dominated by corporate hubs, local and regional music ecologies continue to operate at the system's edges, shaped by uneven investment, transport provision, policy recognition and data visibility. Emerging digital mapping methodologies offer new ways to surface these peripheralized dynamics, visualise structural inequalities, and evaluate how music sectors interact with wider economic, transport and spatial systems.

Drawing on recent largescale mapping work in the Liverpool City Region, the West Midlands Combined Authority, North East Combined Authority, and Glasgow, the panel explores how mapping makes visible previously obscured cultural geographies and repositions music industries within broader systems of (re)production. Together, the papers address: the methodological challenges of creating full ecosystem maps; the politics of inclusion/exclusion in cataloguing cultural supply chains; the interplay between live music ecologies and transport systems; and the potential for mapping tools to function as decision making infrastructure in cultural governance. The panel argues that music mapping sits at the intersection of industry practice, policy formation, technology, and spatial justice. In doing so, it contributes to IASPM's theme by demonstrating how data driven research can challenge centre dominant narratives, highlight regionally peripheralized cultural activity, and support more equitable cultural economies.

Beyond the Live Music Venue: Towards Full-Sector Music Ecosystem Mapping (Patrycja Rozbicka, Aston University, Mathew Flynn, University of Liverpool, Adam Behr, Newcastle University)

This contribution interrogates the conceptual, methodological and political challenges involved in mapping an entire music ecosystem. Moving beyond venue only approaches, it considers how scholars and practitioners increasingly attempt to capture supply chains, micro industries, informal spaces, community practices and dispersed production infrastructures. The contribution reviews past attempts at music mapping and evaluates current experiments in full ecosystem cataloguing, including recent efforts in Liverpool, the North East and Glasgow.

The discussion centres on the question of “completeness”: what should be included, what must be excluded, and how boundaries of ‘the music sector’ are negotiated. We explore how mapping practices illuminate and reinforce notions of peripherality—particularly where supply chains extend beyond city centres, cross administrative boundaries, or rely on precarious and informal labour. By presenting examples of iterative schema development and inclusion criteria, we show how decisions around classification, data sources and granularity shape the cultural narratives that maps ultimately produce.

We argue that full ecosystem mapping raises fundamental questions about representation, scale and the political work that maps perform. Ultimately, the paper proposes a methodological framework for comprehensive mapping that remains attentive to the fluid, distributed and sometimes hidden nature of music activity.

Mapping Music Infrastructures: Technical Solutions, Delivery and Challenges, (Martin Nicastro, University of Pavia/University of Liverpool, Richard Anderson, University of Pavia/University of Liverpool)

This contribution focuses on the technological, methodological and delivery challenges associated with mapping music infrastructures using GISbased tools. Drawing on case studies from Liverpool City Region and North East Combined Authority it presents the team’s experiences of collating, cleaning and integrating large volumes of venue and event data into digital spatial platforms.

The paper discusses the potential of Rbased mapping interfaces to visualise temporal change, integrate heritage datasets, and enable cross sector comparisons. It highlights how layering publicly accessible datasets (ONS, local authority plans, music heritage timelines) produces novel insights into the cultural, spatial and historical structures of music ecologies. Challenges addressed include data scarcity for smaller or rural venues; the need for interoperable schemas; ethical issues surrounding data accuracy; uneven documentation of marginalised cultural spaces; and scaling mapping processes across regions.

We argue that music mapping is best understood as an evolving digital infrastructure—one capable of supporting longitudinal research, comparative analysis, and policy interventions. The paper concludes by reflecting on the scalability of the mapping platform and its potential role in shaping future planning and cultural decisions.

From Map to Mandate: Cross-Domain Cultural Decision-Making through Multilayered Music Data (Mathew Flynn, University of Liverpool; Patrycja Rozbicka, Aston University; Adam Behr, University of Newcastle)

This contribution demonstrates how multilayered music mapping can function as evidence infrastructure for policy and planning. Using three UK regions—Liverpool City Region, West Midlands Combined Authority and North East Combined Authority—we show that mapping gains explanatory power when layered with policy relevant datasets

such as economic indicators, public transport availability and urban-rural classifications.

The contribution reveals how the LCR map's 1,500 entry dataset exposes systemic undervaluation of the music sector's GVA; how transport layer integration in the WMCA region reveals accessibility gaps influencing nighttime cultural participation; and how harmonised mapping across urban and rural settings in NECA uncovers peripheralized opportunities and cultural inequalities. We argue that mapping is no longer a static representational tool but a cross-sector decision mechanism with direct policy implications.

Mapping Music in the Polycrisis: the Case of Glasgow (Matt Brennan, University of Glasgow; John Williamson, University of Glasgow)

This contribution begins with the panel's core argument – that music mapping sits at the intersection of industry practice, policy formation, technology, and spatial justice – and considers how this applies to the case study of Glasgow as the city navigates challenges of environmental crisis, cultural regeneration crisis, and cost-of-living/operating crisis.

The paper discusses three music maps created in Glasgow between 2023 and 2026 focused respectively on environmental sustainability and live music (2023), the cultural heritage of Sauchiehall Street (2025), and a full-sector music ecosystem map (2026). The time frame of these projects coincide with Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Life (the arm's length charity responsible for the city's culture, museum, and sport provision as well as its UNESCO City of Music identity) face considerable financial challenges, for instance Glasgow Life being midway in responding to funding cuts forcing it to make £9.8m in reductions across three years (2024-27) while inflation and cost-of-operating cultural spaces increases. The paper considers not only how each of these maps aimed to address different challenges facing the city's music sector, but also the specific challenges involved when trying to translate the initial research into impact.

Pushed to the Periphery: The Role of Songwriters in the Eurovision Song Contest

Chair: Dr Barbara Barreiro Leon

Panel Abstract

Songwriters have been an essential, core component of The Eurovision Song Contest since its inception in 1956, providing songs that are beloved across Europe and that mark the various social and political changes occurring across the continent from the post-war period until modern day. Songwriters have put the 'song' in song contest, but the recognition of their contributions has vastly changed as the contest has moved out of the concert hall into the arena. Songwriters used to receive the trophies for winning, now they are given a mini-trophy backstage. Their involvement used to be made clear on the broadcast but now their names only appear for approximately 4 seconds on the screen.

