SOLD OUT!

An Ethnographic Study of

Australian Indie Music Festivals

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degree of

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

Except where reference is made in the text of the thesis, this thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis presented by me for another degree or diploma.

No other person’s work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

Development of the thesis was aided by the presentation of parts of the research within academic forums, including journal articles and conference presentations. These have been including in the following section.

Name: Joanne Cummings

Signature: ____________________
PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

The development of this thesis was assisted by the presentation of parts of the research within academic forums throughout the candidature. These forums include refereed publications, a conference proceeding and conference presentations. I have listed these below:

**Refereed Publications**


**Conference Presentations**

Cummings, Joanne (2006) “We’re all in this together. The Meanings Australian Festivalgoers Attribute to their Music Festival Participation.” Presented at ‘History of Stardom Reconsidered’ International Institute for Popular Culture (IIPC) conference at the University of Turku, Finland 9-11 November


Cummings, Joanne (2006) “It’s More than a Fun Day Out. The Meanings Festivalgoers Attribute to their Festival Participation.” Presented at the University of New South Wales Sociology Postgraduate Symposium, Sydney 3 June

Cummings, Joanne (2005) “Australian Indie Music Festivals as Scenes.” Presented at the University of Western Sydney Postgraduate Colloquium, Campbelltown 9 June
Presented at the Symposium of the International Musicological Society 
(SIMS), Melbourne 11-16 July

Presented at the University of Western Sydney Postgraduate Colloquium, 
Campbelltown 17 June

in Australia.” Presented at the University of Western Sydney Postgraduate 
Colloquium, Campbelltown 7 November
SUMMARY

The focus of this sociological research is on the five most popular and commercially successful Australian indie music festivals: Livid, Big Day Out, the Falls festival, Homebake, and Splendour in the Grass. The three key features of Australian indie music festivals are, firstly, that they are multi-staged ticketed outdoor events, with clearly defined yet temporal boundaries. Secondly, the festivals have a youth-orientated focus yet are open to all ages. Finally, the festivals are primarily dominated by indie-guitar culture and music. My aim is to investigate how these music festivals are able to strike an apparently paradoxical balance between the creation of a temporal community, or network of festivalgoers, and the commodity of the festivals themselves.

My research methodology utilises a postmodern approach to ethnography, which has allowed me to investigate the festivalgoers as an ‘insider researcher.’ Data was collected through a series of participant observations at Australian indie music festivals which included the use of photographs and field notes. In addition I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews and two focus groups with festivalgoers and festival organisers.

The thesis adopts a post-subcultural approach to investigating the festivalgoers as an ideal type of a neo-tribal grouping. Post-subculture theory deals with the dynamic, heterogeneous and fickle nature of contemporary alliances and individuals’ feelings of group ‘in-betweeness’ in late capitalist/ global consumer society. I argue that Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribalism can shine new light on the relationships between youth, music and style.

Music festivals are anchoring places for neo-tribal groupings like the festivalgoers as well as a commercialised event. An analysis of the festivalgoers’ ritual clothing (t-shirts as commodities), leads to the conclusion that the festivalgoers use t-shirts to engage in a process of identification. T-shirts, I argue, are an example of a linking
image which creates both a sense of individualism as well as a connection to a collective identity or sociality.

Through a case study of moshing and audience behaviour it is discovered that the festivalgoers develop neo-tribal sociality and identification with each other through their participation in indie music festivals. Although pleasure seems to be the foremost significant dimension of participating in these festivals, the festivalgoers nevertheless appear to have developed an innate sense of togetherness and neo-tribal sociality. The intensity and demanding experience of attending a festival fosters the opportunity for a sense of connectedness and belonging to develop among festivalgoers.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCING MUSIC FESTIVALS AS POSTMODERN SITES OF CONSUMPTION

Sophie on the commercialisation of festivals:

For me that’s [the commercialisation of festivals] one of [the] things that I find loses it for me. The increase in sponsorship has decreased my liking… it’s sort of made it [Big Day Out] into something else, made it into a commodity. That’s just moving with the times, cos so many things are now sponsored. Sponsorships in the surfing world, in the skating world in every sort of area yeah that’s increased cos we live in this time with labels and people like to be tagged. You know like even our clothing, it started with Mambo and then it was Mossimo and you know there’s all sorts of different labels. Even individuals starting a label, it’s like in the names that they put on t-shirts.

Sophie on a sense of community at festivals:

I think cos I have a love of music and all my friends are musicians or a lot of them are or are involved in the music industry there is a little crew or a family. I guess it could be like anyone if you had a local pub and you know that every Friday night everyone meets down there to have a beer at the end of week. It’s sort of the same thing, like particular bands you go to, you know like everyone’s going to be going to that show. You almost don’t have to call anyone and you know you’ll turn up and there everyone will be. It’s definitely like a community, that one thing that ties you all together.
Festivalgoer Sophie feels a sense of loss due to the commercialisation of a community that she has been a part of for many years. Yet at the same time she recognizes that music festivals are in themselves a commodity. As she points out we live in a time when we like to label ourselves, especially through our clothes. Commodities seem to be playing a greater role in our lives than ever before, as through commodities we might be able to find a sense of personal identity and identification with others. It is no surprise that music festivals have become sites where people such as Sophie gather and share in experiences of consumerism and community. While the idea of having a commodity and a community working together may seem to be contradictory, as in modernist terms communities and commodities were seen to be at odds with each other, in postmodern terms spaces now allow for communities to form around commodities (See Edwards 2000; Featherstone 1996; Shields 1992b). This insider’s account raises the question of how Australian indie music festivals are able to simultaneously represent a commodity and a community. This is the central question the thesis is seeking to answer.

This question has already been addressed in very recent research such as that by Roy Shuker who argues that festivals play ‘a central role in popular music mythology as they keep traditions alive, maintaining and expanding their audience base, legitimizing particular forms of the tradition and giving its performers and fans a sense of a shared, communal identity’ (2005:105). For Shuker, the audience or festivalgoers form a temporal community united in ‘celebration and homage’ to the performers and/or the genre as well as ‘being created’ as a commodity in a major commercial enterprise (2005:106). Shuker’s research, however, was limited in its nature as his focus was generalised to addressing and explaining the key concepts
within the study of popular music, whereas my research investigates music festivals using an in-depth ethnographic study.

In other research on festivals, Chris Gibson and John Connell (2005) have studied music festivals as a form of cultural tourism. They argue that festivals provide places with spectacle and a sense of uniqueness. Festivals function in music tourism industries as a way to ‘create networks of performers, generate tourist income, help regenerate urban areas, or to enhance cultural awareness and experiences of local populations’ (Larsen and O'Reilly 2005:5). Gibson and Connell suggest that music festivals represent both community and commodity as well as a space for the enjoyment of music (2005:259). My research builds upon Gibson and Connell’s ideas about the community/commodity dialectic, as they have provided a solid starting point. It is my intention, however, to attempt to explain this seemingly contradictory relationship between community and commodity that may be found at festivals through implementing Michel Maffesoli’s (1996) theory of neo-tribalism which will move research beyond Larsen and O’Reilly’s working paper.

Further, these recent studies are not exclusively Australian based¹ and indeed, Australian indie music festivals barely rate a mention in sociological or popular music studies. From what limited literature there is, Big Day Out is the most commonly cited festival (See Mathieson 2000; Mitchell 1996; Walker 1996). Other theorists like Shane Homan (2000) and Lisanne Gibson (2001) have focused more

¹ Gibson and Connell’s study incorporated festivals from around the globe including Australia. They did not, however, explore the nuances of the Australian festival experience.
on the politics of the local pub scene, or used festivals like Livid as an example of a need for innovation in contemporary Australian youth arts policy, yet no in-depth study has been conducted on Australian indie music festivals.

On the whole, the field of sociology has neglected the study of music festivals, popular or not. This lack of research is not limited to the field of sociology but can be extended to other disciplines. As noted by Henri Terho, ‘regarding these festivals in general there is a tradition for interpreting these issues in the field of anthropology, but even this field has given little attention to music festivals’ (2000:47). Shuker has also noted that ‘given their scale and significance, festivals have only received limited attention within popular music studies’ (2005:105).

Timothy Dowd, Kathleen Liddle and Jenna Nelson (2004b) have studied music festivals as scenes. They argue that music festivals are spaces which offer festivalgoers a ‘collective opportunity’ in which performers and fans can experience music and lifestyles, as festivalgoers can immerse themselves in the festival culture and experiment with different identities. As their study lacked empirical data, Dowd

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2 The English Glastonbury festival is the most famous and commercialised music festival in the world. George McKay (2000) has studied the festival with a particular focus on the social resistance and its associated social changes. Glastonbury has its origins in ‘free festival’ culture. It is unique in its struggle with British social policies and governance. It is important to note that Glastonbury has different origins and political interests to Australian indie music festivals. While Glastonbury may have inspired Australian indie music festivals there is no Australian equivalent of the festival (See Aubury and Shearlaw 2005).

3 The term scene describes the social milieu within which groups of producers, musicians and fans ‘collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004:1). I explain scene theory in chapter four.
et al. (2004) have put out a call for more empirical research, especially in-depth ethnographic studies to be conducted in this field. They suggest that further attention needs to be paid to the issues of participants’ commitment and organisers’ expectations, which I address in this thesis (see chapter seven). Ultimately, there is a need for more research to be conducted on the socio-cultural aspects of music festivals, especially how festivals are able strike a balance between their attendees’ representation of community and commodity.

In this thesis I aim to address this lack of sociological research through an ethnographic study of Australian indie genre based (also known as alternative or indie-guitar based) music festivals. The three key features of Australian indie music festivals are, firstly, that they are multi-staged ticketed outdoor events, with clearly defined yet temporal boundaries. Secondly, the festivals have a youth-orientated focus yet are open to all ages. Finally, the festivals are primarily dominated by indie-guitar culture and music. I have chosen to focus my research on the five most popular and commercially successful Australian indie music festivals: Livid, Big Day Out, the Falls festival, Homebake, and Splendour in the Grass.\(^4\)

\(^4\) It is important to note that this study excludes the extremely alternative festivals like Confest, which are based on utopian ideologies of authentic hippy spirituality, and its conflicts with so-called inauthentic electronic rave music infiltrating such festivals (See St John 2001). The study also excludes the Meredith Music festival as I have not participated in this festival and it was beyond the scope of this research. New festivals such as Come Together, Cockatoo Island and the Great Escape that began during the course of the research were not included.
1.1 The Aim of the Research

The aim of the research is to investigate music festivals as postmodern sites for the consumption of popular music, using Australian indie music festivals as a case study. I aim to investigate how music festivals may be able to paradoxically represent both a sense of community and commodity at the same time. Furthermore, I aim to investigate the meanings consumers (festivalgoers) attribute to their consumption practices. I also hope to highlight some of the paradoxes of consumption that may be found amongst festivalgoers.

Sociological research needs to address young people’s own meanings through the creation of locally situated knowledge, as what consuming means to one young person in a certain geographic area may not be the same as somewhere else (Cohen and Ainley cited in Miles 2003:182). This means examining the more mundane elements of young people’s lives (See Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). Following this perspective, the research utilises a post-subcultural approach (See Muggleton 2000; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003; Redhead 1990) to investigate social networks and identity formation that may be found amongst indie music festivalgoers. This approach argues that classical ‘subcultural’ divisions, such as that of style, musical taste and identity, have become increasingly weakened and more fluid, as young people ‘mix and match’ various elements of music and style together (See Bennett

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5 These are sites of consumption in which there is a combination of leisure and consumption practices that were formerly held apart in modernity, with the exception of the provision of popular amusements that is exhibitions, festivals and so forth which were an arguably less intensified version of these spaces. See section 1.5 and 1.6.
Michel Maffesoli’s neo-tribal theory has been suggested as one of the possible replacements of traditional subculture theory. I test out this hypothesis through applying Maffesolian thought to this research. This approach ‘abandons modernist concerns with socio-structural identities instead favouring the variety and fluidity of tenuous tribal structures’ (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003:5). The focus of this thesis is thus on popular music festivals in which the return to sociality, rather than to the social and political, is celebrated.

For Maffesoli, empathetic ‘sociality’ is expressed ‘by a succession of ambiances, feelings and emotions’ (1996:11). Maffesoli’s work, especially that on neo-tribal sociality allows for a reworking of the ‘affectual dimensions’ of youth cultural involvement. It helps to restore the ‘textual, symbolic, semiotic focus of classic (sub)cultural work’ (Sweetman 2004:87). It may also help to highlight the increasing fragmentation of youth culture, through ‘first-hand’ accounts from young people themselves.

However, before moving to the heart of the research, an explanation of key sociological themes, that is consumer society, consuming youth, postmodern space and consumer culture and postmodern sites of consumption, will help us to contextualise this research.
1.2 Consumer Society

Tim Edwards argues that ‘in contemporary society, almost no human need or activity avoids commodification, and consumer society, despite its internal contradictions, is increasingly all encompassing’ (2000:5). He defines consumer society as a society that is increasingly organised around the concept and practice of consumption. A key aspect of consumer society is commodification or commercialisation, which is the process through which:

things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in the context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services); developed exchange systems in which the exchange value of things (and activities) is stated in terms of prices from a market (Cohen 1988:380).

Consumer culture theorist Mike Featherstone (1991) argues that consumption practices cannot be understood wholly in relation to the exchange value of the commodity, as individuals appropriate objects and give them meaning. He suggests that consumers classify themselves through the objects they consume.

Featherstone (1991) points out that one of the striking features of western societies in late capitalism is the growth of leisure and consumption activities. He regards this as leading to egalitarianism and individual freedom in some cases, whilst in other cases, it is seen as increasing the capacity for ideological manipulation through the seduction of the population wanting the better life. In other words consumption can be a means of empowerment and expression on the one hand and manipulation and exploitation on the other (Edwards 2000:2).
Furthermore, Featherstone argues that ‘the satisfaction gained from goods relates to their socially structured access in a zero sum game in which satisfaction and status depend upon displaying and sustaining differences’ (1991:13). He argues that people use goods in order to create social bonds or distinctions, and form identities through consumption patterns, as individuals have the potential to communicate affiliations with others who have shared consumption patterns and differences with those who do not. Hence, we live in a society of highly stylised lifestyles generated by a culture of consumption. Undeniably:

The new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle (Featherstone 1991:86).

Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman (1992) views consumption as the centre of operation in contemporary society. For Bauman the relationship between the individual and the social is mediated by consumption as it becomes the primary means of creating both individual identity and social cohesion. Controversially, consumption is also viewed by Bauman as a cause of social division between the “seduced” and the “repressed” (Edwards 2000).

For Bauman, the individualisation of consumption practices leads to the formation of group identities based on a process of inclusion and exclusion. He further argues that

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6 For Bauman the seduced refers to people who have the freedom to choose and are able to act upon or consume their choices. The repressed, on the other hand, refers to people who have a lack of choice, mostly due to their limited resources.
social groups are constructed around their relationship to consumption practices and identities which manifests in neo-tribes or lifestyle cliques. Bauman appears to argue for consumption as individualism. In his view, contemporary society is held together by ‘neo-tribes’ which he argues are ‘styles of consumption’ (Bauman, 1988:207 cited in Edwards 2000:39). It is these styles of consumption that will be of relevance to this thesis. These styles appear, however, to be used mainly by the ‘youth’ in these festivals.

1.3 Consuming ‘Youth’

Steven Miles (2003) argues that through developing an understanding of the experiences of young people as consumers, youth researchers may be able to provide ‘a unique insight’ (2003:170) into what it means to be a young person in contemporary society. Miles regards contemporary society as one that ‘gives the consumer an unprecedented status. To consume is to belong; to consume is to justify yourself as a citizen of a contemporary society’ (2003:174). Of course, as Miles appropriately points out, for young people this means that consumption becomes the ‘primary means’ (2003:174) of achieving a way to belong to that society.

Miles argues that:

Consumerism is perceived to be democratic, freedom-inducing and positive. Consumption is good because our society deems it so. Young people’s consumption is particularly liable to be cited as evidence of young people finding their adult feet and perhaps constructing their identities (2003:173).
The view that young people are seeking out some kind of adult identity formation through consumption is, however, misleading. Indeed, young people might instead be seeking to prolong their youth and reject their adulthood. As Andy Bennett notes:

subsequent generations of 'youth' have reached adulthood and yet refused to 'grow up,' using music, style and various forms of memorabilia as a means of retaining a sense of 'youthfulness' even as they approach middle age (2004:10-11).

In the same way, Paul Chatterton and Robert Hollands maintain that:

in the past two decades there has been an extension of the youthful phase, as evidenced by terms like 'post-adolescence' and 'middle youth', often characterised by liminality or experimentation in youth cultural activity for an extended period of time (2002:97).

In their study of youthful consumption of nightlife in Newcastle (UK), Chatterton and Hollands found that some people are ‘social chameleons’ who use their night time identities as a way of escaping their mediocre everyday lives.

Andy Bennett (2006) argues that although little sociological research has been conducted on the practices of older music fans, that is those fans aged over thirty years old, music festivals appear to provide older music fans with the opportunity to continue to participate in the scene and engage in face to face contact with other fans both young and old. Due to family or work commitments, however, older festivalgoers may be limited in their ability to participate in events as often as they would like.
1.4 Defining Youth

For the purpose of this research, ‘youth’ is defined as an ideological category or a ‘state of mind,’ as ‘style and other popular cultural resources’ have transformed the term into being about much more than just an age category (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). The fact that the interviewees for this research project were aged between eighteen and fifty years highlights the use of the term youth as ‘a state of mind’ rather than a certain stage in their life cycle. (See chapter three for more details).

This is supported by the fact that the festivals investigated by this thesis are open to people of all ages, although there are greater numbers of festivalgoers under thirty, as was highlighted by an internet survey of 19,774 people conducted by Big Day Out in 2001. Results from the survey found that festivalgoers aged eighteen to thirty years old made up sixty five percent (65%) of the audience compared to only four percent (4%) of festivalgoers who were aged over thirty (Big Day Out 2001). Similar research projects conducted by the University of Tasmania on the Falls festivals in Marion Bay 2003/04: the Harper study and the Dudley study have found that eighty seven percent (87%) of the respondents were under twenty five years of age (cited in Essential Economics Pty Ltd 2005:6-7). In comparison, the majority (90%) of my interviewees were under thirty years of age.