This panel will examine how Eurovision songwriters have been pushed to the periphery by various stakeholders such as the European Broadcasting Union, National Broadcasters and even artists, creating often challenging working conditions. It will also explore how songwriters are beginning to push back against being sidelined and through commercial songwriting practices, such as songwriting camps, are once again finding agency to self-advocate for change. It will capture the experiences of songwriters in navigating the contest selection process and how it can provide both risk and reward. The papers in this panel offer varying perspectives and insights into the role of songwriters. The first paper will set the broader context of how songwriters feel about the evolution of the contest into the twenty-first century, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork. The second paper will delve into the emerging importance of songwriting camps, echoing wider commercial songwriting practices and the impact of this method of composition. The final paper will draw on autoethnographic reflections of personal experiences writing songs for Eurovision to give a unique insider perspective.

‘Wasted Love’: The Decreasing Recognition of Eurovision Songwriters (Sam Murray, University of Leeds and Jenna Doyle, Middlesex University)

This paper draws on a combination of survey results and qualitative interviews to bring together a picture of how songwriters have been experiencing the Eurovision Song Contest. Through data collection stories have emerged showing an inconsistent picture of how national broadcasters connect with and support the writers of their chosen songs.

When analysing the collected data one theme was clear, songwriters felt their contribution to the contest was undervalued and not recognised. Recognition of songwriting craft and labour is crucial to gain opportunities for future work. Existing literature has mostly explored the songwriting challenge of Eurovision (Scott 2010, Bohlmann 2013) as well as exploring the place of the Eurovision song as a site for communication of national identity (Leach 2018). It has also considered the professional practices involved in Eurovision including that of songwriters (Wolther et al, 2022) from a broad perspective but has yet to evaluate in detail the contemporary compositional processes and experiences involved. Through stories from our interviewed writers this paper will piece together accounts of how Eurovision is experienced from their perspective and will share the changes they feel are needed to achieve the desired level of recognition.

‘And a little Baile Funk’ – Writing Formulaic Songs in Standardised Environments? Songwriting Camps and the Writing of Eurovision Song Contest Entries (Katherine Williams, University of Huddersfield)

The songwriter’s role in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) has changed as the competition has evolved. Songwriters have gone from being an acknowledged and rewarded part of the winning team, joining victorious performers onstage in ‘Europe’s favourite television show’ (Murray, 2012), to becoming behind-the-scenes providers of content.

The act of generating songs for ESC submission is big business. Over the past decade, multiple residential songwriting camps dedicated to writing ESC entries have sprung up around Europe as a facilitating structure. These camps are expensive, and have a competitive application process. In this paper, a researcher from a bi-national funded project on songwriting camps shares insights from the project's ethnographic observations of examples of this phenomenon.

Industry songwriting camps are a highly standardised organisational structure (Herbst/Ahlers, 2024). ESC songwriting camps function in the same way, but the cultural memory and lineage of the competition is a notable difference. This paper questions whether the standardised creation process encourages a formulaic approach to songs destined for Eurovision.

The Cost of Becoming a Professional Songwriter (Emma Gale, Birmingham City University)

I paused my doctoral study in 2023, due to bereavement and rapid professional change. I had space to reflect and refocus and began to recognise lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge within songwriting research. My initial research formed the basis of an investigation into professionalism within contemporary songwriting. My development as a songwriter mirrored my original research focus, as I moved from amateur status into sustained professional songwriting. For two years, I worked intensively: combining full-time employment and self-funded creative development as a songwriter. This included international collaborations, songwriting camps, and writing for a range of artists and platforms, such as the Eurovision stage. I experienced extraordinary moments, but I came to realise they often came at a cost. Significant financial investment, unpaid labour, emotional strain, pressure on health and relationships, and the constant uncertainty of working in a highly competitive, gatekept industry led me to a central research question: what is the real cost of becoming, and remaining, a professional songwriter? This paper positions cost as a structural feature of contemporary songwriting, with implications for access, identity, and long-term sustainability.

Songs as Carriers of Memory and Time Travelling: Forgetting, Losing and Remembering

Chair: Joe O'Connell

Panel Abstract

This panel brings together three scholars whose work explores how songs as 'memory carriers' can contour, catalyse and embody tensions between collective and subjective modes of remembering and forgetting. Exploring the edges and borders of voluntary and involuntary memory, we will use our papers to connect how music, lyrics, songs and voices are woven through lifetimes and life experiences (i.e. grief, loss, love, and trauma). The papers explore how ordinary, mundane, and everyday experiences connect to ideas around life writing. They are inspired by fragmentary life writing such as Joe Brainard's *I Remember* (1975), Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects* (2007) and Olivia

Laing's *Everybody* (2021) allowing each scholar to consider the relationship between memories (remembered; misremembered; lost; forgotten) and music (via songs; voices; objects) in ways which reflect the non-linear nature of time and the edges of memory within popular music, where modes of emotional intensity 'that catch people up in something that feels like something' (Stewart, 2007) occurs in both ordinary and extraordinary ways. This will allow the panel to reconsider the relationship between popular music and the construction and deconstruction of a linear life narrative as it is contoured by moments of loss, nostalgia, crisis and place. This can be from within an artist's body of work (Paper 1); the use of involuntary memories as emotional triggers in songs (Paper 2); and through the importance of songs/lyrics in speaking to/articulating life experiences and the part they play in navigating memories (Paper 3).

Except Sometimes: Involuntary Memory and the Syntax of Unresolved Love Songs (Richard Elliot, Newcastle University)

This paper examines a specific lyric device in unresolved love songs: the staging of involuntary, Proustian memory at the unstable border between remembering and forgetting. Rather than presenting memory as deliberate reminiscence, certain torch songs and contemporary ballads dramatize recall as intrusion, an event that interrupts the speaker's present-tense composure and exposes the fragility of emotional distance. In Hoagy Carmichael's 'I Get Along Without You Very Well' (1939), the repeated structure of confident assertion followed by qualifying exception formally encodes this border condition: environmental cues such as rain or the mention of a name reopen what the speaker claims to have contained. Memory appears not as narrative choice but as breach. Similarly, in Jason Isbell's 'Good While It Lasted' (2025), present reflection gradually yields to a recognition of loss that feels less summoned than encountered. Drawing on Marcel Proust's account of involuntary memory alongside Ricoeur's philosophy of memory and forgetting and contemporary lyric theory, this paper argues that such songs stage love not as a completed past but as a precarious threshold state. They perform memory as something that hovers, neither fully possessed nor fully relinquished, at the shifting edge between endurance and erasure.

'I like to be a time traveller': Time Portals and Shared Memory in Annie Lennox's 2025 Work (Emma Longmuir, Newcastle University)

2025 was a monumental year for Annie Lennox. Five years since making her musical comeback during the COVID-19 pandemic, Lennox performed her first full pop set since 2019 at the Royal Albert Hall in March 2025. She also released her visual memoir, *Retrospective* and went on an accompanying promotion tour of in-conversation events in September 2025. These were opportunities for Lennox to reconnect with her audience beyond musical performance. A linear chronology is presented throughout *Retrospective*. Within some conversations though, Lennox remarks upon the strangeness that time is measured 'as if it was a linear thing!' ('Annie Lennox in conversation at Emmanuel Centre', September 2025) alongside describing music and photographs as 'portals' which enable her and her audience to travel through time(s), lifetime(s) and memories.

This talk will focus on Lennox's claim that she 'like[s] to be a time traveller' (The Guilty Feminist, 2025). It will consider how her creative and curatorial methods expand upon renewal processes which are present musically in Lennox's work prior to 2025. I will explore how Lennox utilises music, images and narratives as 'portals' which allow herself and her audience to travel through time and memory in non-chronological ways. I will consider how this may further narratives of 'agelessness' (Longmuir, 2023) in Lennox's later life work and how these 'portals' reflect Lennox's work being as much 'about everybody' (Auster, 2021) as it is about herself, allowing her audience to time travel with her.

Popular Music across Asia

Chair: Dr Christina Ballico

The Impact of Festivalization on the Chinese Indie Musician Career: A Thematic Analysis (Yi Wang, University of Aberdeen)

In 2023, the Chinese live music sector returned to normal after the Covid-19 pandemic. Supported by national policies, as many as 560 music festivals were held in 2023. Festivalization has made music festivals prominent sites for live music production and consumption. However, this expansion has come at a cost: booking headliner has become a common strategy for music festivals to reduce risk and to strengthen trust and reciprocity within the field. To some extent, this process excluded the majority of indie musicians.

In the music industry, music festivals matter because those function as gatekeepers by evaluating and legitimising the value of music genres and musicians to connecting production and consumption. From early struggles over record contracts to music festivals now, competition has consistently been the rule of the game that performers must face. For aspiring indie musicians, festivals can open pathways to larger markets. Indie musicians have long built their careers as cultural entrepreneurs. They not only focus on music creation but also must produce and organise the products that often exceed the roles as musicians to attract the attention of music festivals. These practices, analysed within Bourdieu's framework of capital, offer insightful perspectives on the involvement of indie musicians in music festivals.

This study, through semi-structured interviews with 16 independent musicians, elucidates how independent musicians transform different types of capital into potential exchange value through motivation, experience, and meaning, thereby winning the favor of cultural intermediaries and gaining development opportunities in the music festival.

From Peripheral Resistance to Symbolic Product: The Reconfiguration and Tensions of Du Li Indie-Pendent in the Chinese Music Industry (Changbo Duan, Independent Scholar)

Through frameworks of time-space distancing (Giddens, 1990) and compression (Harvey, 1989), the notion of independence in Western popular music has been disembedded and reembedded within the Chinese popular music discourse—Du Li.

With the representation of a fractal globalised shape that offers a way of ‘possible lives’ that inspired and inherited the global cultural flows (Appadurai, 1996), Du Li (independent) became an opaque, complex, and fluid concept in China. Fusing global-local conventions and repertoire, it has undergone translation, adaptation and reconstruction. Given this importance and complexity, I have identified six distinct incarnations from music makers’ perspectives: Du Li as entrepreneurship; Du Li as management of cooperation; Du Li as symbolic product; Du Li as aesthetic preference in creativity; Du Li as unrestrictive creativity, and Du Li as critical thinking in creative decision-making.

This presentation focuses on one: Du Li as a symbolic product. Drawing from the framework of Mosco’s (2009) communication of political economy—commodification, spatialisation and structuration, it aims to examine how this incarnation is reproduced through a ‘strategic alliance’ (Mosco, 2009) amongst big players in the Chinese music industry—large Du Li label (e.g., Modern Sky), talent show companies (e.g., The Big Band) and streaming platform (e.g., NetEase Music); the commercial value has been amplified to fulfil the rising needs for individualism and ‘cool culture’ within China’s social development. This process demonstrates how a cultural form with origins in the Western periphery (from the mainstream centre) is selectively centred within the Chinese market. Through capturing the ‘sound, image and story’ of these music makers, they have been reproduced as a symbolic product (Jones, 2012) with high symbolic value (Throsby, 2001) in the music market. However, such an incarnation highly contradicts some music makers’ ideal of being Du Li—ideals rooted in a conscious peripherality, valuing artistic creativity, self-expression and industrial autonomy.

The presentation draws on 50 semi-structured interviews and 28 participant observations across Tier 1 and Tier 2 cities in China, including Guangzhou, Shanghai and Chengdu. It reveals how Du Li is constructed by large-scale institutions. It highlights the challenges and struggles music makers face in their everyday practices, caught between imposed commercial centrality and cherished peripheral autonomy. This presentation explores how Du Li’s peripherality is negotiated within China’s unique political economy. I argue that Du Li can be understood as a performative identity constructed by both institutional structure and individual agency.