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7 The term ‘youth’ is a sociological stage in the life cycle that is expanding to encompass a greater age range of people. Practical activities also characterised as ‘youthful’ are constructed via economic exchange and the cultural consumption of material commodities as the t-shirt case study demonstrates in chapter five.
Lewis argues that musical taste ‘dramatically cuts across standard indicators such as class, age and education in creating groupings with common musical expectations and symbolic definitions’ (1992 cited in Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004:10). This study aims to rethink ideologies about youth through an examination of an integral part of people’s lives: music, not only through their consumption of music in the form of indie music festivals but also on the way music allows people of all ages to develop a sense of belonging and community.

### 1.5 Postmodern Space and Consumer Culture

Postmodernism strives to blur the traditional oppositions and boundaries between the aesthetic and the commercial, art and the market, and high and low culture (Shuker 2005:205). According to Tim Edwards, postmodernism relates to ‘the development of cultural, aesthetic and artistic forms where practices of pastiche, parody and a wider plundering of the past are often incorporated stylistically’ (Edwards 2000:168). Predominantly, postmodernism is defined in relation to what it is not: modernity (see table one which briefly outlines postmodern conditions).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postmodern Conditions</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Openness/ tolerance</td>
<td>Acceptance of difference (different styles, ways of being and living) without prejudice or evaluations of superiority or inferiority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperreality</td>
<td>Constitution of social reality through hype or simulation that is powerfully signified and represented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetual present</td>
<td>Cultural propensity to experience everything (including the past and future) in the present, ‘here and now’.</td>
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Introducing Music Festivals as Postmodern Sites of Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postmodern Conditions</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paradoxical juxtapositions</td>
<td>Cultural propensity to juxtapose anything with anything else, including oppositional, contradictory and essentially unrelated elements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation</td>
<td>Omnipresence of disjointed and disconnected moments and experiences in life and sense of self-and the growing acceptance of the dynamism which leads to fragmentation in markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Commitment</td>
<td>Growing cultural unwillingness to commit to any single idea, project or grand design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentring of the Subject</td>
<td>Removal of the human being from the central importance she or he held in modern culture and the increasing acceptance of the potentials of his/her objectification.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reversal of consumption and production</td>
<td>Cultural acknowledgement that value is created not in production (as posited by modern thought) but in consumption- and the subsequent growth of attention and importance given to consumption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on form/style</td>
<td>Growing influence of form and style (as opposed to content) in determining meaning and life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of disorder/chaos</td>
<td>Cultural acknowledgement that rather than order, chaos and disequilibria are the common states of existence-and the subsequent acceptance and appreciation of this condition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Firat and Shultz 1997:186; see also Patterson 1998)

Edwards argues that although postmodernism ‘is of consequence to consumer society, consumer society is not necessarily postmodern society’ (2000:166). The connections between postmodernity and consumer society fit into three main areas. Firstly, there is a common concern with the increasing significance of consumption as a way of life and as an organising feature of contemporary society. Secondly, consumption is important in the commodification of everyday life, as more and more
aspects of life are quantified and ‘wrapped up’, such as visual cultures, media, advertising and marketing. Thirdly, there is a strong view of consumption practices as increasingly composing personality and social, group identities (See Bauman 1988; 1992; Featherstone 1991). The reason postmodernity does not equal consumer society is that consumption is only one aspect of the theory of postmodernism (Edwards 2000).

Fredric Jameson (1988; 1991) suggests the key features of postmodernism are its reaction against the established forms of high modernism and its blurring of the boundaries between high culture and popular or mass culture. This blurring of the lines means that it has become impossible to distinguish between for example, high art and commercial form, or in other words the authentic and the fake or reproduced. Jameson further suggests that in postmodernism, reality is transformed into the image and time and space are fragmented into a series of ‘perpetual presents.’

One key difference between what we understand as ‘the modern’ and what we refer to as ‘the postmodern’ is their distinctive understanding of space and time. In postmodern terms, space and time are seen as temporal whilst in modernist terms they are fixed entities (Jameson 1991). Following this perspective, I use the term ‘postmodernism’ as associated with societies within which consumer lifestyles and mass consumption have come to dominate the lives of the people living within those societies. In postmodern societies value is now created in consumption not in production (Patterson 1998).
Similarly, David Lyon contends that in a postmodern society, consuming and leisure rather than working becomes the centre of the life-world. He argues that ‘pleasure once the enemy of capitalist industriousness, now performs an indispensable role’ (1994:66). Controversially, he suggests that, if postmodernity means anything it means consumer society.

Postmodern society is one in which there is openness, tolerance and an acceptance of different lifestyles. It is a society obsessed with the ‘here and now’. There is, however, a strong sense of fragmentation, a feeling of disconnection in life and in one’s sense of self-identity. The fickle nature of postmodernity leads to a lack of commitment to any one idea. This leads to an emphasis on style and form (not content) to give people meaning in their lives (Patterson 1998). Hence, people will consume to fulfil their needs and desires. As Miles (2003) noted above, consumption creates a way to belong in contemporary society.

For Maffesoli, postmodern society is merely a way of highlighting the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. He states:

It is not a question of granting the term ‘postmodern’ the status of a concept, but seeing if the status of a group of categories and sensibilities are an alternative to those prevailing during modernity. It is a matter of a new outlook, a category which allows one to recognise the saturation of a way of thinking and living, a category allowing the recognition of a precarious moment situated between the end of one world and the birth of the next (Maffesoli 1990:85).
In this thesis, I use the term postmodernism to refer to a society whose central concern is with the present or the ‘here and now.’ Postmodern societies are understood to be western societies in which production remains a key part of social life, though now ones consumer life overshadows it, especially in terms of the creation of self identity and as a way to identify with others.

Utilising this postmodern approach, the thesis looks at the nature of postmodern sites of consumption that combine leisure and consumption activities. The temporal spaces I have chosen to investigate indie music festivals are sites in which there is a clear combination of leisure and consumption activities, as the sites both entertain and sell. Furthermore, indie music festivals can potentially be regarded as events during which individuals may be consuming a sociable experience, what Malbon (1999) refers to as experiential consumption. Experiential consumption describes the consuming of the experience of attending a festival. As Malbon notes “countless forms of consumption do not involve the purchase of objects or tangible services, but are instead premised upon an experience during and after which nothing material is ‘taken home’- only an experience held subsequently as a set of memories” (Malbon 1999:22).

1.6 Indie Music Festivals as Postmodern Sites of Consumption

The complexities of the ‘modern’ and the intensification of commodification and consumption within postmodern leisure spaces and practices is an argument that goes beyond the scope of this thesis to address. Golby and Purdue, however, in their
Introducing Music Festivals as Postmodern Sites of Consumption

Discussion of fairs, leisure and recreations in England during the late 1700s to mid-1800s have argued that,

The notion of a sharp break between a world of pre-commercial leisure and a more exploitative commercial one is, as we have seen, mistaken. For centuries the provision of popular amusements had been a commercial activity (Golby and Purdue 1984:190)

While not denying that the provision of popular amusements that is exhibitions, festivals and so forth have always had an underlying commercial aspect which was an arguably less intensified version of today’s ‘postmodern’ spaces. It is argued in this thesis that postmodern sites of consumption are spaces in which there is a greater intensification of the combination of leisure and consumption practices which is increasingly becoming part of everyday life. As Rob Shields argues ‘the modernist separation of economy and culture has left little room for serious engagement with consumption practices’ (1992b:2). Shield’s work on the subject of consumption is heavily influenced by Walter Benjamin’s arcades project, which recorded a 19th century modern commodity society characterised by a flow of goods and fleeting impressions in which the boundaries between leisure and consumption, strollers and shoppers, community and commodity, all dissolve (See Frisby 2001).

Postmodern sites of consumption are characterised by ‘a new spatial form which is a synthesis’ of leisure and consumption activities that were previously held apart by being located in different sites, performed at different times or accomplished by different people’ (Shields 1992b:6).
Shields (1992b) uses the example of the shopping mall as a new, postmodern, spatial and cultural form which has resulted from a combination of practices which characterise the spatial performance of leisure spaces on the one hand and commercial sites on the other. Leisure spaces include practices of displacement and travel to liminal zones, as they exist on the thresholds of social control. They provide a validated break from the regulation of everyday life. They are zones of legitimated pleasure and carnivalesque. Although, these social spaces are not fully distinguished ‘or fully liminal as even in its most carnivalesque form, social exchange is marked by economic exchange’ (Shields 1992b:9). In contrast, economic spaces try to discourage the carnivalesque and focus on financial gain. It is important to point out that the relationship between commerce and leisure is not always harmonious as in these spaces there is a constant battle between the two opposing forces.

Shields (1992b) claims that it is in these spaces of consumption that ‘we find the implicated shadows of self, desire, and consumption in amongst the goods on display and the crowds of people’ (Shields 1992b:1). His study investigated the spatial arrangements within which people consume or ‘shop’ and links the shopping experience to more than just an economic exercise. Shields points out that the benefits of the marketplace or mall, with its ease of access, climate control, and reduced prices, are quickly outstripped by the symbolic and social value of the mall as a site of communication and interaction.

Shields argues that, within these postmodern sites of consumption, groups meet and participate in face to face communication, ‘if not community’ (1992b). He applies this typology to a range of sites from shopping malls, to outdoor markets, to
Disneyparkl and to music festivals (Shields 1992b). This further suggests that these sites are the ‘realm where the goods of the good life promised in the magazine ads and television commercials can be found’ (Langman, 1991:2 in Shields 1992b:5).

For Shields, the act of consuming has come to take on more and more social functions as, he argues, it becomes a form of solidarity. He argues against the Marxist approach of exchange value as ‘real value’, arguing that shoppers are conscious of the inequalities of exchange value. Instead, they use the mall environment, or festival marketplace, to consume symbolic values of objects while avoiding inequalities in exchange. They do this through browsing, shoplifting, the purchase of cheaper imitations and look-a-likes (Edwards 2000).

Shields (1992a) argues that there is always a level of sociality within consumption spaces, for example between the shop assistants and the regular shoppers. Shopping for goods then is not only a simple commodity exchange but a social exchange as well, built around the shopping activity, as illustrated by market days where the shopping experience and community come together in a social environment.

Australian indie music festivals, like shopping malls, might also be postmodern sites of consumption as they are marked by both social exchange and economic exchange. On the one hand, social exchange at these festivals can be seen in the mosh pit, crowd surfing, singing aloud on so forth (see chapter six). On the other hand, economic exchange is evident in the purchase of entry tickets, T-shirts, CDs, food and drink and so forth (see chapter five). The argument that Australian indie music festivals are postmodern sites of consumption will be tested throughout the thesis.
Consumption as commodity exchange, according to Shields (1992a) has not disappeared but is now less significant in postmodern societies. Shields (1992b) has argued that shopping in itself has become a leisure activity, which indicates that the act of consuming (shopping) is not just a functional activity. Consumption has become a communal activity and a form of solidarity. For groups like the festivalgoers, consumption then may be one way to solidify a sense of personal self and a sense of belonging to a group.

1.7 Thesis Outline

The thesis consists of nine chapters. In the following chapter I introduce the reader to my case study of Australian indie music festivals, which will be used to investigate the meanings and paradoxes of consumerism found amongst festivalgoers. I explore the historical development of indie music festival culture in Australia, from the 1970s to 2006. I begin by providing a brief historical overview of the first few ‘alternative’ Australian music festivals, The Open Air Festival, Sunbury and the Aquarius festival. I then give a more detailed history of Livid, Big Day Out, Falls, Homebake and Splendour in the Grass festivals. I explain the origins of the different festivals and outline the main events in the festivals’ history. Within this history I begin a discussion on how these intentionally commercial festivals have integrated with the indie music scene to promote a sense of collective identity. I argue that this has lead to an ongoing debate amongst festivalgoers about a festival’s justified ‘commercial’ success or its unjustified ‘selling out’ aspect. I then, discuss the development of indie-guitar culture. I investigate how the term ‘indie’ developed from meaning ‘independent’ artists and record labels, to a ‘genre’ of music that categorises any kind of music that is considered to be outside of the ‘mainstream’. I
then demonstrate how problematic the mythology surrounding the term indie has become in relation to the debate about ‘selling out.’

Chapter three, ‘From the inside looking out’, explores the use of postmodern ethnographic research methods. I explain how employing the triangulation of interviews, participant observations and focus groups helped to strengthen my results. The chapter begins with an examination of postmodern ethnography, followed by a discussion of how the ethnographic method has been applied to researching youth culture and popular music. I then discuss the position of the researcher as a ‘cultural insider’ or ‘insider researcher.’ Finally, I present a detailed research procedure to show how the research sample was chosen and how the fieldwork was conducted.

Chapter four situates my postmodern ethnographic methodology within the theoretical framework of this thesis, commencing with a debate about the death of youth subculture and a neo-tribal new beginning. I review the failures of subcultural theory and explain how a post subcultural approach is more insightful. I then introduce a debate about the relevance of Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribalism. Finally, the chapter investigates the carnivalesque nature of festival culture and its connection to indie music festivals as scenes.

Chapter five begins a discussion of my fieldwork results. I discuss the ways in which music festivals have become anchoring places for neo-tribal groupings. I begin by attempting to identify the festivalgoers as a style-tribe or neo-tribal grouping. I then analyse the relationship between the festivalgoers’ consumption practices and their
subsequent process of identity formation, through a case study of the festivalgoers’ ritual clothing: the t-shirt. I argue that by exploring the meaning given by the festivalgoers to their acts of consumption, we are able to see, even if these consumption patterns are somewhat conservative, the way in which they use commodities in their identity construction.

Chapter six investigates the festivalgoers’ sense of togetherness and how this is performed within the music festival context. I investigate the meanings the festivalgoers attribute to their festival participation through a case study of moshing and audience behaviours. I argue that the mosh pit is a complex social organism within which many social relationships take place. I further demonstrate the connection between neo-tribalism and the carnivalesque using the mosh pit as an example. I then show how festivalgoers develop a sense of togetherness through their participation in the indie music festival scene through a discussion of interviewees’ feelings about whether or not they feel part of a community of festivalgoers. Finally I discuss the role of virtuality in the continuation of the festival scene outside of the festival season.

Chapter seven explores the festival scene in terms of its intensity, boundary work and its impact on the wider community. Using the notion of festivals as postmodern sites of consumption I look at the impact of festivals on festivalgoers and how festival atmosphere is created and maintained.

Chapter eight revisits the idea of postmodern consumerism in light of my case study of the festivalgoers. I investigate the festivalgoers as both consumers of indie music
and as a neo-tribe or brand community. In addition I investigate the impacts of branding on these festivals in terms of commercialisation. I also explore the connection between indie festivals and global corporations in terms of festival sponsorship and how this may impact on the meanings attached to the festival by the festivalgoers. Furthermore I examine how the boundary work of the festival organiser affects the ‘selling out’ perception of the festival.

Finally, after reviewing and summarising the topics and issues discussed as part of this research, in chapter nine I bring my arguments to a conclusion.
CHAPTER 2

CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIAN INDIE MUSIC FESTIVALS

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the meanings given to and the paradoxes of consumerism, using Australian indie music festivalgoers as a case study. In the first part of this chapter, I introduce the Australian indie music festivals that will inform my case study. I use an historical approach to explore the development of indie music festival culture in Australia from the 1970s to 2006. I begin by providing a brief historical overview of the first few ‘alternative’ Australian music festivals: the Open Air Festival, Sunbury and the Aquarius festival. I then present a more detailed history of Livid, Big Day Out, Falls, Homebake and Splendour in the Grass festivals. I briefly explain the origins of the different festivals and outline the main events in the festivals’ histories. Within this history, I begin a discussion on how these intentionally commercial festivals have integrated with the indie music scene to promote a sense of collective identity.

In the second part of the chapter, I ask the following question: what meanings do festivalgoers attribute to their consumption of indie music? I analyse this question in three parts. Firstly, I explore the definition of indie music from both a music industry and the consumer’s (festivalgoers’) point of view. In particular, I focus on indie music as both a genre and a system of production. Secondly, I investigate indie-guitar culture or the indie music scene, focusing on the problematic relationship between indie music and the mainstream (major record labels). Thirdly, I introduce the debate about the selling out of indie music as I investigate the idea that a non-
commercial style of music and activity has become commercialised.

Finally, in the third part of the chapter I explain how the Australian indie music festivals investigated by this thesis may have become postmodern sites of consumption.

2.1 A Brief History of Indie Music Festival Culture in Australia

Festivals at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s were created as non-profit, youth-orientated rock events. Such festivals included Monterey (1967), Woodstock (1969) and the Isle of Wight (1969) (See Shuker 2005). Since then, festivals have become increasingly commercialised. In this section, I want to show how festival organisers and promoters developed these into commercial culture industries, in the form of the music festival. Furthermore, I want to explore how these new culture industries created festivals that simultaneously represented both commodity and community.

2.1.1 The Hippy Styled Festivals (1969-1974)

The American Woodstock festival of 1969\(^8\) brought together a counter-cultural generation. Woodstock represented a milestone in the use of music as a medium for political expression while at the same time acting as a launch pad for the more clearly commercial rock and pop festivals such as Isle of Wight (England 1969), Roskilde (Denmark 1971) and many more which were to follow (Bennett 2004a). Australia’s first attempt at a Woodstock-like festival was the Open-air Festival of

\(^8\) The 1969 Woodstock festival featured artists such as the Who, Country Joe and the Fish, Ten Years After, Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix.
Love Peace and Music, held in Ourimbah, New South Wales, in 1970. James Cockington described it as, ‘a weekend celebration of drug culture, alternative lifestyles and one long jam session’ (2001a: Episode 3). He added:

It had all the features that made Woodstock successful including a village-fair atmosphere and a ready availability of LSD, the official festival drug... [But] despite their supposed love of nature, hippies at a festival would often turn a pristine paddock into a garbage dump, leaving their trash behind, for the pixies to clean up (Cockington 2001b:144-145).

The Sunbury festival was quite different from the revolutionary hippy utopia presented at the Open-air festival. The Sunbury festival (1972-1974) was held over the Australia Day long weekend in a quiet valley on George Duncan’s farm near Tullamarine Airport, Melbourne, Victoria. It was a three-day festival of heat, dust and hard sweaty guitar. It was a monumental ‘piss-up’ (See Cockington 2001b:145). Hygiene was a major problem at the festival due to inadequate portaloos, which meant punters were using a creek running through the site as a toilet when the portaloos were full. The drug and alcohol abuse, and sea of beer cans left after the events also did not help the festivals’ reputation and this ultimately led to the demise of the hippie-style music festival in Australia (Cockington 2001b).

Cockington also notes that this may not have been the only cause for the demise of such festivals:

Rampant greed had compromised the hippie ideal of peace and love, a formula that had inspired George Duncan to donate his land free of charge (the promoters, he explained, paid for the building of the roads and laying of water pipes). Others had also entered into the hippie spirit. Local schoolboys cleared rocks from the site for a measly $1.50 an
hour, while the noble Diggers Rest firies\(^9\) were on 24-hour stand-by for the grand total of $316.80. Plenty of other people worked for nothing. But with around 50,000 people (in 1972) paying $6 just to get into the festival, then forking out much more for overpriced beer, food and drugs, someone somewhere was making shitloads of money...In truth the festival was the work of rank capitalists or to use the hippie term, breadheads (Cockington 2001b:148).

These early hippy-styled Australian music festivals might have been poorly organised by people with little to no experience in event management and promotion (see Coupe 2003; Mathieson 2000), yet these early festival organisers or ‘breadheads’ had, despite their failure in some of the logistics of the festival, found a way to make money out of youth culture. They were in a sense what Charles Leadbeater and Kate Oakley refer to as ‘independent cultural entrepreneurs’ (1999:10), or in other words, capitalists of culture, who through their do-it-yourself, rather than being part of a large business organisation mentality, found a way to turn a profit out of pleasure (see Gibson 2002).

There is, however, another side to this commercialisation. According to Leadbeater and Oakley (1999), the new cultural entrepreneurs such as festival organisers, promoters, market and food stallholders, musicians and artists, play a ‘critical role in promoting social cohesion and a sense of belonging. The reason for this is because; [sic] art, culture and sport create meeting places for people in an increasingly

\(^{9}\) Firies is an Australian slang term for fire fighter.
diversified, fragmented and unequal society’ (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999:17). As Big Day Out promoter Ken West commented:

Most people don’t even know their neighbours anymore. People create their own communities. What’s happening now is that festivals are understanding their need to specialise and create their market (Lobley 2005).

Cultural entrepreneurs like West, choose independence because it allows them to do the work the way they wish, without the restrictions of large organisations. Independence is crucial to the way these entrepreneurs generate and apply their creativity to commercial ends (Leadbeater and Oakley 1999).

In spite of this, festival organisers may form partnerships with government art programs, for-profit organisations (sponsorship from companies) or not-for-profit organisations, in order to generate the capital needed to set up and operate their business, as Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly explained to me:

Naomi: Sponsorship is certainly important to us, because we’re a really tight budget festival cos we keep our ticket prices just ridiculously low for what we do and we definitely don’t have big budgets, so sponsorship is a critical part of our funding but we’re fortunate.

Jo: Do you get government grants?
Naomi: Yeah we do actually. We’ve just for the last three years had a Tourism Victoria grant because the Victorian event has become increasingly national. I mean it’s not money for nothing. It’s basically we could promote our festival to a Victorian market and save ourselves a lot of money but just in part of spreading the benefit of a festival and particularly
travellers’ festivals...yeah. We have an interstate campaign, which has been effective in drawing a crowd from interstate. So and in Tasmania we’ve had some arts funding. We’ve had a little bit, but grants are hard work.

Independent cultural entrepreneurs managed to create a new relationship between commerce and creativity. It appears that they set up small independent companies that were able to maintain artistic and creative control whilst making a profit. This meant promoters, festival organisers, artists, musicians and so forth had control over the production of their work and could focus on the creative process. In order to support such a movement towards independence a cohesive network or creative milieu had to be established. For the indie music community, this meant the creation of networks between independent bands, records labels, promoters, record stores, clothing and food stallholders, artists, and other relevant parties. Through this creative milieu, the new cultural entrepreneurs could then gain access to the market and grow (see Kruse 2003).

2.1.2 Touring and One Day festivals

Touring and one day festival organisers embraced the indie ideal\(^{10}\). Unlike the hippy-styled festivals that were often poorly organised, these new festivals had tightly scheduled programming. As Big Day Out promoter Ken West recalls:

Rock festivals- at least in Australia- before the Big Day Out [1992] were all about pretending to be Woodstock…in the

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\(^{10}\) The indie ideal refers to the DiY and ‘back to basics’ attitude characteristic of indie-guitar culture. See section 2.2.2.
countryside, drinking beer and getting stoned. Normally, it was a camp out and facilities were shit, the production was shit and if it rained, it was a mudfest. I hated the whole hippy bullshit concept. I hated hippies’ full stop. I wanted urban mayhem, I wanted controlled chaos but I also wanted cold drinks, nice food, lots of choice, good drainage, lots of toilets and great production. Then I wanted people to learn about music, go as hard as they wanted, and be able to, and to get home safely at the end of the night (cited in Howarth 2006b:7).

2.1.2.1 Livid (1989-2003)

The Livid festival was the first festival to take up this one day format. Although overshadowed by World Expo, held in Brisbane in 1988, Livid began as a festival to showcase local Brisbane bands.

In reaction to the World Expo 1988, Livid ‘was conceived as an oppositional forum for the exhibition of Brisbane art and music produced by young people’ (Gibson 2001a:486). Livid is Australia’s longest running indie music festival having been established in January 1989 at the University of Queensland, with headliners including The Go-Betweens and Chris Bailey.11 Lisanne Gibson has suggested that the Livid festival ‘plays an important role in the development and maintenance of the local cultural industry’ (Gibson 2001a:488). Livid enabled the indie community in Brisbane to come together through exposing indie acts and supporting the indie music industry including independent record labels, promoters, tour managers, graphic designers, publicists and other small cultural businesses. As Gibson explains:

Despite its massive growth and commercial success, Livid still retains this focus on providing a space for the display of young Brisbane artists and musicians. The festival operates on a philosophy of acting as a forum for young local artists. The first Livid was held under a circus ‘Big Top’ tent and involved two stages alternately showing bands and performance art. As the festival became bigger the focus on the art component was reduced, and by 1990-91 the performance stage had taken a minor role. According to Peter Walsh, founder of the festival and one of its current directors, the removal of the performance stage from major stage status was as a result of a change in the festival’s audience demographic (Gibson 2001a:486) (Gibson 2001b:486).

According to Gibson (2001), Livid is the only commercial youth music festival which had an arts program in Australia. It displayed the works of local artists and gave them an avenue to express their talent. In 1995 Livid introduced skateboarding to the festival in the form of skate demonstrations. Although originally a Brisbane festival, Livid flirted with Sydney audiences, touring in 1990. It was not until 2002 that Livid left Brisbane again, with a second show in Sydney, in which local Brisbane band Powderfinger headlined over British rock act Oasis. As Peter Walsh states:

The original reason Livid started no longer exists. Brisbane doesn’t have to prove anything anymore. The whole thing now has come full circle- that we could go from having to bring local bands back here to exporting the event interstate, with a home-grown band headlining, the statement was too good not to make (cited in Stafford 2004:272).

In 2003, under new management, Livid toured along the east coast to include Sydney
and Melbourne. This was to be Livid’s last year.

The increasing commercialisation of the Livid festival meant that the arts program that was the original essence of Livid was under threat. Livid self-funded the arts program out of the profits of the festival. The retention of this program, however, required a lot of lobbying by the artists and punters who produced and engaged with this culture. In 2004, Livid reached its peak as far as commercialisation went. Promoter Michael Coppel, whose company owns the festival, announced the cancellation of the festival for that year due to competition for headlining acts. He stated:

When you look at what acts are out there in the European circuit and the fact that business is not strong outside the sort of, I guess, landmark festivals like Glastonbury, Roskilde and so forth. It just doesn’t seem to us to be a good year to be doing a festival in Australia (Coppel 2004).

This decision by Coppel to cancel the festival due to lack of a good overseas headliner was quite a ‘slap in the face’ to Peter Walsh’s comment (see above) about the home-grown talent produced by the festival and how far Australian music had come. It seems that with the change in festival management there was also a change in the value placed on Australian bands. To counteract this, Peter Walsh attempted to establish a new Brisbane-based festival called ‘Funhouse.’ Walsh, however, had to cancel the festival due to unidentified circumstances.
2.1.2.2 Big Day Out (1992 to present)

Although not the first one day festival, Big Day Out is the most successful alternative music festival in Australian history. It has toured the nation annually since 1993, exposing Australian audiences to a vast cross section of music, taste and style. The festival is part of a commercial enterprise set up by cultural entrepreneurs Ken West and Vivian Lees who wanted to create a touring alternative music festival in Australia, similar to the American Lollapalooza festival.\(^\text{12}\) As director Paul Critchley says in his documentary on the Big Day Out ‘96, it was ‘controlled chaos’ (Critchley and Goldman 1996).

The first Big Day Out held in Sydney in January 1992 was going to be a one-off event, which showcased the cream of Australian indie bands\(^\text{13}\) combined with well known international acts such as Nirvana and the Violent Femmes. Due to Nirvana’s breakthrough into the American mainstream music scene with the release of the Nevermind album just prior to their Australian tour, however, the demand for the festival heightened and all 9,500 tickets were sold. The festival was so successful that in 1993, organisers decided to tour the Big Day Out to four cities across the nation. This ultimately established the festival as a high point on the Australian alternative music calendar. Festival organiser and promoter Ken West describes the Big Day Out as ‘...a musical version of the Royal Agriculture Show as it often

\(^{12}\) Lollapalooza, a touring festival, was conceived by Jane’s Addiction and Porno for Pyros’ lead singer Perry Farrell in the summer of 1991. It was a six-week movable feast of art and music (see Crisafulli 1994).

\(^{13}\) Indie band refers to independent bands. They include Big Day Out 1992 acts like Ratcat, Died Pretty, The Hard-Ons, Clouds, Falling joys and Beasts of Bourbon (Mathieson, 2000). See section 2.2.1
features rides, skating, markets, films and exhibitions’ (Sound Check 2002).

Today, the Big Day Out is staged on five sites across Australia and one in New Zealand, over two and a half weeks in January. It is one of the world’s largest touring festivals. The whole festival tours with most of the infrastructure, production personnel, as well as a massive touring party of local and international acts (Howarth 2006b).

The Big Day Out reinvigorated the festival culture in Australia and has become the benchmark for other Australian festivals. The overwhelming success of the Big Day Out has meant that many people have tried and failed to re-create it. Failed festivals included Summersault 1995 and Alternative Nation 1994, which had a stronger focus on alternative rock acts and were primarily marketed to a Triple J14 audience (see Coupe 2003:254-260; Mathieson 2000:182-185). In 2000, a United States broadcasting giant, Clear Channel, attempted to buy out the Big Day Out but was rejected by festival organisers West and Lees (Shedden 2005). Given the Big Day Out’s success and stranglehold on the touring festival circuit, competing promoters needed to look for alternatives. The result was the annual Homebake festival, the unofficial companion to the Big Day Out.

2.1.2.3 Homebake (1996 to present): An All Aussie Affair

Homebake is a ‘locals only’ festival, meaning that it only showcases Australian bands (although it occasionally adopts New Zealand bands). Like the Big Day Out,
but on a much smaller scale, the festival has markets, rides and mix of local and international foods. The first Homebake\(^\text{15}\) was held in January 1996 at Belongil fields in Byron Bay. That same year, in December, a second event was held at the University of Sydney. After a year off, in January 1998, the promoters toured the Homebake festival along the east coast to Melbourne, the Gold Coast and Sydney. In December of the same year, the Sydney Domain hosted the festival. Homebake toured again in late 1999 to the Gold Coast and Sydney. In 2000 the festival finally found its home in Sydney’s Domain where it is now held annually, on the first Saturday in December\(\text{Force 2001}\).

Homebake has built a reputation for showcasing a uniquely diverse range of the finest contemporary musical talent Australia has to offer… Homebake has steadily grown from being a music festival distinguished for its commitment to giving new Australian acts a chance, into a well known local music lover’s ritual, and now into nothing less than a national Australian music institution with a unique reputation for cultivating the very best Australian musical talent on offer \(\text{Homebake Newsletter 26/8/2004}\).

Homebake ‘has been a catalyst in helping to establish the careers of young and up and coming bands and also for honouring the achievements of some of our well established popular acts’ \(\text{Homebake Newsletter 29/9/2004}\). Homebake has had a significant influence on the Australian music scene. It is clear that most successful Australian bands got their first big break at festivals like Homebake; such acts include Powderfinger, Jet, Grinspoon, You Am I, Regurgitator, Something for Kate and many more \(\text{Homebake Newsletter 26/8/2004}\). Some of these bands are now

\(^{15}\text{Homebake was originally named Weedstock, due to the headlining band Tumbleweed (Channel V 2006).}\)
2.1.3 Return of the Camping Festivals

I have focused above on urban-based indie music festivals. This study also includes, however, two camping festivals, the Falls and Splendour in the Grass, which are held in rural locations. These festivals, in a similar fashion to Sunbury and the Open-air festival are a return to more hippie ideals and a move ‘back to nature.’ The Falls and Splendour are travellers festivals as they attract festivalgoers from all around the country. Camping festivals, as the name suggests, include camp grounds adjacent to the festival site and are usually run over a period of two or three days. At Splendour in the Grass, one-day and weekend passes are also available.

2.1.3.1 Rock above the Falls Festival (1993 to present)

The inaugural ‘Rock above the Falls’ festival was first held on New Year's Eve in 1993-94 on a farm in Lorne, Victoria. Festival founder Simon Daly set up the festival in order to get people off the streets of Lorne on New Year’s Eve in order to reduce trouble in the town. Therefore, he built a small stage on his parents’ farm and invited some bands to play. The idea was simple and effective: build it and they will come. The festival started as a small one-day concert, which attracted around 11,000 festivalgoers. Naomi Daly recalls the festival’s beginnings:

Naomi: The Falls festival was started by my brother Simon...He started it back in ’93. My brother was not your typical sort of student. My parents had run their own their business. They actually like the farm (that the Lorne festival is held on), it was like a family farm. And they kind of hoped that Simon might do something productive with that. I’m sure the Falls festival wasn’t quite what they had in mind at the
start. That’s kind of how it came about. We were pretty young. I was like a teenager back then and Simon was 22 when the idea started and Lorne used to be one of those towns…Are you in Sydney?

Jo: Yes

Naomi: I don’t know if that is what Bondi is or what are your sort of trouble areas sort of over New Year’s Eve but that’s kind of how Lorne started out. It was just a summer hot spot over New Year’s and so the Falls kind of started out as a bit of a people management strategy for the town and a solution to our own sort of expectations of New Year’s Eve I suppose. You know how disappointing it goes usually. So, it kind of started out that way and then grew. It’s nothing like that now. The people who come to the Falls festival don’t even really closely resemble the people that came in the first years and the event has changed a lot. The first year it was sort of half a dozen bands and one night. And I don’t think the bands travelled much more from Melbourne let alone the patrons. So now, it’s obviously grown a lot in terms of its duration and the number and the size and the quality of the acts and the number of people who come and the organisational level and the expansion to Tasmania.

Due to its success, the festival has become an annual event. The festival expanded in 1995 to a two-day event. In 1996, the festival name was changed to the ‘Falls festival’ and in 1997, a capacity crowd of 12,500 campers attended. In 2003, the festival format changed to include a new site at Marion Bay, Tasmania. The two festivals were held simultaneously. The same acts played at both events; the December 30 acts who play at Lorne, play December 31 at Marion Bay and vice
versa. The Falls festival features a diverse range of international and national acts. It also promotes local bands, especially bands from Victoria and Tasmania (Falls Festival 2003).

### 2.1.3.2 Splendour in the Grass (2001 to present)

Held annually in July, Splendour in the Grass is Australia’s youngest and only winter indie music festival. Splendour in the Grass, nicknamed Splendour, is a boutique festival held in Byron Bay in tropical New South Wales. The festival started in 2001 and promoted itself as a break in the long wait for the summer festivals. The festival features two stages, one playing indie-guitar orientated acts and the other stage playing electronic, dance, and hip-hop artists. The festival also features many artworks from local artists, local handicrafts and food in the markets (Splendour in the Grass 2003). Promoter and festival organiser Jess Ducrou explains how the festival came about:

> I always wanted to put on another show in Byron Bay. I was involved in the first Sydney Homebake and so that was originally held here and I am also the agent for Powderfinger. Their manager suggested doing a festival together, so we sort of collaborated and came up with doing a festival here. It’s quite a small festival, so we don’t need large acts and so often we put on a lot of bands that we personally like, so it gives us a fair bit of latitude there (Channel V 2005).

In 2005, the Splendour in the Grass festival had unprecedented ticket sales. In the previous year it took eighteen days to sell out. In 2005, all camping tickets sold out in an hour and all other tickets sold out in less than a day and a half. The festivals crowd capacity was 14,000 people. Unfortunately, due to the increasing popularity
of the festival, scalpers, wanting to profit on the festival’s popularity, brought extra
tickets. Scalpers were selling tickets in online auction houses, like e-bay, for triple
the official price. This resulted in an outcry from genuine festivalgoers who had
missed the tickets. They spearheaded a campaign with the help of national radio
station Triple J to sabotage the bidding process. Splendour organisers were also
outraged and talked about taking legal action against the sellers (Murray 2005).

In 2006, Jess Ducrou announced an innovative step towards combating ticket
scalping through a change to the ticketing procedure for the 2006 event:

> We were greatly disappointed with the obvious and calculated ticket scalping for the 2005 event, which resulted in many people paying inflated prices to attend Splendour in the Grass. In response, we are introducing a new ticketing system that will make sure genuine patrons are able to attend Splendour in the Grass at the face value of the ticket. This new system is loosely based on the model developed by Glastonbury organisers who faced similar ticket scalping problems on a much larger scale. We are committed to producing a good quality, value for money festival and we hope this new ticketing system will be embraced in the spirit in which it is intended (Splendour in the Grass 21/04/2006).