From Hyperpop to Kpop: The Suspended Peripherality in KATSEYE’s Gnarly (Linzi Yang, The University of Birmingham)

In recent years, K-Pop has been dedicated to expanding into global markets beyond Asia, necessitating the implementation of globalisation strategies across the entire industry. Under this background, the multiracial girl group KATSEYE was formally established in 2023 through a global reality TV audition programme, aiming to transcend boundaries of nationality, race, culture, and artistic expression. In April 2025, KATSEYE released the lead single ‘Gnarly’ of their second EP, which applies the style of hyperpop. Hyperpop is an experimental electronic music genre emerged in the 2010s, rooted in internet culture and marked for its exaggerated timbre, fusion of diverse genres, and focus on marginal identities and identity fluidity. ‘Gnarly’, as a hyperpop song, expresses an attitude of refusal to conform through fragmented song structures, the absence of melody, distorted and overdriven synthesiser tones, and repetitive slogan-like lyrics. The

collage aesthetic elements prevalent throughout the music video also metaphorically represent a subversion of authority and order. 'Gnarly' seems to be celebrating the peripherality and marginality within contemporary pop culture, but the interesting thing is that such celebration happens in the K-Pop industry that is publicly recognised as a highly-commercial and relatively mainstream music system, especially when the song has gained some mainstreaming success globally, which may make the peripherality of 'Gnarly' more 'suspended'. This research aims to explore how KATSEYE's 'Gnarly' introduces and arranges the aesthetics of hyperpop, how the process may hint the dynamic relationship between the peripherality in popular music and the mainstream pop music production, and finally, how we should understand the 'suspended peripherality' of 'Gnarly'. The research applies the methods of music analysis and cultural studies, connecting with Simon Frith's theories on popular music value and Sarah Thornton's theory on subcultural capital.

11:00 – 13:00

Peripherality in Irish Popular Music

Chair: Dr Richard Elliott

Kneecap's Rebel Tunes: From Self chosen Margin to International Epicentre (Dr Catherine Girodet, Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne)

Since the Gaelic-singing hip hop trio Kneecap emerged in 2017, the Belfast band have become one of the most prominent – and disruptive- groups on the Irish popular music scene. Exemplifying a form of abrasive punk hip-hop which combines rapped storytelling, confrontational humour, and explicit lyrics, their two studio albums 3CAG (2018) and Fine Art (2024) engage with Irish cultural identity, urban youth lifestyle, political issues, and Gaelic language revival. Kneecap roll all these themes into a boisterous Gaelic-English rap stampede and a punk-inspired performative protest style reliant on an anti-Establishment stance, as well as irreverence towards cultural and political gatekeepers be they politicians, journalists, or indeed Irish traditionalists.

Structurally, Kneecap's paradoxical blend of hip hop and punk aesthetics with Gaelic lyrics locate the band in the marginal end of the popular music spectrum: firstly, they use a minority language which connotes traditional music and rural cultural heritage to express the lived experience of boisterous urban lifestyle of Belfast's youth subculture, and secondly, they strikingly use that language as part of an idiosyncratic musical idiom of resistance, provocation and satire.

Indeed, in using the global cultural idiom of hip hop, Kneecap encode resistance to structural inequality through storytelling in vernacular (i.e., Gaelic), and therefore they self-locate in an essentially marginal position. Moreover, in deploying punk's defiant politics of outrage, satire, and shock tactics, Kneecap move themselves beyond the pale of social and cultural respectability, and into a peculiarly controversial margin. However, periphery and controversy have proved strikingly fruitful: despite the criticism and censorship the band have faced, they have become especially successful internationally, filling up large and small venues as well as festivals. This paper aims to

examine how Kneecap's peripheral positioning on the contemporary music scene has paradoxically led them to international fame.

'Up de Flats': Class Based Inequality in Irish Popular Music (Dr Caroline O'Sullivan, Dublin City University)

Ireland is a peripheral island on the edge of Europe with a reputation that it punches above its weight in terms of international success in the creative arts. Irish artists have exerted a cultural influence that far outweighs the country's size and population. Research conducted by the Arts Council in 2023¹ found that almost 81% of artists aged between 18-34 live with their parents, highlighting the severe financial pressure faced by young creatives. The same research identified a significant gender imbalance in the music sector where over 71% of practitioners were male. While schemes such as the Basic Income for the Arts (BIA), introduced as a pilot scheme in 2022 and made permanent in 2026, gained plaudits world-wide as a pioneering scheme to support Irish creatives, its limitations must be acknowledged. The scheme has been found to alleviate recipients' risk of enforced deprivation and significantly reduce levels of anxiety or depression, however, its limited scope means the majority of musicians remain excluded. For those who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds in particular, structural barriers continue to hinder sustained participation and success within the industry.

This paper examines the contemporary realities facing young Irish musicians within a post-colonial landscape, considering how historical legacies, economic precarity, and evolving cultural policy continue to shape both livelihoods and artistic expression. Presenting case studies on young working-class musicians such as Gemma Dunleavy and Khakikid, it will argue that while class is a theme of musical expression that can be embraced by the mainstream, class background and access to various forms of capital remains a decisive, yet often overlooked factor, in determining survival within the industry. Finally, the paper contends that an explicitly intersectional approach to the study of the music industry in Ireland is required to understand how class interacts with other structural inequalities.

Voices from the Margins: Making Contemporary Popular Music in Belfast (Dr Ioannis Tsioulakis, Queens University Belfast)

Belfast is bursting with sound. Independent, original popular music creativity is audible everywhere: in its pubs and arts venues, open-air stages and repurposed buildings, bookshops and cafés. From new-folk to queer punk, and from afrobeat to experimental electronica, emerging musicians tell stories about Northern Ireland, their place in it, and the myriad routes that brought them here. And yet, this burgeoning creativity is doubly ignored. Academic research in Northern Ireland has disproportionately focused on performances of sectarian division, while the State disregards artists, Northern Ireland having the lowest investment in culture across the UK and Ireland.

Reflecting on early findings from ongoing research within contemporary popular music scenes in Belfast, this presentation will address peripherality in two inter-related senses. Firstly, the paper will address how musicians in Northern Ireland experience

marginality and peripherality in relation to both the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Lack of state support and an absence of an established professional industry urges local musicians to construct a narrative of plentiful 'elsewheres' from which they are excluded. Secondly, the presentation will address how emerging artists in Belfast use their voices to challenge mainstream understandings of local community, identity, and politics. Focusing primarily on musicians from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as queer pop and rock artists, the paper will discuss how they articulate alternatives against regional political conservatism, speaking against the powers that try to make them peripheral within their own place.

Irish Blood English Bands: Analysing Irish Influence in the British Rock Canon (Thomas Windibank, Independent Scholar)

This paper explores the musical influence of British rock bands from Northwest England, with a particular focus on songwriters of Irish heritage. While discussions about the British rock canon often highlight American influences — such as blues, country and western, and Tin Pan Alley songwriters — the impact of neighbouring Ireland has been relatively overlooked. By examining Irish musical traditions, this study sheds light on the intersection of cultural backgrounds and musical styles within the unique characteristics of British rock.