The changes to the ticketing system included: limiting ticket outlets to the official
festival website and a telephone hotline, limiting the types of tickets to weekend
passes and camping passes, and printing the name and date of birth of each
festivalgoer on the individual tickets. This new ticketing system was successful in
stopping ticket scalpers. The 2006 event with an increased capacity of 17,500 tickets
sold out in less than two days and no tickets appeared on e-bay (Holmes 2006).
A positive outcome of Splendour in the Grass has been the promoter’s school program run each year by promoters Jess Ducrou and Darcy Condon. Six or seven young people chosen from the Byron Bay region attend a program to teach them the skills and realities of promoting music festivals. This was in the hope that the young people would be encouraged to put on their own all-ages events in the region as Ducrou explains,

Over the years of working with bands, young kids approach me and I’ve tried to encourage them as much as possible. And then moving to an area like Byron Bay where I think there is a real market for under ages but there’s no one actually doing it. So we try and encourage the kids and provide some intellectual property to help them actually go out and do that (Channel V 2005).

The aim of the promoters’ school program is to help young people learn the skills needed to put on their own events in the local area. This is in keeping with the DiY nature of indie-guitar culture that promotes the idea that ‘anyone can get out there and give it a go’ whether it be starting a band or managing a live event. To be eligible to attend the promoters’ school, potential participants need to live in the local area and they need to have attended an outdoor music festival before. As Ducrou notes ‘frequenting festivals is a definitive criteria that they have been to an event before. I think it’s a bit difficult if this is your first experience of an outdoor event’ (Channel V 2005).

Having introduced the festivals under investigation in this study, I now begin the second part of this chapter, which introduces the debate about the perceived selling out of indie music. From my historical analysis of indie music festivals, I found
many aspects of potential ‘sell out’. It seems that as a festival develops it needs to expand its market. This expansion may include touring to new cities, adding or removing stages such as Livid’s performance stage, or obtaining more sponsorship from companies in order to avoid financial deficit. Although growing popularity is a good thing for festival organisers and festivalgoers, speedy ticket sales and increasing prices due to scalpers or consumer demand overshadows for some the authenticity and DiY nature of the festivals. As a way to counter this problem, Splendour in the Grass organiser Jess Ducrou, for example, has attempted to maintain her festival’s authenticity by running a promoter’s school program and implementing a new ticketing system. My aim in this next section is to address the underlying question of what meanings festivalgoers attribute to their consumption of indie music at these festivals. I begin with an examination of what festivalgoers mean when they talk about indie music.

### 2.2 The Selling Out of Indie Music

To sell out means to abandon previously held political and aesthetic commitments for financial gain. Through my case study of indie music festivals, I aim to investigate how a style of music believed to be non-commercial by its audience has turned into a commodity. Before a discussion on the selling out of indie music can take place, however, it is important to define indie music.

#### 2.2.1 Defining Independent/ Alternative Music

Shuker argues that indie or alternative music since the late 1960s has been seen as a broad label or a loose genre of popular music that is considered to be ‘less
The indie aesthetic rejects the commercial music industry and places ‘an emphasis on rock music as art or expression rather than as a product for sale for economic profit’ (Shuker 2005:9). The indie ideology views music as raw and immediate, while the mainstream music is processed and mediated by overproduction (see Shuker 2005:145).

The definition of indie music prior to 1986, from a music industry perspective, concentrated on music considered to be independently produced and distributed. According to David Hesmondhalgh, ‘indie proclaimed itself to be superior to other genres not only because it was more relevant or authentic to the youth who produced and consumed it but also because it was based on a new relationship between creativity and commerce’ (Hesmondhalgh 1999:35; see also Leadbeater and Oakley 1999). Indie was seen as ‘preferable’ as it was ‘supposedly more in touch with the rapid turnover of styles and sounds characteristic of popular music’ (Hesmondhalgh 1999:35). Within this DiY mentality, untrained people were encouraged to take the means of musical production into their own hands; for example, the promoters’ school run by Splendour in the Grass, which encourages young people to stage all ages events (see above).

Moreover, Hesmondhalgh (1999) notes that the meaning of the term indie started to change after 1986, as it was becoming more widely used to describe a distinctive style of music. This style of music has, however, embraced a number of different
strands. Spin\textsuperscript{16} editor, Jim Greer has commented that the alternative/ indie label:\textsuperscript{17}

Encompasses college rock, rap, thrash, metal and industrial, has many variants as adherents, and has slowly attracted a larger and larger audience to the point where alternative no longer means anything. Alternative music is simply what the kids are listening to today (Shuker 2005:9).

The music industry and its associated institutions have used the terms indie and alternative to pigeonhole the work of artists and bands. These bands had one or a combination of the following characteristics: they had local origins, unique musical styles, affiliation with independent record labels, and exposure through community or non-commercial radio stations like FBI\textsuperscript{18} and Triple J and local venues (Mohan and Malone 1994:283). Defining independent music is complicated because of the number of variations within it. Indie bands often embrace crossover and mix different styles of music together, for instance dance beats and electric guitar (see Hesmondhalgh 1999; Kruse 2003).

Today, the term indie is generally used to describe ‘a set of sounds and an attitude, rather than an aesthetic and institutional position’ (Hesmondhalgh 1999:51). One of my informants, Roxanne, further explains this in the following quote:

\begin{quote}
quote{\textsuperscript{16}Spin is an American music magazine.}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
quote{\textsuperscript{17}It is clear that the terms indie and alternative have a similar meaning and for the purposes of this thesis, these terms are interchangeable. As Andy Bennett comments on the cross-cultural similarity between the British and American understandings of these terms, ‘in the US the term alternative is used in a broadly similar fashion to indie-guitar as a means of describing guitar-based music deemed by musicians and fans to be non-mainstream’ (2001a:58).}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
quote{\textsuperscript{18}FBI is an independent community based Sydney radio station.}
\end{quote}
Jo: How would you define ‘indie’?

Roxanne: I guess indie is short for independent but there’s so many bands that get classed into indie rock that are on major [record] labels and all that kind of shit. But, I don’t know, to me indie is bands that write their own music and play their own instruments and all that kind of stuff rather than anything related to labels. Because there are so many bands and people out there that are playing songs that were written by other people and doing exactly what they’re told. I guess indie is a bit of a rebel term too, like ‘we’re not doing what we’re told we’re fuck’n indie rock’ yeah. But it’s more an attitude… than anything else. I think it’s just a way of playing dirty rock ’n’ roll to dirty rock ’n’ roll fans.

Indie is hard for festivalgoers to define. Festivalgoers seem to define indie in one of two ways, first by saying what it is not, usually with reference to ‘mainstream’ music, and second, through the bands they regard as fitting into the indie label. As Jeanne comments:

Jo: What does indie/ alternative mean?

Jeanne: I don’t know. It’s not really mainstream, like it’s not like the top forty or anything like that, sort of more independent bands who write all the music and sing themselves.

Jo: And if the band is popular does that make them not indie anymore?

Jeanne: Well I guess you sort of… think of like Jet cos they never used to be popular then they had that one song and suddenly they were huge. And like I was never that big of a fan to start with but yeah they were alright but now like I’ve heard their songs everywhere I’m kind of a bit like …I’m still like they’re a good
band and everything but I wouldn’t go and see them live now just because they’ve made it or whatever.

Jo: What about a band like the Foo Fighters or the Red Hot Chili Peppers?

Jeanne: I think they are still like alternative cos as long they stay like true to themselves and what they wanted to do, once they’re like sold out then na.

Sophie argues that indie still exists today. She regards indie as having an underlying belief in a DiY aesthetic, which at times can be commercialised by the mainstream record labels. She notes:

I heard of independent music, [it] was a tag you went to a particular type of music but that particular type of music is quite mainstream at times now. Like when Nirvana hit the big time they were sort of an indie band but they did that crossover and I guess all those bands around guitar rock sound. I mean I guess it still sort of exists like indie is independent music, which means you make that music and in theory, no major record label would ever touch it. So you put it out or you have a small record label to put it out and distribute it and you know people who wanted to find it had to kind of do a lot to find out where to get it. And I guess that had a particular sound cos it was a belief, well I think it had a belief that the mainstream wasn’t interested and that’s what record companies like to sell but now the mainstream is interested so it has crossed over which is awesome. And I think that starting that was probably well over ten years ago.

Roxanne, Jeanne and Sophie’s comments are representative of my interviewees’ feelings about what indie means to them. For the festivalgoers, indie is not only associated with the production and distribution of music, it is a particular guitar
Further to this difficulty of clearly defining what indie is, there is an ongoing debate amongst the audience of indie music about bands ‘selling out’ during the mainstreaming process which leads to even more confusion. Mainstreaming is when an indie band moves from an independent label to a major company in light of commercial success such as U2, R.E.M and Nirvana (Shuker 2005). Liz comments on this in relation to Powderfinger’s involvement with the Homebake festival:

There’s always people that think it’s sold out. There’s always people that will sit there and go you know I can’t believe it. I remember when they [Homebake] started including big names like when Powderfinger got big; it’s not really about them it’s about what the band has done. So you know once they start selling a lot of records and people go whoa!

For Holly Kruse, indie describes ‘both a type of music (most commonly thought of as music characterised by a particular do-it-yourself guitar sound, regardless of whether it appears on a major label or an independent) and a system of production (music put out on independent labels)’ (2003:34). I will be using Kruse’s definition for this thesis.

### 2.2.2 Indie as a Genre: What’s the Difference?

Genres are ‘a way of defining music in its market or alternatively, the market in its music’ (Frith 1996:76), they are the way music is labelled and categorised in order to promote and sell it to certain markets. The music industry creates genres in order to utilise them as identifiers of different music in the marketplace. As Frith states ‘the point of music labels, is in part, to make coherent the way in which different music
media divide the market: record companies, radio stations, music magazines and concert promoters can only benefit from an agreed definition of say, Heavy Metal’ (1996:77). This means that the music industry and its associated institutions need to agree and be aware of what certain ‘genre’ terms like Industrial Rock, Techno, or Blues and Roots mean.

On the other hand, the consumption of music is different from the genre maps created by the music industry. The development of these genre maps enables the music industry to organise the listening process, meaning that genres not only describe who listens but also what the music means to them, thus creating ‘fantasy’ consumers. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that genres are constructed and understood within a commercial/cultural process; they are not the result of detached academic analyses or formal musicological histories (Frith 1996).

In recent times, there has been an increase in the popularity of genre fusions and genre crossovers such as Punk/Reggae, Two-tone Ska, Hardcore/Metal, Nu-Metal and so on. This is reflective of the new direction in music organisation within scenes today that are often in direct contrast to the music industry and its associated institutions. Often the type of music played within a particular scene will not fit into traditional genre boxes such as Jazz, Rock, Dance, Punk and so on, that the music industry creates. A good example of this from within the Australian indie scene is the music of the band Regurgitator. In 1997 their album Unit became quite controversial, as it was a radical shift from their previous indie rock style to more mainstream pop.

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19 Fantasy consumers are consuming a lifestyle that is attached to the music, for example Punk (see Frith 1996).
The new album was similar to their 1996 album *Tu-Plang* in that it included cynical lyrics and ‘sleaze’ yet it was more pop. As Martin Lee, Regurgitator’s then drummer explains:

Unit is fun. It’s pop. It’s a whole lot of things. It’s us just having a good time. Before the sessions we must have been listening to too much Cars, Prince, Cyndi Lauper, RnB, ‘80s one-hit wonders… (Gee 1997:1).

Traditionally, the music industry and its various institutions did not encourage such genre fusions, due to the difficulty faced in trying to market them. Scenes, especially music festivals, however, thrive on musical crossover and hybridisation. Events like America’s Lollapalooza and Australia’s Big Day Out bring together different musical communities (or at least samplers and guitars) for mixed audiences (Ross 1994).

At this point, it is important to note once again that indie music embraces many different strands of music. Artists that combine guitars and samplers such as Itchy and Scratchy, Kraftwerk, Death in Vegas or Resin Dogs are included in this musical style as are Australian hip-hop acts such as Koolism or The Herd. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be focusing mainly on the guitar-orientated side of indie music and its associated festivals as incorporating all the musical genre variants found within music festivals would be too confusing and go beyond the scope of this research.

### 2.2.3 What is Indie-guitar Culture?

Indie-guitar culture is the name Bennett gives to the culture surrounding indie-guitar music. Although the basis of Bennett’s study of indie guitar culture is in the United
Kingdom, its application to the Australian scene is appropriate, as it is only the region that differs, not the aesthetic. According to Bennett indie guitar culture is ‘a generic term in popular music vocabulary used to describe a loosely defined, guitar-based sound and its attendant performance/consumption aesthetic’ (Bennett 2001:45).

The central ethos of indie-guitar culture according to John Street (1993) is that of ‘back to basics’, the idea that good and meaningful music can be made without the ‘show business trappings’ that is found in popular/mainstream music. Instead, indie bands rely on minimal stage set-ups and small-club or pub venues. Wendy Fonarow (1997) suggests that there is a sense of community between the bands and their audiences due to their localised networks of production and distribution. Street further suggests that this helps them to create a ‘sense of otherness’ (1993:51).

For Fonarow (1997), the fact that the bands are not heavily advertised in the mainstream media and that not all pubs have indie bands is the source of this creation of a ‘sense of otherness’. Indeed, to follow this culture, people need to be ‘in the know’ or to have a certain degree of ‘subcultural capital’ (see Thornton 1997), in which you need the local knowledge of listening to the right radio station or reading the right fanzines. This ultimately creates an underground feel to the scene, that sets it apart from the mainstream and thus creates a ‘sense of otherness’ for the rest of society.

20 Is there such a thing as the Australian sound? Liam Dennis argues that there is such a sound even if it is appropriated from the global musical scene. He further suggests that it is the uniquely Australian song lyrics that refer to Australian geography, slang and lifestyle which makes the music and the sound local (see Dennis 1999). This alone does not, however, justify a difference between the United Kingdom and Australian indie festivals culture as slang and local sounds do not create any difference between the base sound and the performance/consumption aesthetic.
Bennett, like Fonarow, acknowledges that the band is important to the creation of a sense of otherness for the indie community. He argues that this sense of otherness is authenticated by the ‘particular conventions of guitar style, sound and even choice of guitar, amplification and effects unit’ (Bennett 2001:54). Further, indie bands are seen to be authentic bands, rather than commercial, as they are ‘in touch’ with their audience. Bands work together with each other and the audience to create an atmosphere during the concert, which in turn creates a sense of ‘community.’ (This will be discussed further in chapter six).

Within the indie ethos, there is a sense of do it yourself enthusiasm, generated from the United States garage band scene which promoted the idea that any one could pick up a guitar and play. There is, however, a marginalisation of women in this scene. Although women play in indie bands, there is a significant gender imbalance. As Sara Cohen (1991) points out, women are a threat to band unity as they may become emotionally involved with one of the band members. Nevertheless, as bands like Hole, the Donnas, the Spazzys, the Superjesus and Magic Dirt continue to have female members who play the guitar then women might slowly gain more ground in the indie music world (see Gottlieb and Wald 1994).

\[\text{21 The United States garage band scene was around from 1965 to 1968. It involved as the name suggests people setting up bands in their garages who often played at high school dances and “battle of the bands” competitions. They often had little conventional music skill and performing experience, and had only basic knowledge of guitar, bass and drums (see Bennett 2001).}

\[\text{22 It is important to note that in this statement Cohen is reiterating a view held by many male Liverpool (UK) musicians, rather than a truism.}\]
2.2.4 Sell Out or Burn Out

Selling out is the term used by insiders to describe what happens when bands considered alternative gain a large amount of commercial success or adjust their image in order to appeal to a larger audience. Such is the case for bands like the Red Hot Chili Peppers, R.E.M, New Order, Powderfinger or Silverchair (see Kruse 2003). Rick, a festivalgoer, measures a bands’ ‘sell out’ through the type of venues they play. As he explains:

The problem for me as a fan is when the bands start playing different kinds of venues. Like when they start playing venues that aren’t small enough for you to actually really enjoy it. But once they move from, if you’re in Sydney, say it’s alright when you’re playing the Hopetoun and the Annandale and it’s still alright when you’re playing the Metro but once you start playing the Hordern I just stop. I lose interest, or the Enmore, I just can’t be bothered. The largest venue that I can be bothered going to is the Metro. That’s just because that’s a really good medium size venue. I mean I saw Nirvana in a really small place. To me that was still indie.

The term ‘sell out’ is inherent in indie guitar culture, which assumes that independents abandon previously held political and aesthetic commitments for financial gain. Warren Zanes sees selling out as ‘a conscious decision one can make, a decision involving a deliberate move away from one’s roots’ (1999:43). The term ‘burn out’ is also used in this indie guitar culture and is at the other end of the spectrum. It reflects the reality that independents can only exist for a short time before financial and human resources run dry (Hesmondhalgh 1999). The problem for many independent record labels for example, is that they must to some extent
become involved with major record companies or financial institutions in order to
survive. If independents do not sell out, they will eventually burn out.

Zanes questions whether the craze against commerciality and its selling out aspect
became more prominent simply because ‘commerciality was increasingly difficult to
pin onto any one particular section in the rock music business’ (1999:49). For
example in the 1980s, the rock video made it impossible to avoid the fact that
promotion and art fitted together so well. Commerciality has become increasingly
difficult to isolate at the level of production and packaging. Authenticity is easier to
identify, however, because it is nostalgic and temporal. In the case of indie music this
authenticity is usually associated with bands of the previous generation that are seen
to have the most in common with a purer past, which is believed to be a time when
there were less bands selling out.

Lawrence Grossberg (1992) has suggested that the ideology of authenticity that has
determined the structure of the various histories of rock, whether it is produced by
fans or critics, is in crisis from accounts of contemporary rock youth cultures ‘where,
for many fans, no single allegiance, no single organisation of taste seems more
authentic than any other’ (Grossberg 1992:224). He argues that there is a postmodern
logic of ‘authentic inauthenticity.’ Using the example of rock music, he argues that
it is no longer consumed as a realist youth cultural expression but instead has become
a ‘depoliticised, escapist, disposable commodity in times of popular conservatism’
(in Laughey 2006:46).

Steve Redhead offers quite a different solution on the perspective of authenticity
faced by postmodern youth cultures. He suggests the idea of ‘Pop Time’ which is a framework wherein ‘the speed of what comes around again may change but the cyclical motion is embedded in pop’s genealogy’ (Redhead 1990:25). That is, revivals of popular musical sounds and genres are universal, but occur at random. Therefore, youth cultures are mere marketing devices that have a musical association, which may have nothing to do with its social or historical context. For Redhead, the politics of pop music needed to integrate the authentic originality of ‘new’ musical traditions such as American Hip Hop.

It is important to note that the indie music festivals studied in this thesis were deliberately commercial (to some degree) from the outset. Notably the Big Day Out is the most heavily corporately sponsored festival. The main reason for the festivals ‘selling out’ is to prevent them from ‘burning out’. Festivals are expensive to run and corporate sponsorship can help to cover costs. In turn, corporate sponsorship gives companies and their products ‘street credit.’ Nevertheless, if corporate sponsorship becomes too entrenched, a festival runs the risk of alienating itself from the scene and its core audience (Dowd et al. 2004b) (see chapter eight).

Bennett has challenged the distinction between commerciality and non-commerciality, which he argues ‘quickly founders’. He has suggested instead that as sociologists we should look at ‘how things are accepted or rejected as components of indie-guitar culture’ (2001a:51 italics original). Hence, Bennett sees the debate about selling out as failing to resolve anything. I agree with Bennett that as sociologists we need to look more closely at how groups of young people like the festivalgoers come to accept or reject things and ideas into their culture. In
particular, I want to draw attention to the meanings festivalgoers attach to their festival experiences.

For Will Straw (1997), this acceptance or rejection of what makes up indie-guitar culture is due to the processes of self-definition by fans and bands who embrace the myth of independence and create group solidarity through their constructed sense of otherness. This self-definition has allowed for fragmentation and cross-fertilisation to occur between indie and many different styles of music, for instance the new Rock/Dance/ Electronica fusions or Hip Hop/ Punk / Nu Metal fusions or laidback Surfer Blues and Roots music. This diversity and adaptation of indie-guitar culture has allowed for its acceptance in the mainstream. Indeed, Clinton Walker (1996) argues that because of this process by the early 1990s the underground (indie) scene in Australia had gained wider critical and commercial acceptance. As Shane Homan notes:

The overwhelming success of the West/Lees venture, the Big Day Out; the chart successes of older hands like Ed Kuepper, the Cruel Sea, Nick Cave, Dave Graney; the long term viability of labels like Shock and Volition, are all evidence of an increasingly diverse scene. The fault lines between marginal and mainstream have increasingly blurred, to the point where theorists like Redhead believe that ‘the hierarchy of centre and periphery, mainstream and margin, no longer holds in the cultural politics of pop’ (1990:71 cited in Homan 1997:91).

Author and music journalist Craig Mathieson sums up the position of indie music in Australia today:
We still label bands as mainstream or alternative or whatever we need, but when it matters, they’re all on the same playing field. Sometimes I think it’s a victory, but is gaining equality a victory or your due? Either way, it feels good to flick through a pile of CDs and realise how much good music has appeared in just, say, a month. It feels extremely good to be caught up in the emotion of a live concert with other people, when at its best the music not only surrounds you, but catches you up within it… We’ve become used to bands as challenging as Regurgitator or as daunting as Silverchair, as powerful as Spiderbait, as inspirational as You Am I, having a presence in the mainstream (Mathieson 1996).

2.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the Australian indie music festivals that form my case study. I have demonstrated through a brief historical account the importance of these events in creating a space for the expression of indie guitar culture. These festivals are places in which festivalgoers can meet and feel a connection and a sense of belonging in an increasingly fragmented and diversified society (see chapter six). Although music festivals have become increasingly popular and more commercialised over the years, they have still managed to maintain an element of ‘authenticity’ that connects them to the indie music scene.

The definition of indie music is complex and differs depending on the listener’s or the music industry’s point of view. For the festivalgoers, indie is about more than the production or distribution of music. It is an attitude, a raw sound in which the bands write their own songs and play their own instruments. It is something outside the mainstream, a non-commercial genre of music with a DiY aesthetic. Paradoxically,
for the music industry, indie music is a label used to promote and market a genre of music.

There is a debate in indie music about its supposed selling out which has failed to bring to light any meaningful resolution about the relationship between indie and mainstream music. For sociologists, however, what appears to be more important is the analysis of the ways in which indie music festivalgoers choose to accept or reject certain elements into their culture. I will be exploring this later in the thesis (see chapter five). Indie guitar culture might have constructed a sense of otherness to create a sense of group solidarity. This in turn could have created a sense of affectual alliances between both the bands and fans of indie guitar music resulting in the indie guitar scene. The problem for the future of indie guitar culture might be the paradoxical nature of striking a balance between authenticity and commercialisation. This will be explored in the remainder of the thesis.

Having tested the existence of the relationship between ‘commodity’ and ‘community’ through an explanation of the history of the festivals, it is now justified to investigate the field and explore the subtleties of the relationship. Before getting into the heart of these subtleties, we first need to explore the methodological approach (chapter three) and lay down the theoretical framework (chapter four).
CHAPTER 3
FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO RESEARCHING INDIE MUSIC FESTIVALS IN AUSTRALIA

The rain poured down onto the roof of the van, so hard that I was woken from my sleep. Surely it would stop in a minute. The rain continued for what seemed like hours. I thought to myself, ‘I would really hate to be in a tent right now.’ Slowly I drifted back to sleep as I ignored the urge to go to the bathroom while I listened to the rhythm of rain as it hit the van’s roof. In the morning, the sun was shining; I stepped out of the van to look at the damage from the night before. A huge puddle of water surrounded the van however the nearby tents seem to have survived the night. It was the first day of the Splendour in the Grass festival and in traditional winter weather; Bryon Bay was putting on a shower then a rainbow followed by another shower.

Around lunchtime my partner and I made our way from the camp site to the festival grounds, only to be confronted with muddy roads and puddles. The festival grounds had been transformed from a green field into a quagmire. As I walked around my runners and the bottom of my jeans became caked in mud. My fiancé, in what he believed to be a stroke of genius, was wearing thongs. They quickly became stuck in the mucky ground and so he decided to go bare foot. The mud swished between his toes and splashed up his legs. ‘You
really should put some shoes on’ I nagged. It seemed gumboots were the ultimate fashion accessory of the weekend. You would think this being my third Splendour that I would have remembered to bring a pair.  

The above is a description of what a festivalgoer may encounter at an Australian indie music festival. I have taken this description from my field diary as I am an insider researcher. I argue in this chapter that becoming an insider researcher or starting in the position of an insider can benefit ethnographic studies. The following chapter discusses the ethnographic methodology undertaken for this thesis, which employs a triangulation of methods including interviews, participant observations and focus groups. This chapter begins with an examination of postmodern ethnography, followed by a discussion of how this ethnographic method has been applied to researching youth culture and popular music. Subsequently I discuss a dilemma I faced, as I was both a ‘cultural insider’ and a researcher. Finally, a detailed research procedure is presented to demonstrate how the research sample was chosen and how the fieldwork was conducted.

### 3.1 Postmodern Ethnography

Ethnographic research involves a focus on the micro-sociological elements of everyday life such as the beliefs, values, rituals and general patterns of behaviour underlying social relationships. Anthropologically speaking it is a description and an interpretation of everyday culture (Cohen 1993).

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23 Extract from Splendour in the Grass 2006 field notes.
The researcher is, however, sometimes confronted with a paradox when using this approach. According to Sarah Thornton:

> The two methods that make up ethnography—participation and observation—are not necessarily complementary. In fact, they often conflict. As a participating insider, one adopts the group's views of its social world by privileging what it says. As an observing outsider, one gives credence to what one sees (1995:105).

This creates a methodological contradiction as the researcher cannot be both objective and subjective at the same time. Subjectivism seeks to explore people’s beliefs and ignores the unreliability of their understanding, as it takes the point of view of the individual in the social world. In contrast, objectivism explains social life in terms of material conditions and ignores the experience individuals have of it. This approach seeks to construct a view of the social world through structural practices and representations (Thornton 1995:106).

This methodological contradiction between objectivity and subjectivity is nevertheless embraced by postmodern ethnography, as the very nature of postmodernity is contradictory. According to Paul Atkinson and Martin Hammersley:

> Postmodern ethnography explores the discontinuities, paradoxes, and inconsistencies of culture and action. In contrast with the supposedly ‘modern’ ethnography, it does so not in order to resolve or to reconcile those differences. The classic modern ethnography (the postmodernist holds) brought the various fragmentary representations of social life under the auspices of a dominant narrative and a single, privileged point of view (1998:127).
The exploratory nature of postmodern ethnography is what sets it apart from modern ethnography. It does not attempt to explain social life under a single dominant narrative, rather, it presents a fragmented view of social life (see table two).

**Table 2: Ideal-type differences between modern and postmodern approaches to ethnography**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Modern</strong></th>
<th><strong>Postmodern</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aim</strong></td>
<td>To resolve or reconcile differences in culture and action.</td>
<td>To explore the discontinuities, paradoxes and inconsistencies of culture and action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of the social world</strong></td>
<td>Holistic, seeks to explain social life under one dominant narrative.</td>
<td>Fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textual nature</strong></td>
<td>Monologue</td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher</strong></td>
<td>Objective observer</td>
<td>Subjective participant observer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the postmodern approach to ethnography allows the researcher to report in the first person. This personal involvement and subsequent subjectivity of the researcher as narrator, effectively brings to light hidden facts which would not have been revealed by a classical approach using a more authoritative voice of the researcher. It is important to note, however, that in order to avoid the trappings of ‘ethno-egocentrism,’ a researcher needs to state where they are coming from in relation to the research. Ethno-egocentrism is a term used by Olivier de Sardan (1992) to explain how a researcher may begin to privilege their own experiences of a culture, while projecting their preconceived ideas through their thoughts and feelings onto the culture they are studying. De Sardan is critical of the use of the ethnographic

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24 This table was adapted from the work of Atkinson and Hammersley (1998) and Tyler (1997).
‘I’ in postmodern ethnographic accounts as there is a tendency to overdramatise the story being told. This thesis is written in a way that accounts for this critique.

To help avoid this ‘over dramatisation’, I follow Stephen Tyler’s comments that postmodern ethnography is a textual reconstruction that emphasises *dialogue*, as opposed to monologue, and ‘the co-operative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation’ which is opposed to a more classical method used by a ‘transcendental observer’ (1997:255). In this position, Tyler acknowledges the fact that postmodern ethnography:

rejects the ideology of 'observer-observed', there being nothing observed and no one who is observer. There is instead the mutual, dialogical production of a discourse, of a story of sorts. We better understand the ethnographic context as one of cooperative story making that, in one of its ideal forms would result in a polyphonic text, none of whose participants would have the final word in the form of a framing story or encompassing synthesis- a discourse on the discourse (Tyler 1997:255).

The use of dialogue to escape the tendency for monologue in ethnographic texts is aided by the ethnographic interview, as interviews allow for a ‘multiplicity of voices’ (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). For example, Ian Maxwell (2003) in his account of the Sydney Hip Hop scene, *Phat Beats and Dope Rhythms*, uses dialogue to create

25 Atkinson and Hammersley add that postmodern ethnography adopts a ‘radically alternative attitude towards its textual nature’ (1998:128) and state that Tyler ‘rejects any claim that the ethnography can be said to represent the social world’ (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998:128). Tyler (1997) instead uses the terminology of ‘evoking’ although, as Atkinson and Hammersley point out, he fails to mention what exactly is being ‘evoked’.
the scene of the research. By using participants’ own words, the researcher allows informants to express themselves, which in turn permits a ‘functional interaction between the text-author-reader’ (Tyler 1997:258). While this emic approach may be nothing new as it has been used in the past by anthropologists, the postmodern difference according to Tyler, is that ‘postmodern ethnography does not practice synthesis within the text…the text has the paradoxical capacity to evoke transcendence without synthesis…it avoids any supposition of a harmony between the conceptual order of the text and the order of things’ (Tyler 1997:258).

Ethnographic interviewing usually takes place within the context of participant observation, and is used by anthropologists to acquire a sense of the other (North 1993). Sarantakos argues that ethnographic interviewing has the function of studying cultures and their manifestations on people. He argues that such interviewing aims to:

[discover] cultural meanings as conceptualized by individuals, search for cultural symbols, establish relationships between cultural symbols and in general explain the meaning of culture for the people (Sarantakos 1998:251).

Ethnographic interviewing allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the culture being studied. In the context of this thesis, however, the methodological elements of ethnographic research were used not to study the other or the exotic but rather to study my own familiar culture. The dilemma then faced is that of being a ‘cultural insider’ and a researcher at the same time.
A postmodern approach has been chosen for this study as opposed to a modern or classical approach to ethnographic research as in late capitalist societies like Australia, social life is becoming increasingly fragmented and plagued with discontinuity (see chapter one). A postmodern approach to investigating such a society is appropriate as rather than trying to resolve or reconcile social life’s discontinuities, paradoxes and inconsistencies, it seeks to explore and deconstruct such relationships. It does not attempt to show a big picture or a totality of social life, but rather to represent a fragmented view.

The aim of this research is to investigate the meanings the festivalgoers attribute to their consumption practices and how this contributes to their understanding of community and personal identity. The problem posed through studying how consumption practices constitute the festivalgoers’ personal and social identity, however, is that identity becomes dominated by ‘unstable individualized cultural trajectories’ that cut across a variety of different groups rather than attaching themselves substantively to any one specific group (Hodkinson 2005:133). Unlike traditional subcultural approaches, in which groups of young people were seen to have clear boundaries between ‘us and them,’ post-subcultural groupings like the festivalgoers (see chapter four) are temporary, heterogeneous and loosely bounded. This creates difficulty in being able to predict the distance of social researchers (Hodkinson 2005). Such fluidity and individualisation has been ‘offset by an ongoing accumulation of evidence suggesting that some young people continue to focus on discernable groupings that, whether subcultural or not, are united by strongly held attachments towards relatively distinct sets of tastes, values and
activities’ (Hodkinson 2005:135). The interview extract below demonstrates this point. (Further explanation is provided in chapters five and six):

Jo: Do you see yourself as being part of a musical community or a scene?

Meg: I guess I do cos I think cos there’s the group of people who go to raves and like trance or dance [music] whatever and like they go to all night raves or whatever they are. But I don’t think they [raves] could ever compare to an outdoor music festival with rock and stuff like that. I know they’ve got the Boiler Room26 [at Big Day Out] and stuff and I know people that spend the whole day in the Boiler room which just seems pointless to me. But I don’t think they would experience music the same way that I would. Like I would never enjoy going to a rave and I don’t know if they would enjoy coming to Big Day Out. So I think I am part of the scene that aspect that I get to go to music festivals and enjoy them. And there are people who wouldn’t want to come or enjoy them so we are kind of segregated in that way. And I belong to the festivalgoers rather than the ravers.

Groups such as the festivalgoers continually distinguish themselves from others who do not share the characteristics or perspectives important to them. As the interview extract above demonstrates, festivalgoers feel that their musical taste and festival attendance is what separates them from other groups of people. Style of dress, musical knowledge and attending certain venues or participating in certain scenes as opposed to other scenes may also be ways that the festivalgoers distinguish

26 The Boiler Room is the name of the dance stage at the Big Day Out.
themselves from others. Hence, I believe that a researcher, however hard it is to be in some contexts, must be able to, on some level, be seen by the group as an insider and not just as a researcher.\textsuperscript{27}

My personal experience with Australian indie music festivals, prior to conducting this research, began in my early teens. My first Big Day Out was in Sydney, in 1997 at the old festival showground. It was advertised as ‘Six and Out’ and was going to be the final Big Day Out. The Big Day Out, however, started up again at the new showground in Homebush two years later. My first Homebake was at the Domain in Sydney in 1998. I have attended each of these festivals annually. My first Livid was in 2000 at the Royal National Association showground in Brisbane. I have also experienced many smaller music festivals that were not included in the current research such as the Vans Warped Tour, Surf Skate Slam, Grudgefest, Glenwroth Valley festival, Newtown festival, M-One, Cockatoo Island and The Great Escape festival, which I believe more than qualifies me as an experienced festivalgoer.\textsuperscript{28}

My status as a festivalgoer, therefore, allows me to become an ‘insider researcher.’ Starting the research from the position of an insider has enabled me to gain access and knowledge of many festivals. I do not wish to claim, however, that my personal experience as a festivalgoer has lead to guaranteed acceptance by the research respondents. Rather it has helped in my participation at festivals and allowed me to

\textsuperscript{27} The term ‘insider researcher’ is used as a means to designate ethnographic situations characterised by significant levels of initial proximity between the researcher and researched (see Bennett 2002a; Hodkinson 2005).

\textsuperscript{28} As part of my fieldwork I travelled to Splendour in the Grass in Bryon Bay in 2003 and 2004, as well as the Falls festival in Lorne, Victoria, in 2003 and 2004. I also travelled to the Big Day Out in Auckland New Zealand in 2004.
develop rapport when interviewing the festivalgoers as they saw me as someone ‘in
the know.’

3.2 Researching Youth culture and Popular Music

Andy Bennett (2002a) critiques the recent qualitative research methodology used in
sociological studies on youth culture and popular music. He argues that young
researchers are not reflexive enough when it comes to their insider status, as quite
often the research they conduct on popular music comes from their prior engagement
as a fan. This is of course problematic as the myth of a more classical ethnographic
research is ideally to be an outsider, someone without bias and observing a particular
behaviour in society (Cohen 1993). As has been proven in numerous accounts of
ethnographic research, however, it is impossible to be completely objective (see
Humphreys 1970; Thornton 1995; Whyte 1981). This is due to the fact that to truly
become part of an ethnographic study, one needs to become an insider, to ‘get in’, to
use Erving Goffman’s (2002) term, with the group being studied. William Whyte,
however, poses an interesting question ‘…we may agree that no outsider can really
know a given culture fully, but we must ask can any insider know his or her culture?’

This insider/ outsider relationship becomes irrelevant in postmodern ethnographic
research, as it ‘rejects the ideology of observer-observed’ (Tyler 1997:255),
preferring to see ethnographic research as a collaboration between the researcher and
the participants. This would entail a complete rejection of objectivity when
researching, as according to the postmodern approach to research, adherence to
objectivity is neither possible nor desirable.
Bennett (2002a) suggests that there are at least two reasons for the current lack of critical methodological engagement amongst researchers of popular music. Firstly, young and inexperienced researchers usually undertake research on popular music. Secondly, as mentioned above, these researchers derive their observations on popular music from their prior position as a fan. Bennett suggests that this researcher/fan position needs to be deconstructed, so that one can obtain a ‘level of critical distance from the fact of being a fan and from popular fanspeak contrast-pairings such as underground and commercial; authentic and packaged’(2002a:462) whilst not developing a smug superiority to the research.