Historically, the British music industry has been centred in London, where major labels, management and media are concentrated. However, over 200 miles away in Northwest England, some of Britain's most influential music has emerged. Liverpool is famous for The Beatles, while Manchester is known for The Smiths. Both groups have key songwriters with Irish heritage: Lennon-McCartney and Morrissey-Marr, respectively. This study illustrates how varying Irish musical practices have helped shape the sound of these English bands.

The research combines recordings with available scores and lead sheets to aid in transcribing original, demonstration material for presentation. The analysis investigates various musical elements, including melodic shapes, scales, modes, harmonic patterns, rhythm, meter, and phrasing — identifying features derived from Irish music and deviations from Anglo-American rock conventions. This approach emphasises the embedded Irish influences within the music itself, rather than focusing solely on biographical accounts.

By positioning Northwest bands outside the traditional centre of the British music industry, this study demonstrates how musical innovation can arise from music scenes beyond an established core, thereby influencing mainstream sounds. The Irish influences present in the music of The Beatles and The Smiths underscore the role of regional musical practices in shaping British rock. Ultimately, this highlights the significance of recognising musical and cultural diversity in a more comprehensive understanding of the British rock canon.

Musical Labour at the Peripheries

Chair: Dr Alex de Lacey

Structuring Participation Apprehension around Volunteer Pathways Retention and Empowerment in a DIY run Music Infrastructure (Seán Finnan, Technology University Dublin)

While contemporary music listening habits are increasingly mediated by corporate music streaming platforms, small scale DIY internet radio stations have proliferated in the past decade and operate as an emergent grassroots and participatory infrastructure for localised music communities. As a reaction to the abstract space produced by music streaming platforms through their stripping of music from a place-bound music practice, such stations instead emphasis the local over the global, the human over the algorithm's recommendation system, and the artist, listener and DJ as an involved member of a community rather than a data subject.

This paper focuses on issues around the reproduction of a community run online radio station in Dublin as a DIY run infrastructure and how volunteerism functions within the organization, in particular examining apprehensions around how this volunteer labour force is attracted, trained, retained, and empowered in decision making. While this paper is cognizant of how the ethos of volunteerism is espoused within the organization, and how this ethos functions as an internal mechanism to motivate volunteers to contribute their time to the project, it is primarily focused on apprehensions, expressed by participants and from organizational records, of making the station accessible to potential volunteers and the development of mechanisms and practices through which they can become more invested in the organization. This theme examines how apprehensions around pathways for volunteering underline wider anxieties around the reproduction of the radio station in Dublin, and the constant need to renew the conditions through which volunteering takes place, even as the urban context within which the radio station operates changes.

'Keeping the Machines Alive': Repairing and Maintaining the Fairlight CMI (Dr Paul Harkins, Edinburgh Napier University)

In his study about the continued importance of old technologies, David Edgerton writes that 'the majority [of scientists and engineers] have always been mainly concerned with the operation and maintenance of things and processes; with the use of things, not their invention or development.' As the study of technologies has moved from a focus on their design to their use, it is also important to look at what happens when things become difficult or impossible to use. What happens when things go wrong, when things don't do what they're supposed to, when things fail, or when things stop working completely? Synthesizers and other instruments are left to gather dust in cupboards and storerooms while others are consigned to skips and second-hand shops. Drawing on literature in the field of Maintenance and Repair Studies, I want to look at those users who are involved in repairing digital synthesizers. Using material from interviews with Rob Puricelli and Peter Wielk, who are both involved in fixing Fairlight CMIs, I want to find out what they do, why they do it, and how they do it. I also draw on data from an

interview with Annie Jamieson at the National Science & Media Museum about the storage and preservation of a Fairlight that is part of their collection. What happens when it is not possible to fix instruments, not because replacement parts cannot be found, or damage is irreparable but because of curatorial guidelines about the preservation and display of objects in museum collections? I argue that it is important for the historiography of digital synthesizers and the study of musical instruments more generally, to look at the repair, maintenance, storage, and preservation of technologies. While these practices may be considered peripheral, they are central to understanding how technologies work and don't work.

Escaping the Playlist?: Lofi Beats Tutorials as Visibility Strategy (Dr Joseph Coughlan-Allen, University of Oslo)

The rise of streaming has been met with much speculation about the effects the format might have in shaping popular music, both in regard to what it sounds like and how it is made. In this paper, I address this question by examining music production tutorials on YouTube, many of which now offer advice on creating "Spotify-ready" tracks. As a case, I examine tutorials on lo-fi hip-hop, a subgenre of hip-hop that entered the mainstream after being appropriated and rebranded as "beats to relax/study to" by online curators in the late 2010s. Numerous lo-fi hip-hop production tutorials on YouTube provide advice on making tracks suitable for Spotify, its playlist system, and the lean-back listening it fosters. However, since they are created by independent "solopreneur" producers occupying the periphery of an opaque and highly contingent platform, these tutorials base their instruction largely on an imagined version of Spotify, raising questions about the relevance of their advice.

Through an examination of tutorials published between 2020 and 2025 across nine channels by active lo-fi hip-hop producers, I demonstrate ways in which these producer-tutors translate their understandings of Spotify into instruction on composition, sound design, mixing, branding, and marketing. In doing so, I identify ways in which extensions of Spotify penetrate and shape music production practice through a process of platformisation, ultimately conditioning what the resulting music sounds like. At the same time, I consider the underlying motivations of these music production tutorials, showing how producers use them as a means of re-centring themselves in response to (in)visibility issues presented by Spotify's system of playlists, and the passive listening the platform fosters. Through this process, I illuminate how, through their tutorials, these producers both pursue and resist alignment with Spotify as an established centre of power.

Backstage Contracts, Front Stage Trials: Platformed peripherality and the Moral Economy of Metal Labour (Prof Jan Herbst, University of Huddersfield)

What happens when the backstage conditions of musical work become visible at scale? To answer this question, I analyse the 2025 public dispute around the British extreme metal band Cradle of Filth. A pivotal catalyst, an employment contract containing pay figures and screenshots that departing musicians circulated ignited a heated debate amongst fans and influencers across YouTube and Reddit. I argue that the scandal following this circulation temporarily ruptured the field's taken-for-granted hierarchies.