Being young and inexperienced may result, as Bennett has suggested, in a lack of critical methodological scrutiny amongst researchers of popular music. Being a participant observer who is familiar with the surroundings of the event observed, however, may help inexperienced researchers to feel more comfortable and at ease with the research. Researchers gain access to the field more easily and know what role to play once there and therefore are able to obtain better data and so forth (Bennett 2002a).

Furthermore, Goffman (2002) argues that one of the biggest challenges of ethnographic research is that the researcher may need to be of a certain age, gender, or ethnicity. As discussed in the introductory chapter, age is an important factor in researching festivalgoers, as a Big Day Out survey conducted in 2001 found that sixty five percent (65%) of the audience were aged between eighteen and thirty (Big Day Out 2001). This may mean that researchers over the age of thirty, acting like an insider, may have difficulty in accessing the field and recruiting participants. In
regard to gender, the same survey found that fifty one percent (51%) of the audience were male and forty nine percent (49%) were female. This result shows that the gender of the researcher may not be an issue. In regard to ethnicity this factor is not considered to be as crucial to the study of the festivalgoers, as age may be, although the majority of festivalgoers in my experience appear to have an Anglo-Saxon/European background. That is not to say, however, that other nationalities are not represented as Australia has a diverse and multicultural population. Therefore, it could be assumed using Goffman’s argument that young researchers are in a good position to work in the area of popular music because they are the right age and can gain easy access to the field.

To address the second point in Bennett’s critique, it is necessary to deconstruct the researcher’s position as a fan and how this may affect the study. I believe that as an insider researcher, being a fan only helps the postmodern ethnographer in developing their relationships with the groups studied, as it enables the researcher to engage in casual conversation with their research participants. Critical distance may therefore be difficult to measure, especially with postmodern groupings. As long as the subject of the study is situated within the theoretical knowledge, however, this should not be an issue as within a postmodern framework there are no calls for representational significance (see Tyler 1997:258).

The danger then for young researchers is that they may ‘go native’; that is, they may cease to balance the role of participant and observer and instead simply participate like any other member of the group, and hence stop being a researcher. This is not necessarily what happens, however, as Whyte (1981) found in his study of juvenile
gangs. Although Whyte became so involved with the gang that he began to see himself as a gang member and no longer a researcher, he was nevertheless able to relate to the group and gain a greater understanding of their lives that he may not otherwise have achieved. Furthermore, Hodkinson notes that ‘those who begin in an insider position and at least partially ‘go academic’ may find themselves in a strong position to both empathise and to scrutinise’ (Hodkinson 2005:144).

Sarah Thornton (1995), in her study of club cultures, was older than the people she was studying. This age gap may have negatively impacted her study. Thornton attempted to compensate for the age gap by employing a sponsor who was the same age as the group she was studying and was familiar with club culture, to accompany her in her fieldwork and ‘vouch for her’ to potential participants. If she was of a similar age to the clubbers she would not have needed a sponsor and may have encountered fewer problems. Thornton’s attempts to become as much an insider as possible jeopardised her research. In taking ecstasy, a commonly used party drug, with one of her respondents, she failed to take into account the ethical dilemma that she was faced with, or ‘what happened when the drug began to take effect, or how, if at all, it altered her experience of the dance club environment’ (Bennett 2002a).

As I have stated previously, I am a ‘cultural insider’. I did not, therefore, have the same dilemmas as Thornton (1995). Although drug use such as smoking marijuana and taking ecstasy are common at music festivals and were taken by many of the interviewees, I did not ‘go native’ to such an extent for the benefit of this research.
One of the benefits of my status as an ‘insider researcher’ was the credibility given to me by the respondents; they viewed me as ‘one of them.’ Insider researchers also benefit from their shared or familiar experiences to that of the respondents, such as having attended the same festivals and seeing the same bands, thus creating a common language. During the course of the interviews I found that I have had these shared experiences with the festivalgoers. Many of the festivalgoers, as well as myself, were present at the infamous Limp Bizkit set at the Big Day Out in 2001, during which there was a crowd surge that resulted in the death of a young girl. Another shared experience was at the Sydney Big Day Out in 2000 during the Nine Inch Nails set when a young man climbed up a pole in the middle of the main area, in order to get a better view of the band. The crowd cheered as he climbed higher and higher, which alerted the security guards who asked him to come down. After avoiding security during a few songs, the man finally gave up trying to hold onto the pole and made an escape by jumping off the pole onto a tent and sliding down into the crowd and running off.

As an insider researcher I was culturally competent, this made me comfortable when conducting my fieldwork as I was familiar with the surroundings, norms, values and behaviours of the festivalgoers. My insider researcher status also aided my ability to observe and participate, especially the fact that I dressed like the other festivalgoers and knew the music, hence enabling me to sing along, dance to the songs, and communicate with the festivalgoers. This also helped in enabling me to informally gain information as well as recruiting participants, as many festivalgoers I met wanted to be part of the research and vouched for me when introducing me to potential interviewees.
Naturally, my status as an insider researcher had some limitations, as at times, the familiarity between myself and the respondent may have led to me not probing for more information when ‘you know’ was the response. Further, the perceived amount of familiarity between the respondent and myself meant that too much could have been taken as given, for instance, by not asking certain questions or by the interviewee not volunteering basic information. In order to avoid this I started each interview by asking respondents basic questions for the benefit of the tape. These included their name, age, occupation, and festivals they had been to. Furthermore the same interview schedule was used with all participants (see section 3.4).

Another potential problem with interviewing festivalgoers was highlighted by Paul Hodkinson who claims that ‘youth cultures, like other communities, are often characterised by their own collective ideologies’ it raises the possibility that, in the presence of someone they perceive as an insider, respondents may feel disproportionately encouraged to provide answers consistent with dominant thinking’ (Hodkinson 2005:140). In relation to my research this proved to be a valid concern, as respondents may have felt that they could only talk about bands or festivals that were perceived as ‘cool’; for instance, they may like Metallica but not mention it because of the controversy surrounding their appearance at the Big Day Out.  

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29 When speaking to an ‘insider’ or someone in the know, respondents may not want be seen as ‘uncool’ or question the dominant thinking of the group.

30 In 2004 Metallica’s appearance at the Big Day Out in Sydney resulted in a record sell out of the event, which promoted the promoters to put on a second show. Festivalgoers felt that second show was being held purely for profit which the promoters denied. They also felt that the vibe of the event was destroyed due to the overwhelming numbers of Metallica fans at the Sydney show.
less likely to exaggerate, make omissions, guesses or throwaway statements, when
talking to someone who is ‘clued-up’ (Hodkinson 2005). In the case of the
festivalgoers, they would ask me to clarify some of the details from the field under
investigation. For example, if they could not remember what the festival was called
or what year it was in or if that band played that year. The interview extract below
demonstrates this point.

Jo: What was the first festival you went to?
Chris: Umm, would have been when I was about 15
probably, I can’t remember what it was called. It
was…in umm that park in the city…
Jo: Domain?
Chris: It’s close near central?
Jo: Hyde Park?
Chris: No, it’s a smaller one
Jo: Oh was it Grudgefest?
Chris: Yeah.
Jo: Do you remember who played or anything?
Chris: Yeah Bloodhound Gang, Grinspoon, Vercua Salt and
umm I can’t remember a couple of other bands.

3.3 Constructing the Festivals: The Fieldwork

The postmodern ethnographic methodology was chosen for this study for several
reasons. Firstly, as noted above, ethnography involves a focus on the ‘micro-
sociological’ elements of social life (Cohen 1993). As Atkinson points out,
ethnography allows the researcher to ‘explore the nature of a particular social
phenomenon rather than setting out to test a hypothesis’ (1998:110). Secondly, it
allows for a thick description of social life through the use of narrative and dialogue.
Thirdly, ethnography ‘works primarily with unstructured data, that is, data that have
not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a close set of analytic categories’ (1998:110). Finally, it investigates a small number of cases, sometimes just one case in detail (Atkinson and Hammersley 1998). It is appropriate to use this postmodern ethnographic approach in relation to my fieldwork as I am exploring the social setting of the indie music festival rather than testing a hypothesis. I am also using a combination of participants’ voices and narrative to describe and explain this social phenomenon. Lastly, I am only investigating a small sample of festivalgoers.

The research undertaken for this thesis was conducted in two stages. The first stage centred on participant observations at five Australian indie music festival sites from 2003 to 2006. The second stage consisted of interviews and focus groups with festivalgoers.

3.3.1 Stage One: Participant Observations

3.3.1.1 The Research Sample
The research population for the participant observations consisted of festival audiences at five different Australian indie music festivals from January 2003 to July 2006. These audiences comprised of anywhere between 10,000 and 65,000 people. With such an extremely large population, it was impossible to observe the whole audience. Therefore a non-probability research sample was used. The sample was chosen using accidental/ convenience sampling. This type of sample is used when representativeness is not an issue. In employing this type of sample, I am able to study any unit or in this case any person or group that I accidentally come into contact with during the research period. The number of people or groups observed was not known, as the observations were random and generalised amongst the audience (see chapters five and six).
There were, however, some key groups of people and individuals who were observed on more than one occasion and at more than one festival. These reoccurring groups of people and individuals developed into key informants (and some even interviewees or focus group members) who became ideal-types of the festivalgoers.

The sites at which the participant observations took place included the Big Day Out, Splendour in the Grass, Livid, Homebake and the Falls festival (see table three). In total my participant observations consisted of twenty four days.

**Table 3: Festivals during which participant observation took place**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date/s of observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>Sydney, Showground</td>
<td>26th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Splendour in the Grass</td>
<td>Byron Bay, Belongil fields</td>
<td>25th, 26th, 27th July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Livid</td>
<td>Sydney, Moore Park</td>
<td>11th October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Homebake</td>
<td>Sydney, Domain</td>
<td>8th December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>Lorne</td>
<td>30th, 31st December and 1st January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>Auckland, New Zealand</td>
<td>16th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>Sydney, Showground</td>
<td>26th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Splendour in the Grass</td>
<td>Byron Bay, Belongil fields</td>
<td>23rd, 24th, 25th July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Homebake</td>
<td>Sydney, Domain</td>
<td>5th December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>Lorne</td>
<td>30th, 31st December and 1st January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>Sydney, Showground</td>
<td>26th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Homebake</td>
<td>Sydney, Domain</td>
<td>3rd December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>Sydney, Showground</td>
<td>26th January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Splendour in the Grass</td>
<td>Byron Bay, Belongil fields</td>
<td>21st, 22nd, 23rd July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.3.1.2 In the Field

I feel like my eyes have actually been the eyes for a lot of people cos not everyone takes their camera to Big Day Out. For obvious reasons, cos basically everyone gets mashed up and probably lose the camera. But yeah I feel like I’ve put it [the BDO] in the context and done it in a way that I think would kind of resonate on a personal level to other people, to the crowd and I tried not to make to the book on beyond, you know, like beyond their access. And in saying that showing backstage as what it is, it’s very nice and relaxed; you know all those different vantage points (Sophie Howarth talking about her book of photography from the Big Day Out, *Peace, Love and Brown Rice*).

The data from the observations were recorded in two ways: traditional note form (field diary) and in the visual photographic form, at various intervals during and after the festivals. The photographs were stills as no sound or movie recorder type cameras are allowed at the festivals.

I argue that the camera can be used as research tool especially within participant observations. As Collier and Collier contend:

> The camera is another instrumental extension of our senses, one that can record on a low scale of abstraction. The camera, by its optical character, has whole vision. No matter how select a unit we might wish to photograph, the camera faithfully records this specialized subject and also all other associated elements within focus and scope of its lens. This capacity makes the camera an invaluable tool for the observer (1992:7).
The camera has a memory. It captures the moment and allows for future observations to be made that may not be fully understood at the time of taking the photograph only to be discovered at a latter time in the research process. It captures an aspect of reality. According to Collier and Collier:

The effect of photography as an aspect of reality is felt throughout (late) modern life. In a sense we think and communicate photographically. The nonverbal language of photorealism is a language that is most understood interculturally and cross-culturally. This fluency of recognition is the basic reason the camera can be of such importance in anthropological communication and analysis (1992:9).

Photograph one, below, is an example of a random crowd shot taken during the course of the fieldwork. This photograph captures the intensity and emotion of being in the mosh pit at the Big Day Out (see chapter six). It visually illustrates the intense relationships on display in the pit between the performing band and the festivalgoers, between the festivalgoers and the security personnel, and finally amongst the festivalgoers themselves. The complex relationships on display in the photograph demonstrate power struggles and intimate understanding between these groups. As one security guard in the foreground attempts to control the incoming crush of the crowd into the D-barricade, another security guard below the stage sprays the festivalgoers with water to cool them down. Capturing a moment like this on film enabled me to examine these intense relationships after the event, which I may have taken for granted in the middle of my fieldwork.
The limitations then of using photographs for data collection is that of any human observation- bias and personal projection; that is, not seeing the subject being studied as it ‘really’ is. Furthermore photographs are seen as having too much information that can overload the project. Unlike the observer’s eyes, photographs contain detailed information that may not be able to be refined by the researcher. The other major limitation is that in sociology the image is not trusted. Photos can be subject to impressionism and manipulation of vision (Collier and Collier 1992).

The use of the visual in sociology is marginalised. Photos are not often published in journals or books due to the costs of copyright and paper quality in reproducing them. When photographs are published in a sociological work, furthermore, they are used only as illustrations (Emmison and Phillip 2000), although this is being overcome by advances in digital technology.
Today, digital cameras allow the average domestic user greater control over the images they take. Images can be viewed on a small display screen on the back of the camera to check the shot and can be deleted and retaken. Digital technology also allows the images to be downloaded straight into a personal computer, edited and printed out at home without the need for a professional.

Unlike written field notes, photographs allowed me to record data when it was inappropriate or inconvenient to write notes. For example, whilst conducting my research I was often told stories about the group’s past experiences both at festivals as well as their general life story. It would have made the storyteller feel uncomfortable if I started writing notes while they spoke. Therefore I took photos and later during the day, I wrote down the story by memory using the pictures to remind me of the respondent and the place where the story was told. Also as music festivals are very loud places, it is very difficult to talk. The happenings at the festivals are more visual. So photographs are ideal, as they contain rich non-verbal data that was helpful in the decoding of the events of the day, and gaining a better understanding of the participants.

For the purposes of the thesis, I took a total of 764 photographs. The photographs were used in much the same way as written notes. I analysed and decoded each photograph individually, looking for patterns such as: people sitting, standing, moshing, the male to female ratio, stage set-ups, festival layouts, and so on (see table four). I have also used the photos as illustrations in my thesis.
Table 4: Number of photographs taken per festival\textsuperscript{31}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Year/s</th>
<th>Photographs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004*</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendour in the Grass</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>2003/04</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>\textbf{Total}</td>
<td>\textbf{764}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Auckland

Using photography in conjunction with participant observations was an unobtrusive method that provided me with the opportunity to experience the music festivals through the eyes of the festivalgoers. I was able to interact with other festivalgoers and develop relationships with them, which is a key aim of this thesis.

My identity as a researcher was not meant to be known to the festivalgoers. The large majority of festivalgoers just saw me as one of them. I felt that a covert approach, would have allowed the participants act more naturally. The groups and individuals who became more central to my research, however, learned of my identity early on in the fieldwork. The main reason for this was that my partner or friends, who would

\textsuperscript{31} Please note no photographs were taken at the Livid 2003 festival as I did not have a camera with me and this was the festival’s final year.
often accompany me on my fieldwork, liked to boast about how I studied music festivals as part of University studies. To my surprise, this honesty on the behalf of my associates proved invaluable as people would often open up more and would ask questions about what I was doing and if they could help in anyway. This also gained me access into the festivalgoers’ friendship groups, and I would often receive emails about up and coming festivals from them. Ultimately this became the reason for my abandonment of the covert approach.

3.3.2 Stage Two: The Interviews and Focus Groups

In addition to the participant observations at indie music festivals, I carried out interviews and focus groups with the festivalgoers. I conducted interviews as it is common practice in ethnographic studies (see Bennett 1999; Dorst 1989; Muggleton 2000; Shank 1994; Thornton 1995) to back up any participant observations as dialogue allows the researcher to investigate how the participants identify themselves within the culture. This was important because it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding from the participants’ points of view of the motives and meanings behind certain social symbols and social interactions.

3.3.2.1 The Research Sample and Recruitment Process

Interview participants were recruited via purposive/judgemental sampling. The interview participants were chosen from key informants who are, according to Sarantakos, ‘people who have knowledge of the issues and situations in which the researcher is interested’ (2005; 1998:251). These chosen nineteen festivalgoers were friends and/or associates (met at festivals) of the researcher\(^{32}\) that had attended more

\(^{32}\) This may account for the homogeneity of the sample.
than five alternative music festivals.\textsuperscript{33} I chose five as the minimum amount of festivals people needed to have attended as I believed this would have allowed them to gain enough experiences of festival-going to be able to talk about festivals at length. During the interviews I found that interviewees with more festival going experience gave more in depth responses than interviewees who had only been to the minimum five festivals. The sample then had a snowballing effect as interviewees nominated their friends as potential interviewees.

Recruitment of the festivalgoers was a straightforward matter of phoning or emailing each participant and asking them if they would like to participate in an interview about music festivals. During the phone calls/emails I established rapport with the potential interviewees and eventually arranged a time and place to conduct the interview. All interviews were conducted in a public place such as a pub or a park at a time arranged with the interviewee, with the exception of five interviewed by telephone. The interviews were conversational, loosely structured and very informal, lasting no longer than two hours. All interviews were taped and later transcribed with the informed consent of the interviewee.

In all, I conducted nineteen individual interviews with festivalgoers. Although the number of interviews may seem limited, after fifteen interviews with festivalgoers, I was starting to get the same types of responses and no new information was coming to light. The extra four interviews were conducted as a measure of security to assure that no new information could be found. In addition to the interviews, I conducted

\textsuperscript{33} Except one festivalgoer who had been to one Big Day Out, however, the festivalgoer had attended other indie festivals that were not focused on in this study.
two focus groups, one with five festivalgoers and the other with eight festivalgoers. In total I interviewed thirty one festivalgoers.