Relationships that usually remain implicit between a core artistic brand and peripheral craft labour were pulled into view and then intensified through platform circulation and algorithmic visibility.

My analysis draws on a qualitative thematic analysis of public discourse in the form of video transcripts and comments from YouTube and Reddit, collected during the dispute's peak period. I trace how peripherality is reproduced and contested through intertwined processes. Commenters normalised a core-periphery structure by framing the band as a sole-proprietor enterprise ("band as business") and treating non-frontline musicians as disposable "hired guns". The contract itself became the central artefact for moral evaluation. Fans and influencers read clauses on intellectual property, non-disclosure, exclusivity, and punitive exit costs as mechanisms that convert symbolic hierarchy into enforceable economic dependence. At the same time, platform dynamics shaped adjudication. Alongside creator-led framings, likes and upvotes privileged particular moral logics (market realism versus solidarity) while fans of the band mobilised gendered tropes to delegitimise labour claims and push complainants back to the field's periphery.

I aim to show that fan debates can become an informal tribunal in which notions of fairness, professionalism, and artistic value are argued over in public. Platforms can briefly place peripheral workers and their conditions at the centre of attention, but visibility is uneven: algorithmic amplification and familiar scene narratives still shape which claims gain credibility and which are dismissed.

**WORKSHOP: Sonic Urbanisms: Listening as a Research Method
(WORKSHOP) (Please note: this session will include a sound walk)
Chair: Dr Christina Ballico, Department of Music, University of Aberdeen**

Panellists:

Prof Suk-Jun Kim, Department of Music, University of Aberdeen

Dr GeorGINANA Mihaela Varna, School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, University of Newcastle

Dr Ali Rennie (Sound Artist and Independent Scholar)

Dr Alp Arisory (Urban.Koop)

Dr Ismet Emre Yücel (Amasya University)

Bringing together scholars, practitioners and community members from across the United Kingdom, Türkiye and Indonesia, this session examines the importance of listening within our urban environments. Drawing on a range of applied projects and associated research, we will examine the concept and experience of listening in several ways. This includes how it can prove an important tool for empathy as it relates understanding our experiences within urban environments, how soundscapes can shape our perceptions of urban landscapes, and how music listening can be a tool for resilience when navigating an urban life. This session will comprise presentations exploring several research and community projects, a music listening activity and a sound walk through Old Aberdeen.

Abstracts for Wednesday 1st July

09.30-11.00

WORKSHOP: Mapping Live Music: Interactive Data Insights for Peripheral and Connected Music Ecosystems

This practicebased demonstration showcases the Live Music Mapping Project's interactive digital tools and invites participants to explore how mapping can reveal peripheral cultural geographies and support policy development. Delivered by the LMMP team in collaboration with the University of Liverpool's Virtual Engineering Centre, the session allows attendees to engage directly with digital maps of Liverpool, the North East and the West Midlands—with particular attention to how mapping identifies centre–periphery dynamics across regional music industries.

Participants can drop in to explore maps on large screens or their own devices via QR codes. Facilitators will guide attendees through layers representing venue networks, economic indicators, transport accessibility, heritage timelines and urban–rural classifications. The workshop provides a behindthescenes demonstration of new beta technologies designed to automate data collection and support scalable, reproducible mapping anywhere. Emphasis will be placed on how mapping helps reveal edges—geographical, institutional and cultural—and how these edges affect participation, sustainability and visibility of local music ecosystems.

Performing at the Peripheries

Chair: Sam Murray

Analyzing DJ Performance in the Dub Diaspora: A Case Study in Grime Music (Dr Alex de Lacey, University of Groningen)

Most academic studies of DJ practice in electronic dance music have so far favoured canonical groove-based genres, namely house and techno. In these genres, transitions should generally be seamless, take listeners on a journey and build them up to elation. In this literature, different dance musics and their approaches to the craft of DJing have been left behind. While continuity is key for a progressive house set, an artist influenced by reggae or hip-hop may relish in rupture: audience members or a collaborating MC may call for a “rewind,” when a bass line is so strong it simply has to be heard again from the top. Such creative interaction between MC(s), DJ(s) and audience and its emergent discontinuities run counter to dominant discourses about DJing that circulate informally and academically.

This paper will address these (mis)conceptions, and argue that peripheral practice in the dub diaspora is central to our understanding of live electronic dance music performance today. To do so, it will analyze a grime DJ set. Grime is a Black British genre that emerged from localized subcultures of early 2000s London, and is part of a wider

field of electronic dance music that has been substantially influenced by reggae and dub, its experimental offshoot that integrates rewinds and similar ruptures of sonic flow into its aesthetic strategy. Using track listing, tempo mapping and spectrogram analysis, among other tools, this presentation builds on existing analyses of house and techno performance to develop a more inclusive methodology for understanding how DJs and MCs perform across electronic music.

Spaces of the No Audience Underground (Dr Craig Stewart Johnson, Northumbria University)

This paper examines the practices of the translocal, DIY, experimental music scene known as the no-audience underground in relation to the changing infrastructures of live music. Expanding upon some of the findings established through my doctoral research - which looked to explore the degrees of autonomy present in the current world of underground music, using the no-audience underground as a central case – I outline how marginal music practices operate at the fringes of the wider live music ecosystem and provide a vital insight into the infrastructures of performance.

As a scene typified by a loose adherence to six underlying principles – aesthetic variety, self-sufficient, a hobbyist approach to practice, marginal appeal, indifference to the mainstream and a non-hierarchical structure – one of the notable aspects of the no-audience underground is its lack of material resource. Being marginal in nature, practitioners in the no-audience underground resort to working in tactical ways to continue their practice - the scene's lack of material resource or permanent place resulting in a continual search for spaces to perform.

With the wider music ecosystem in an ongoing state of precarity and undergoing a period of change – typified by the continuing closure of live music venues across the UK - my research asks how these changes impact those who often exist on the periphery. I show how those in the no-audience underground use differing spaces of performance aside from the traditional grassroots music venue and how both musical and non-musical venues subsequently impact practice. What I surmise in this paper is that the practices of marginal, experimental music sit in a constantly shifting entanglement with the wider ecology of live music and demonstrate how the use of spaces which exist as a sub-section of the wider music industry can illustrate a potential framework for musicking in the current climate.