It was also my intention to interview the festival organisers although due to circumstances beyond my control I was only able to conduct one interview with Falls festival organiser, Naomi Daly (which was a year in the making). Repeated attempts to contact and arrange interviews with various promoters were made throughout the three years of my fieldwork. Unfortunately, these calls were often met with a flat no as interviews were seen as ‘too time consuming’ by these organisers. To substitute this lack of response/ interest from the festival organisers I used secondary sources such as newspaper articles, festival newsletters and Channel V interviews with the organisers to gain some of their perspectives in relation to the research.

3.3.2.2 The Festivalgoers

I would now like to introduce the festivalgoers.34

Brendan. Male, 25, works in telesales. He moved to Sydney eight years ago from Byron Bay. His favourite music festival is the Big Day Out. He attended the first Homebake in Bryon Bay but since then has attended numerous Big Days Out, Homebakes and Livid. Interview conducted on 13/02/2005 in Cronulla, NSW.

Chris. Male, 21, University student and manager of a sports clothing store in Sydney. His favourite music festival is the Big Day Out in Sydney. He has also

34 The interviewees were given the choice as to whether or not they wanted to remain anonymous. For those interviewees who wanted to remain anonymous pseudonyms have been used.
attended Homebake and Grudgefest. Interview conducted on 29/11/2004 in Burwood, NSW.

**Grace.** Female, 23, postgraduate University student from Sydney. Her favourite music festival was the Vans Warped Tour when her favourite band 311 played. I travelled and camped with Grace at Splendour in the Grass 2004 and hung out with her at Homebake 2004. She has also attended Big Day Out, The Cockatoo Island festival and The Festival of the Sun (Port Macquarie). Interview conducted on 22/02/2005 in Bankstown, NSW.

**Heather.** Female, 23, works in retail in Sydney. Her favourite music festival is Splendour in the Grass. She has been to Homebake, Big Day Out, and the Falls festival. I met her at the Splendour in the Grass festival (2004). I also hung out with Heather and her sister at the Falls festival in 2004/05. Interview conducted on 04/02/2005 in Bankstown, NSW.

**Jeanne.** Female, 21, university student/ book shop assistant in Sydney. Jeanne is Heather’s sister. I met her at Splendour in the Grass 2004 which is her favourite music festival. I hung out with Jeanne at the Falls festival 2004/05 and Cockatoo Island festival 2005. She has also attended the Come Together Festival held at Sydney’s Luna Park and Big Day Out. Interview conducted on 21/08/2005 in Newtown, NSW.
Kara. Female, 19, student lives in Melbourne. Her favourite music festival is Splendour in the Grass, but she has attended the Big Day Out, Livid and M-One festivals. Telephone interview conducted on 08/10/2004.

Kat. Female, 18, student lives in Melbourne. Her favourite music festival is the Big Day Out. She has also been to the Vans Warped tour and the Falls festival. Telephone interview conducted on 11/10/2004.

Kevin. Male, 23, works as a production manager for an audio-visual company in Sydney. I travelled and camped with Kevin at the Falls festival 2003/04, Falls 2004/05, Splendour in the Grass 2003 and Cockatoo Island 2005. I travelled to Livid in Brisbane with Kevin in 2000 and we also attended three Big Days Out in Sydney together. Kevin has also been to Surf Skate Slam in Kiama. Interview conducted on 28/11/2005 in Padstow, NSW.

Liz. Female, 25, postgraduate University student. She often reviews festivals for fanzines, street press and websites. Her favourite festival is Homebake. She has also attended Big Day Out and Livid. I hung out with Liz at the Cockatoo Island festival in 2005. Interview conducted on 29/12/2004 in Sydney, NSW.

Meg. Female, 20, nurse. Her favourite festival is Homebake but she has also been to the Sydney Big Day Out. She plays the piano. I have bumped into Meg on numerous occasions at the Big Day Out and Homebake. Meg was initially interviewed as part of focus group one on 27/12/2005. A second individual interview with her took place on 05/03/2005 in Cabramatta, NSW.
Nathan. Male, 23, civil engineer in Sydney. I met Nathan at the Falls festival 2003/04 where he camped next to Kevin and I. I also hung out with Nathan at the Falls festival 2004/05. His favourite festival is Splendour in the Grass. He has also attended Big Day Out. Interview conducted on 12/02/2005 in Sydney, NSW.

Naomi Daly. She is the event manager for the Falls festival. She has been in this role since 2000. Naomi is the sister of festival founder Simon Daly. Telephone interview conducted on 12/12/2005.

Phil. Male, 25, engineer. He recently moved from Melbourne to Sydney. He has attended Pushover, Meredith Music festival, St Kilda festival and the Big Day Out. He plays guitar. Interview conducted on 24/01/2005 in Parramatta, NSW.

Pyesie. Male, 24, carpenter by trade but is currently working in a bar. His favourite festival is the Big Day Out but he has also been to the Falls festival, Livid, Splendour in the Grass and Homebake. I meet Pyesie at Splendour in the Grass in 2004, shortly before he moved from Sydney to the Gold Coast. Telephone interview conducted on 23/02/2005.

Rick. Male, 38, research assistant, living in Sydney. He has attended the Big Day Out, Homebake, Splendour in the Grass and overseas festivals including Reading (UK) and Roskilde (Denmark). His favourite festival is Glastonbury (UK). Interview conducted on 24/06/2005 in Bankstown.
Roxanne. Female, 21 works in finance. She has been to the Big Day Out, Homebake, the Vans Warped tour and Livid in Brisbane. Her favourite festival is Splendour in the Grass. Interview conducted on 22/01/2005 in Newtown.


Tim. Male, 23 works in IT for a charitable youth organisation. He has volunteered at Homebake at an information stall and in the sign-in tent to raise money and awareness for his charity. He has been to Big Day Out, Homebake, the Falls festival, Splendour in the Grass and the Vans Warped tour. Interview conducted on 19/01/2005 in Balmain, NSW.

Wayne. Male, 50. An aged care worker and long time festivalgoer. His favourite festival is Homebake but he has also been to Sunbury, Big Day Out, Livid, Splendour in the Grass and the Tamworth Music festival. I have bumped into Wayne on many occasions at festival over the years. The first time I met him was at Livid in Brisbane in 2000. I hung out with him at Splendour in the Grass 2004 and Homebake
3.3.2.3 The Focus Groups

Focus groups or group interviews were first used in market and opinion research, but they have also been used in sociology (see Fontana and Frey 2003; Punch 1998; Sarantakos 1998). The term focus group applies to a situation in which the researcher/interviewer asks specific questions about a topic after having either already completed considerable research or as a pre-research method or as the main method of study. For this study, focus groups were used as a post research method, in order to explain trends, variances, reasons and causes through the views of the respondents. Focus groups are useful when using a triangulation approach to data collection as they allow the researcher to put the individual interviews into context.

Even though focus groups are conducted in a group setting the aim of the method is not to analyse the group but is used ‘as a way of gaining information in a short period of time about the range and variation of opinions and establishing a mechanism of opinion formation’ (Sarantakos 1998:181). Sarantakos argues that the basic theory underlying the focus group method is that ‘a group environment will through mutual stimulation, encourage discussion related to topical issues and increase motivation to address social and critical issues’. It will also enable the researcher to ‘lead discussion towards focal points and topical issues’ and allow important viewpoints to be presented in a ‘real, emotional and summated form as spontaneous expressions’ (1998:181).
The first focus group came about through a misunderstanding between an interviewee and myself. I had asked her if she could ask her friends if they would also like to participate in the study. Instead of getting my intended snowball sample, however, the interviewee had arranged for a few of her friends to meet at the same place and time that her interview was to be conducted. Upon learning this information I decided to take the opportunity to conduct a focus group based on the same themes as the interview questions. Later in the research I decided to conduct a second focus group with a different group of respondents in order to verify some of the trends, reasons and causes I was finding in my research.

The focus group was based upon a discussion of the interview question themes which are discussed in the next section. The first focus group consisted of five festivalgoers four females and one male. Their ages ranged from twenty to forty nine years. The participants sat in a circle and informally discussed each topic. The session lasted for two and a half hours. The group was comprised of friends who regularly attended festivals together, including one participant who was the father of one of the girls. This may have affected her responses, but generally the group was comfortable and familiar with each other, sharing stories of their experiences. I will now introduce the members of focus group one:35

**Kristen.** Female, 20, works in a child care centre. She plays the piano. She has been to the Big Day Out, Homebake, Livid and Splendour in the Grass.

**Meg.** (See festivalgoer bio above).

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35 Focus group one was conducted on 27/02/2005 in Edensor Park, NSW.
Karina. Female, 20, is currently unemployed but occasionally works in the family business and enjoys volunteer work. She has been to Homebake, Big Day Out and Splendour in the Grass.

Nicole. Female, 24, teaches English to international students and migrants. She also does volunteer work. Her first festival experience was going to the Big Day Out by herself. She has also been to Homebake and Splendour in the Grass.

Mark. Male, 49, is a computer systems analyst. Mark is Karina’s father. He has been to Homebake, Big Day Out, Hemispheres, a Double J concert (back in the 70s) and Splendour in the Grass.

The second focus group consisted of eight festivalgoers: four females and four males who ranged in age from twenty three to thirty years. The group consisted of two married couples, an engaged couple, and a boyfriend/girlfriend couple. They had all been friends for a while and attended one music festival together as a group. Interestingly while telling stories about their past experiences they discovered they had been to the same festival and seen the same things, before they met each other. I will now introduce the members of focus group two:36

Kelly. Female, 26, a postgraduate university student. She has been to the Big Day Out, Homebake, Grudgefest, Falls, Livid, and the East Coast Blues and Roots festival.

36 Focus group two was conducted on 07/05/ 2005 in Bullaburra, NSW.
Adam. Male, 26, is a chef/operations manager for a catering company. He has been to the Blues and Roots festival, Hootenanny, Livid and the Big Day Out.

Duane. Male, 28, is a motor mechanic and Adam’s brother. He has been to the Blues and Roots festival, Alternative Nation, Big Day Out, and Livid.

Ian. Male, 28, a high school teacher. He has been to the Falls festival, the Blues and Roots festival and Alternative Nation.

Mathew. Male, 28, a Joiner/Director supervisor. His first festival was the Big Day Out in 1994. He has been to the Blues and Roots festival and Alternative Nation.

Charmaine. Female, 28, a clerical officer for a finance company. She has been to Big Day Out, Livid, Blues and Roots and Homebake.

Kate. Female, 22, works in customer service. She has attended Homebake and the Blues and Roots festival.

Amanda. Female, 30, housewife. She has been to the Blues and Roots festival, Big Day Out, Homebake and Livid.

The benefit of conducting the focus groups was that participants were able to bounce ideas off each other and relate to each other’s shared experiences of attending various music festivals. The familiarity between the groups meant that they could express their opinions freely. As mentioned earlier, however, in relation to my status as an
insider researcher interviewing youth cultures, there may have been some pressure felt by participants to respond in line with the dominant thinking of the group. As participants were discussing shared experiences, however, in most cases, the ideas were looked at from various viewpoints and participants would bring up new points about what was really going on. I believe this helped to limit this occurrence. All participants in the focus groups contributed fairly evenly, although some were louder than others, which meant I had to make sure that quieter participants were also getting their views across by asking them direct questions.

The focus groups confirmed the type of data that I was collecting from the one-on-one interviews and they did not seem to bring to light any new data. I believe this is a justification for the sample size as there did not seem to be much new data after fifteen interviews.

### 3.3.2.4 The Questions

A set of questions was developed as a starting point for the interviews. They dealt with the key themes of the research. The interview questions were not asked in a direct way, rather, they were used as a guide to achieve the goals of the interview. The interviews were informal and conversational. The same questions were adapted to suit the focus groups. I found that less detailed information was given in the focus groups than in the individual interviews. See appendices one and two for interview schedules. The interview themes included:

- Taste in music
- Role of music in participants’ lives
- Festival clothing versus everyday clothing
- Degree of commercialisation of the festivals
- Sense of or feeling part of a community or scene
- Experimentation in drug and alcohol use
- Dancing
- Festival stories and experiences

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Computer software QSR NVivo 2 was used to aid in recording and storing the transcribed data. The observation notes were also recorded and stored in the NVivo program. The benefit of the NVivo program was that it enabled me to organise the data in a clear way by adding memos, keywords, and creating mind maps.\(^{37}\) This program also made it easier to search for links between interview responses and/or observations.

The computer alone cannot analyse the data, therefore I used the method of cultural analysis outlined by Sarantakos:

> In this method, which, as the title indicates, was originally employed in cultural studies, the researcher reviews the data, looking for a number of points, such as: the intention people had when they developed certain cultural elements, the way these elements were received by others; the internal structures, patterns or symbols in these elements of culture;

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\(^{37}\) A mind map is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks or other items linked to and arranged radially around a central key word or idea. It is used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas, and as an aid in study, organization, problem solving, and decision making (Gavrilova and Puuronen 2007:2).
and finally the connection that exists between the cultural element in question and the social world (1998:318).

Using this method of cultural analysis the data was categorised and coded. The data was then reduced according to the most valuable and interesting information.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology used to investigate the aims of this thesis. A triangulation approach was taken in order to obtain a variety of information, to limit the weakness of only using one method and to achieve a higher level of validity and reliability. A postmodern approach was used in the study as opposed to a more modern or classical approach to ethnographic research as in late capitalist societies, like Australia, social life is becoming increasingly fragmented and plagued with discontinuity. A postmodern approach to investigating such a society is appropriate as it does not attempt to resolve or reconcile social life’s discontinuities, paradoxes and inconsistencies; it rather seeks to explore and deconstruct such relationships. It does not attempt to show a big picture or a totality of social life, but rather to represent a fragmented view. In the next chapter I explore the theoretical framework behind this research.
CHAPTER 4
THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: THE DEATH OF YOUTH SUBCULTURE AND A TRIBAL NEW BEGINNING?

Heather: Cos when I met you…. I just walked up just cos like there was two of you on your own and I was like bugger it, I’m not spending the entire weekend talking to no one but my sister and we just walked up to you and said G’day. Like meeting Pyesie, truly bizarre, cos I, we just stood there and talked for like an hour and half and then we ended up becoming really good mates out of it. I’ve ran into quite a few people that I used to go to school with at festivals and sort of caught up with them again and even if we like, you know, we usually exchange numbers and go oh we will stay in touch and we never do. But it’s still good to talk to each other like that.

Jo: How did we meet?
Jeanne: Heather’s like I really want to meet some new people and make some new friends and so we were standing around and Heather was like oh look those two girls are by themselves let’s go and talk to them. So, that was sort of how that came about.

Jo: Do you just find that it is more open at festivals, you can just talk to someone, and you don’t have to worry about their reaction?
Jeanne: Yeah, because you’ve already got something to sort of talk about. Cos you can say, have you gone and seen them, are you looking forward to seeing this band? Cos you know that you’ve already got the same
sort of basic interests. Whereas if you just go and talk to somebody on the street they could be totally into Britney Spears or something then you’re screwed cos you’re just like kay? You know, two completely different people.

The above anecdotes about making new friends at festivals demonstrate that there is a sense of sociality and a spirit of mateship that is found at Australian indie music festivals. Nonetheless, how are we able to account for such behaviour? I am arguing in this thesis that these actions (and those that are explained in chapters five, six and seven) can be explained using Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribalism.

4.1 Neo-tribalism

Michel Maffesoli (1996) argues that in late modern consumer societies we are experiencing a ‘time of tribes.’ By this Maffesoli is referring to the beginning of an era in which the focus of social life is on ‘the style of seeing, feeling, loving or being enthusiastic together’ in the present (1993:15). For Maffesoli, tribes are informal social networks or collective associations that are bounded not by traditional modern structural organisations, but which refer more to a ‘certain ambience’ or ‘a state of mind’ that is expressed through lifestyles that favour ‘appearance and form’ (1996:98).

Neo-tribal groups are distinguishable by their members’ shared lifestyles and tastes. ‘Tribes do not therefore exhibit stable practices of inclusion and exclusion. They are integrative and distinctive at the same time’ (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003:12). Such groups are tribes not in the clinical anthropological sense, they are similar to traditional tribal groups ‘in the sense that they participate in the re-enchantment of
Maffesoli (1996) understands neo-tribes to be central to our own experience of everyday living. He suggests that these neo-tribes describe a new form of sociality. For Maffesoli, sociality is the central aspect of social life in consumer society. Sociality is ‘less about rules and more about sentiments, feelings, emotions and imaginations; less about what has been or what will be than what is- the stress is on the ‘right now’ and the ‘right here’” (Malbon 1999:26). In contemporary society, the formation of group identities is no longer along traditional structural determinants such as class, gender, or religion. It is rather through consumption patterns and practices that individuals are able to create new forms of contemporary sociality that transcend classical modernist boundaries (see Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003).

Adapting Weber’s concept of disenchantment, Maffesoli is concerned with the ‘re-enchantment of the world…by means of image, myth and the allegory…that characterise contemporary style’ (Maffesoli 1996:xiv). Maffesoli sees identification\(^\text{38}\) rather than identity as being important, as he highlights social environments in which a person’s sense of identity can be temporarily submerged (Malbon 1999). He looks at social configurations that go beyond individualism such as ‘the undefined mass, the faceless crowd and the tribalism within them’ (Maffesoli 1996:9).

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\(^{38}\) Identification, unlike identity, refers to the shared feelings and experiences of neo-tribal members. Members can identify with each other, which creates a sense of ‘emotional community’ or ‘neo-tribe’ which goes beyond individual identity to be shared by the mass (see Maffesoli 1988).
Maffesoli’s (1996) concept of neo-tribalism describes a world that contains as its conspicuous feature the obsessive search for community. Neo-tribes are based upon ‘sentiment, feeling and shared experiences.’ They are an affectual form of sociation through which both individual and collective ideas are expressed (Hetherington 1998:53). Neo-tribes have little or no control over banishment or co-option, as the tribes are often unaware of their following, which is cryptic and fickle. Membership of neo-tribes does not require admission as one can choose to be part of one or not. Therefore, their existence is reliant on individuals’ decisions to exhibit the ‘symbolic tags’ of tribal allegiance (Edwards 2000). The temporal nature of the tribes means that they may vanish once individuals change their mind or find a new identity. The perseverance of neo-tribes is a result of their seductive capacity, which connects with their consumption practices, especially in relation to music, taste and style, as they are imagined vehicles of individual self-definition.