Queer Music Scenes, Politics and Resistance

Chair: Dr Christina Ballico

Peripheral Sounds: Plague Logic and the Politics of Mundanity in Trans+ Drag Music Cultures (Sarah Cooper, University of Bristol)

This paper explores musical manifestations of trans+ individuals becoming increasingly peripheral to public discourse about transness. In public spheres, trans+ bodies are typically presented through crisis narrative frameworks, where they have historically been medicalised, pathologized, sexualised, and problematised. Queer artistic responses to homophobia and transphobia remain crucial in how crisis is communicated. I situate musical responses to the current trans+ genocide in a queer lineage of musical responses to homophobia and transphobia through a case study of musical responses to the AIDS pandemic, 1981-1996, building on Matthew J. Jones's work on recorded pop music to include pop in other grassroots and protest settings (2024). I demonstrate how music operates within a core-periphery regime; complicit in societal crisis narratives which demand certain musical features (volume, clarity, repetition) whilst marginalising quieter, affective, and mundane sonic modes of trans+ embodiment and connection (I term this 'plague logic').

I argue for reclaiming mundanity as a rich and overlooked sonic register, which combats the musical restraints of plague logic and challenges dominant frameworks of (mis)understanding trans+ bodies. Using ethnographic material from Bristol's drag scene to highlight music as an affective strategy in grassroots drag, I contrast musical permutations of the mundanity of trans+ embodiment with trans+ bodies in crisis. In drag, mundanity is articulated through genre promiscuity, music without symbolic gravitas, affective warmth and intimacy. Music becomes a site of radical care. I reposition drag as a sonic ecology with multiple modes of embodiment coexisting; through music, drag performance enables privacy in public spheres. Sound allows trans+ bodies to be present and centred through foregrounding temporal qualities, affective resonance, listening as relational. By centring mundanity within trans+ drag, this paper reframes peripherality as a productive site of care and alternative music value, contributing to broader discussions of how peripheral sonic practices resist dominant crisis narratives.

How Hyperpop Reimagines Queer Punk for the Digital Age (Jeremy Francoeur, University of Western Ontario)

"New world order, no more gods, only SOPHIE," sings nonbinary artist Fraxiom about fellow trans artist-producer SOPHIE. In this lyric, Fraxiom is referencing SOPHIE's response to the interview question, "Do you believe in God?" with "Yes. God is trans."

This is just one example of many inside joke-laden, openly subversive lyrics penned by artists that fall under the label "hyperpop," the Spotify-assigned term for maximalist beats largely created and shared within the online queer community. Hyperpop as a term gained relevance in 2020, though its classification has often been at odds with the community's wishes. Just two years after its rise to relevancy, the genre was proclaimed "dead" by many music and culture outlets. Yet, its artists and their underground

communities still persist. What does this short overlap between the queer periphery and the mainstream reveal about queer music-making in the digital age?

This talk will be given in a slideshow format with audiovisual examples. In this talk, I argue that hyperpop is not a subgenre, but rather an ethos. It's an ideological descriptor similar to the way that "punk" is. I demonstrate this through an analysis of primary sources - interviews and lyrics of the artists in question - and through comparing these sources to literature on queer resistance and politics in music. Through this discussion, I assert that hyperpop is not a fluke within popular music, but the latest example of a pattern of queer expression among musical artists, and that its unique features provide a roadmap for how artists will continue to navigate queer identity through art in the internet age.

Make the Resistance Louder! Sound Amplification as Creative and Activist Tactic in the UK US, and Indonesia (Dr Rebekah E. Moore, University of Huddersfield)

Sound amplification is not merely a technical support for speech and song but a creative and activist tactic that redistributes political audibility across local and transnational contexts. Drawing on research on recent nationwide demonstrations in Indonesia, anti-ICE protests in Minneapolis, and a single memorable performance in the U.K., I argue that amplification functions as critical infrastructure for dissent. Megaphones, PAs, and mobile phones do more than increase volume: they shape affect, organise bodies, and extend the territorial reach of resistance. In Indonesia, protest footage, mourning rituals, solidarity concerts, and calls to action were circulated and remixed online, paired with popular Indonesian protest songs and global hits that indexed comradeship, repurposed well-known repertoires, and resonated transnationally across diasporic publics. In Minneapolis, megaphones functioned as musical instruments for the Brass Solidarity Band, who ignited mass sing-alongs of "Hold On (Change Is Comin')" and "A Change Is Gonna Come," mobilising historical repertoires through handheld amplification and turning frozen lakes and city streets into resonant commons. During their February 2026 "comeback" performance in Leeds, the punk-rap duo Bob Vylan used the amplified concert stage as a site of urgent political speech and rectification, demonstrating how artist-activists skilfully reframe popular music performance as insurgent address. Across these cases, amplification technologies bridge popular music and protest, collapsing distinctions between rally and concert, witness and participant, and speech and song. They enable creative audibility: the capacity to *sound* collective presence into being in moments of distrust toward state institutions and mainstream media. But amplification alone does not constitute resistance; its force depends on sustained community care, activist histories, and the risks of embodied co-presence. For scholars of popular music, attending to amplification as aesthetic practice *and* political infrastructure clarifies how resistance becomes loud enough to gather publics, challenge centres of power, and resonate beyond the margins.

11:30 – 12.30

Music, Language and Tradition

Chair: Changbo Duan

Voices from the Edge: Language Choice Identity and Lithuanian Eurovision Performances (Dr Barbara Barreiro Leon, University of Aberdeen)

Lithuania has remained strikingly underexplored within cultural and music studies, frequently subsumed into broader analyses of the Baltic states or examined primarily through diasporic communities, particularly in the United States. As a result, Lithuanian popular culture occupies a marginal position within scholarship, reinforcing its perception as a geographical and cultural periphery in contemporary European studies. This absence is especially evident in research on the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC), despite Lithuania's continuous participation since 1999 and the contest's central role as a platform for negotiating national and cultural identities.

This paper addresses this gap by examining Lithuanian Eurovision performances through the lens of peripherality, language choice, and cultural expression. Focusing on the historical dominance of English-language entries and the recent shift towards performances in Lithuanian, the paper explores how language functions as a marker of identity, belonging, and cultural self-positioning within a transnational popular music arena. Particular attention is given to the emergence of the first fully Lithuanian-language entry in 2022, followed by subsequent performances in 2024 and 2025, situating these choices within broader debates on cultural visibility, authenticity, and resistance to linguistic homogenisation in European popular music.

By analysing Eurovision as a site where musical practices from the periphery engage with hegemonic cultural centres, this paper argues that Lithuania's evolving linguistic strategies reflect a growing assertion of cultural specificity and heritage. In doing so, it positions Lithuanian Eurovision performances as meaningful interventions in the negotiation of identity at the edges of Europe, contributing to wider discussions on peripherality, popular music, and cultural representation in contemporary media.

English in Polish Popular Music Beyond the Strategy of De-peripheralisation (Dr Monika Konert -Panek, Warsaw University)

This paper explores the multifaceted roles of the English language in Polish popular music, positing that its function goes beyond a mere tool for overcoming geographical peripherality. While the aspirational function remains a significant driver – where choosing English serves as a conscious strategy to bridge the distance from the Anglophone centre to achieve global recognition (see Lada 2025) – the artists' motivations are more nuanced.

Beyond market logic, the paper identifies alternative motivations for this linguistic choice. English often serves as a symbolic tribute to Western idols, rooted in the history of performing cover versions. Furthermore, it may function as a psychological tool for

distancing, allowing artists to conceal or soften content that would otherwise feel too drastic. These choices are often genre-specific: while the global convention of English is accepted in metal, it is frequently rejected in Polish punk rock, where the native language remains the default.

The study also examines local-global tensions arising from a given decision in this respect. While English offers access to a wider audience, it may clash with a domestic market that is large enough to be self-sufficient. This creates a paradox: while Poles consume global content, many still prefer the native language for local expression. Consequently, fans and record companies may perceive English as a barrier that marginalises the local listener, forcing artists to balance local appeal with international reach. In conclusion, the paper links these choices to identity and the linguistic ego (Block 2010). The struggle with pronunciation highlights a deeper tension: the fear that adopting a new language or accent might mean losing one's cultural identity. Finally, it is argued that in some contexts Polish or non-native English in general can function as an asset rather than a weakness (see Bell 2011).

Popular Music Histories

Chair: Dr Matthew Machin-Autenrieth

Peripherality beyond Capital Refusal and Deferral in Late Socialist Popular Music (Dr Sangheon Lee, University of Huddersfield)

Scholarship on peripherality in popular music has illuminated how marginal positions shape production and circulation, often tracing processes through which peripheral scenes and identities gain visibility. While such work has redressed historical neglect, it assumes that peripherality seeks valorisation within existing cultural and academic economies. This paper challenges that assumption by examining musical practices in which peripheral positions neither convert into symbolic capital nor aspire to integration within a core-periphery dynamic. Through a comparative analysis of two late socialist post-punk formations—the Hungarian avant-garde group Spions and the Soviet band Kino—I argue that not all peripherality aims at recognition.

Spions, led by Gergely Molnár since 1977, enacts a radical refusal to transform exile, marginality, or national belonging into representational resources. Articulating what Molnár termed a “philosophy of treason,” the group rejects not only institutional and political affiliation but also the cultural economy in which peripherality functions as symbolic capital. Rather than converting marginality into value, Spions dismantles the logic through which peripheral status becomes legible or convertible within dominant structures of recognition.

Kino, by contrast, does not reject identity outright but persistently defers its stabilisation as symbolic capital. Although since the 2010s the band has been politically instrumentalised in divergent ways—both within state-nationalist discourses in Russia and through oppositional appropriations—its practices in the 1980s resisted such categorical fixation. Kino and its leader Viktor Tsoi refused definitive inscription as national icon, political emblem, or ethnic category. This instability of meaning is

understood as an aesthetic practice of deferral. Drawing on Adorno's aesthetics of non-identity and Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital, I conceptualise these two modes as refusal and deferral. Rather than treating peripherality as a position to be valorised, the paper foregrounds its capacity to unsettle the logics of recognition and value structuring musical practice and scholarship.

Psychedelia in Andalusian Rock from the Underground to the Mainstream 1975-2024 (Ana Belén López Lorente, Universidad de Córdoba)

This research focuses on the differences and similitudes between the recorded music of Gualberto García (Seville, 1945) and Derby Motoreta's Burrito Kachimba (Seville, 2017), among other groups. While they both fall within the frame of Andalusian Rock (García-Peinazo, 2022), the experiments with the psychedelia (Echard, 2017) were received differently in the late Francoism and Transition than nowadays. Whereas Gualberto's recordings lived on the margins of the underground culture, even though he had received many awards mainly later in life – e.g. Moments Festival 2022, International Flamenco's Award 'Silverio Franconeti' 2025 –, Derby Motoreta's Burrito Kachimba was able to enter in the mainstream with tours around the globe and songs in the top of the Spanish charts. We aim to carry out a musical analysis of records from both artist under the theoretical and methodological umbrella of the analysis of recorded song (Moore, 2010, 2012) and transphonography (Lacasse, 2018). This study takes in consideration the phonograms Vericuetos (Gualberto, 1976), Puente Mágico (Gualberto & Miño, 1983), Sin Comentario (Gualberto, 1996), Nana del Viejo Mundo (DMBK, 2019), Derby Motoreta's Burrito Kachimba (DMBK, 2019) and Hilo Negro (DMBK, 2021).

PLENARY: Popular Music and the University – Navigating Crisis, Closure, and Institutional Change **Chair: Dr Christina Ballico, University of Aberdeen**

Panellists:

Dr Samuel Murray (University of Leeds)

Dr Joe O'Connell (Cardiff University)

Dr Caroline Ann O'Sullivan (Technological University Dublin)

Prof Simon Zagorski-Thomas (London School of Music)

The past decade has been particularly challenging for university music departments across the UK, reflecting broader pressures facing the arts and humanities sector. The impact of funding reductions, departmental restructuring, and programme closures has been especially severe. Within many institutions, music is situated in multi-faculty environments where disciplines compete internally for resources, student recruitment, and strategic priority. This panel provides an opportunity to examine the position of popular music within the contemporary university. It will explore the impact of recent closures and cuts, their consequences for students, staff, research cultures, and the wider implications for the future of popular music as an academic discipline. Bringing together perspectives from across the sector, the discussion will consider how popular music scholars are responding to institutional pressures and how we may adopt.