The symbolic tags of tribal allegiance are ‘linking images’ that enable members of neo-tribes to create both a sense of individualism as well as a connection to a collective identity. Sites, emblems, commonplace signs, trivial objects or neutral words serve to consolidate and affirm their union and support their communion (Maffesoli 1993:88). In this way, the image takes on life and reinforces the social body, as the image serves as both a way to recognise the tribe and a way to ‘rally’ tribal members. Nevertheless, what is most important about linking images is their ability to reinforce social ties and values (see chapter four for an example).
Bennett (1999) argues that the process of tribalism identified by Maffesoli (1996) is tied inherently to the origins of mass consumerism during the immediate post second world war period and has grown ever since as today there is greater consumer choice than ever before. Bennett links neo-tribalism and consumption through Thornton’s (1995) concept of ‘subcultural capital.’ Subcultural capital refers to the framework within which particular musical audiences’ tastes fit. It is a way for members of a ‘tribe’ to distinguish themselves from others. ‘Dance music’ clubbers may for example, distinguish themselves from ‘mainstream’ clubbers.

Bernard Cova and Veronique Cova (1997; 2001b) argue members of neo-tribes as consumers must seek out products and services, not for their use value but for their ‘linking value.’ The linking value of the product or service is the key to understanding the consumption pattern of neo-tribal members. The greater the contribution of a product or service to the development and strengthening of the tribal bond, the greater its linking value is deemed by members to be.

For Cova and Cova (2001b), tribes communicate ‘signs’ that members identify with. These ‘signs’ or ‘traces of identity’ do not express the totality of belonging when it comes to understanding other peoples’ identities. There are two types of tribal traces: temporal traces and spatial traces.

Firstly, in temporal terms, a tribe comes into being; it grows, then reaches its climax, weakens, and then dissolves:

The tribe exists when it springs to life with the crowd. The coteries, rock groups and posses with their own identities dissolve in the crowd for a brief moment of its existence. All
differences vanish for an instant. Even the most exclusive
coteries join the flow and allow themselves to be swept away

Maffesoli (1996) suggests events, even commercialised ones such as music festivals,
are important as they are sites where tribal groups come together to reinforce their
solidarity in ritualistic fashion, which ultimately ensures the continued existence of
the festival and the groups that attend. In this sense, events strengthen tribal
cohesiveness.

Secondly, tribes may also have physical spaces in which some members gather and
perform its rituals. These public spaces can be halls, festivals, places of worship,
clubs, or even pubs. These spaces are ‘anchoring places’ that give the tribe a
momentary home, although tribal membership exists all the time because of the
informality of the tribe. Cova and Cova (2001b) even suggest that a tribe could be
just a feeling, a fancy, or a fantasy, as tribes exist in visible and invisible social
spheres.

Cova and Cova (2001b) developed the 
tribal clover to explain neo-tribalism (see
Figure 1). The horizontal axis of the tribal clover shows spaces where the physical
evidence may be located. The vertical or invisible axis shows the signs that come
from day to day activities, shared experiences and emotions, detected through
vogues, trends, fantasy and imagination that are present in any western society at any
given time.
In this chapter, I set up the theoretical framework behind this study, starting with the possibility of using neo-tribal theory as a new direction for research on youth culture and music. Recent sociological debate has questioned the usefulness of the classical notion of youth subculture. The debate centres on rethinking the term subculture through the use of a range of sociological concepts, including Will Straw’s *scenes* (1991; 1997; 1998) and Michel Maffesoli’s *neo-tribes* (1989; 1996; 1997). Graham St John (2003) has even gone so far as to suggest that in British research on dance cultures, the post-subcultural notion of neo-tribe is superseding subculture as a heuristic device. We might thus wonder what this means for the future of such research. Furthermore, at the end of this chapter I introduce a discussion on the concepts of music scenes and the carnivalesque as theoretical tools for the analysis of the festivalgoers’ experiences at Australian indie music festivals.

### 4.2 Subcultural Theory

It is not my intention in this section to reiterate the historical development of youth subculture theory, as Shane Blackman (2005) and David Muggleton (2005) have
provided excellent up-to-date genealogies. For my purposes, I use Blackman’s definition of subculture as based upon a concern with agency and action within social groups that distinguish themselves from but relate to the dominant culture (2005:2). I will, however, briefly outline two of the main schools of thought- the Chicago School and the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) - that lead to the debate over the continued relevance of the term subculture.

The Chicago school had a heavily criminological focus on ‘delinquent and deviant individuals and groups’ (Ren 2005:2). They argued that ‘deviance when studied in its socio-cultural context could be shown, to be a normal response, determined by cultural norms and not a symptom of psychological deficiency’ (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004:3). In other words, deviant subcultures could normalise forms of deviant behaviour.

The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) used the definition of subculture developed by the Chicago School, but ‘reworked this model of subcultural deviance as a means of interpreting the stylistic response of working class youth in post war Britain’ (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004:5). The CCCS had shifted their focus from locality and community to a macro view of class, using youth subcultures as an indicator of the ongoing class struggle in British society. In particular, the CCCS saw style as a form of response or resistance to struggle.

From the Teddy Boys to Mods, Rockers, Skinheads and Punks, traditional subcultural approaches in America and the United Kingdom were founded on the premise that there are clearly identifiable entities that could be known as youth
subcultures. Often these subcultures are associated with deviant gang activities and class based resistance (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). For many contemporary theorists the term subculture has become little more than a cliché used to describe the connections between youth, style and music (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003).

4.2.1 Critiques of British Subcultural Theory

While the CCCS has been influential in developing youth subcultural theory, it has received a great deal of criticism from within the academic world. Firstly, the CCCS’s approaches fail to provide accounts of girls’ participation in subcultures (see McRobbie 1994a). Secondly, traditional subcultural theories fail to equate post-war patterns of youth consumption with notions of working class resistance (see Muggleton 2000). They have neglected to account for the role of consumerism in offering young people the chance to break away from their class-based identities, giving them the opportunity to experiment with new self-constructed identities. As Bennett argues:

Such a contention rests on the rather tentative notion that, having gained an element of freedom to pick and choose between an increasing range of consumer items, working class youth were somehow driven back to the fact of class as a way of articulating their attachment to such commodities. It could rather be argued that post-war consumerism offered young people the opportunity to break away from their traditional class-based identities, the increased spending power of the young facilitating and encouraging experimentation with new, self-constructed forms of identity (1999:600).
Thirdly, subcultural theories fail to consider the idea that young people play subcultural roles for fun and does not account for those individuals who do not consider themselves to be part of a group (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004). Fourthly, subcultural theory fails to consider local deviations in young people’s responses to music and style, as the subcultural theory developed by the CCCS is an essentially British concept, ‘formulated with the view of studying a specific section of British youth white, working class, males’ (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004:9). Fifthly, the traditional subcultural approach fails to recognise the role of the media in the creation of subcultures and subcultural identity. The CCCS ignored the fact that subcultures are labelled by the mass media as ‘subcultures’, thereby constructing an image of ‘self generating’ working class youth subcultures. As Sarah Thornton states:

Subcultures do not germinate from a seed and grow by force of their own energy into mysterious ‘movements’ only to be belatedly digested by the media (1995:117)

The CCCS appears to have failed to recognise the role of the media in not only identifying subcultural practices but also in ignoring the fundamental role the media plays in authenticating them. Finally, the traditional subcultural approach adopted mainly by the CCCS fails to appreciate youth as an ideological category rather than a particular stage in the life cycle (see Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Chatterton and Hollands 2002).\(^{39}\)

\(^{39}\) It is important to note that the CCCS subcultural theory was developed to support a general ‘cultural’ Marxist (Gramscian) perspective.
For Bennett, youth subcultures are problematic because they draw rigid lines of division between groups. Henry Jenkins further noted that ‘subcultures tend to exclude the idea that there is commonality between subcultures and implies a determinate and deviant relationship to the dominant culture’ (cited in Bennett 1999:603). Indeed, as Dan Laughey points out, subcultures are conceived as forming ‘closed semiotic spaces that define youth groups homogenously against other groups and ignore the everyday interactions between young people (and others) within their different groups’ (Laughey 2006:15). Furthermore, subcultures do not acknowledge or allow for movement between subcultural settings and family life. Bennett (1999) argues that ‘contemporary use of the term subculture has become little more than a catchall term for any aspect of social life in which youth, style and music intersect.’

For Thornton, the CCCS’s definition of subcultures was empirically ‘unworkable’ as the development of traditional subculture theories did not occur through observation and interaction with different groups of young people. Controversially, Steve Redhead has even suggested that ‘authentic subcultures were produced by subcultural theories, not the other way around. In fact, popular music and deviant youth styles never fitted together as harmoniously as some subcultural theory proclaimed’ (Redhead 1990:25). Theses critiques have led to a shift in sociological thinking, in the United Kingdom at least, to adopt a post-subcultural approach.

4.3 Post-Subcultural Theory

Ian Chambers was the first to use the term ‘post-subculture’ to describe the growing trend in ‘collage dressing’ and musical eclecticism in the 1980s (see Martin 2002) and to address the apparent failures of traditional youth subcultural theory. The term
is better known, however, through the work of David Muggleton (1998), Ted Polhemus (1995) and Steve Redhead (1997).

Muggleton and Weinzierl argue that:

The era seems long gone of working class subcultures ‘heroically’ resisting subordination through their ‘semiotic guerrilla warfare’. Both youth cultural activities and the research efforts in this field seems nowadays to reflect a more pragmatic approach compared to the romanticism of the CCCS, whose authors saw radical potential in largely symbolic challenges (2003:4).

In addition, they point out that while contemporary subcultural movements can still convey a political orientation, the possibility for style itself to resist appears largely lost (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003:4-5).

David Muggleton (1995; 2000) is highly sceptical of subculture theory. He studied the postmodern meaning of style, through a revision of Hebdige’s (1979) study of youth subcultures. Muggleton set out to challenge the orthodox subculture theory, claiming that the current studies ‘understand authentic subcultural identity in terms of a cohesive and collective cultural resistance’(Muggleton 1995). For Muggleton (2000), however, subcultural movements could be more accurately understood as vehicles for the contradictory account of anti-group sentiments proposing that stylistic nonconformity only rarely takes the strongly collectivist subcultural form. He suggested that the concept of ‘tribe’ ought to replace the term subculture (Bennett 1999).
Muggleton (2000) recognised that in postmodern society stylistic ‘crossover’ is more apparent than ever before. The crossing over of music and style has meant that today there is a mixing of different groups that were once supposedly distinct, into one. This, however, does not lead to collectivity and cohesion in traditional subcultural terms but rather to a unique individuality and ‘neo-tribal’ nonconformity (see chapter five).

Muggleton (2000) interviewed ‘spectacular’ stylists, those people most often labelled as members of a subculture, in pubs and clubs in Britain. He found that even though they appeared to be Punks, Mods, or Rockers they did not label themselves in that way. Instead, they identified with a number of different styles and often mixed them together to create their own unique spectacular style.

From this research, Muggleton (2000) discovered that his interviewees rejected stereotypical and overly homogenous notions of group membership, preferring to focus on individuality. They did not, however, entirely reject the idea of group mentality although they displayed ‘a limited perception of themselves in collective terms, a transient attachment to any one style, and a failure to recognise divides between the subcultural and the conventional’ (Pilkington 2004:125). Hence, he suggests the ‘end or death’ of the concept of subculture in postmodern, consumption-orientated societies. Traditional notions of subculture as ‘coherent, homogenous, collective and linear’ no longer seem to be relevant, rather, subcultures have become ‘fragmented, heterogeneous, individualistic and hyperreal’ (Ren 2005:14).

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40 Pilkington argues that Muggleton ‘is developing an ideal-type here and his own empirical work draws more subtle distinctions from the partial confirmation of the original hypothesis’ (2004:135).
Furthermore, postmodern notions of subculture lack authenticity and originality, which turns them into ‘simulacra’.  

Like Muggleton, Bennett (1999) argues that what we call subcultures today are in fact examples of the late modern lifestyles in which notions of identity are constructed, rather than given, and fluid rather than fixed. Bennett uses Maffesoli’s concept of neo-tribes to look at types of collective association that form around musical and stylistic preference, especially in relation to the urban dance music scene in Britain. Bennett argues that:

The musical and stylistic sensibilities exhibited by the young people involved in the dance music scene are clear examples of a form of late modern ‘sociality’ rather than fixed subcultural groups (1999:600).

In light of his research on the urban dance music scene in Newcastle upon Tyne, Bennett (1999) argues that subcultural theory can be very problematic when looking at post-modern youth lifestyles. He contends that the concept of neo-tribes best describes the sociation between young people in this scene, as in postmodern society groups and self-identities are becoming increasingly subject to flexibility; they need to be able to change with new situations and developments over time. Neo-tribes are flexible and therefore appear to be better in describing the associations between youth, style and music in late capitalist society.

While it is clear that there has been a significant theoretical shift, post-subcultural theory is yet to produce a dominant paradigm. At present, the works of Pierre Baudrillard’s (1994) simulacra refers to copies of things that no longer have an original or ever had one.
Bourdieu (1984), Judith Butler (1990; 1993) and Michel Maffesoli (1996) compete for theoretical supremacy (see Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003). Bourdieu’s ‘taste’, ‘distinction’ and ‘cultural capital’ have been introduced as important concepts in the analysis of youth culture (see Thornton 1995). Judith Butler’s work on gender and sexual identities suggests that gender is ‘enacted’ or ‘performed’ that is ‘having no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality’ (Butler 1990:139). Her work on performativity has been applied as a ‘basis for comprehending the ongoing construction of subcultural identities’ (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003:5). Maffesoli’s work on neo-tribalism is, however, the best option for exploring collective associations in contemporary Australian society. As Bennett (1999; 2005) and other theorists (Malbon 1999; Muggleton 2000; St John 2003) have shown neo-tribes best describe the types of collective groupings that form around musical and stylistic preference.

Therefore, my research focuses on the application of Maffesolian thought, also called neo-tribal theory, to Australian indie music festivals and their audiences. This approach ‘abandons modernist concerns with socio-structural identities’ (Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003:5) instead favouring a variety and fluidity of tenuous tribal structures.42

42 Muggleton argues that this can be interpreted in two ways, firstly, as how participation in the communal aspects of neo-tribal sociality allows individuals to temporarily transcend their traditional class or gender identities for ‘masks’ (see example on pg 168). Secondly, there is the claim that consumption practices are now empirically no longer as strongly related to social class, gender or age, as they were in the past.
4.3.1 Criticisms of Neo-tribal theory

Neo-tribalism is not, however, without its critics. The main weakness in Maffesoli’s work on neo-tribalism is its lack of any empirical contextualisation, as his writings remain purely theoretical. This failure to situate his work empirically ‘renders Maffesoli’s analysis insensitive to hardened discourses of stylistic convention and cultural competence, which may persist even as collective associations become more multiple, fluid and transitory’ (Bennett 2002b:376).

Moreover, neo-tribal theory has received harsh criticism from within the academic world, due to its idealised explanation of youth cultural consumption and production. Derrick Purdue, Jorg Durrschmit, Peter Jowers and Richard O’Doherty criticise Maffesoli’s concept of neo-tribalism as having been ‘read too literally in the past as existing where there are insufficient cultural resources to produce social movements’ (1997:663). They further add that Maffesoli perceives neo-tribes:

As arising out of an innate sociality and the centrifugal tendency of postmodernity. A tension clearly exists between the tribal identity commitments of particular participants in the milieux …studied [DiY culture, LETS, veggie boxes and festivals] and their universalising claims as pioneers of new forms of society. There is ambivalence between their neo-tribal forms of sociality and their desire to transform society (Purdue et al. 1997:633).

Similarly, Muggleton raises concerns that neo-tribalism ‘fatally underemphasizes the politically emancipative elements within youth culture’ (2003:12) as tribal members ‘rate their individual needs and satisfaction higher than group values and political utopia’ (2003:12). He further states that:
While this ensures [Maffesolian] theory can successfully account for the dispersed and diffuse contextual nature of youth cultural production and consumption, it manifestly fails as an adequate explanation of new forms of political youth cultural activism that have developed in recent years (2003:12).

Nonetheless, Maffesoli (1996:62) relates the re-emergence of popular festivals and the return to sociality as tribal members’ ways of escaping or avoiding politics and history. Although political associations may form among members of neo-tribes, the connection of people coming together with a shared interest is more important than the overall social movement. As Maffesoli argues, ‘the mask makes me a conspirator against the established powers, but as of right now, this conspiracy unites me with others, in a non-accidental, structurally effective way’ (Maffesoli 1996:91).

Maffesoli’s work, especially that on neo-tribal sociality, allows for a reworking of the ‘affectual dimensions’ of youth cultural involvement. It helps to restore the ‘textual, symbolic, semiotic focus of classic (sub)cultural work’ (Sweetman 2004:87). It also helps to highlight the increasing fragmentation of youth culture, through ‘first-hand’ accounts from young people themselves.

Although there have been critiques of neo-tribal theory, this theory has nevertheless been used in studies similar to this one. For example, previous studies on British dance music and clubbing, especially Bennett’s (1999) study of the urban dance

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43 The mask, according to Maffesoli, could be a colourful hairstyle, tattoos, or retro fashions. This makes the person a member of a secret society or neo-tribe.
music scene in Newcastle upon Tyne and Malbon’s (1999) work on clubbing, have connected neo-tribalism and youth culture. Bennett found that issues of fragmentation and temporality characterise patterns of dance music appropriation in the contemporary clubbing context as clubbers ‘move between different dance floors and engage with different crowds’ (Bennett 1999:611). Bennett further argued that this movement mirrors the fluid sociality of a time that has seen individuals appropriate and experiment with lifestyle commodities as a means of communicating identity. Similarly, Malbon’s ethnographic study looked at the sense of identification and community that clubbers gain from their clubbing experiences. He argued that the club is a ‘sensuous’ space where the ‘stable identity of the individual is superseded by the much more fluid and ‘momentary’ identification of the persona’ in which an emotional community, although short-lived, is created (Malbon 1998:279). Malbon uses Maffesoli’s concept of neo-tribes as a way of drawing attention to the more tangible forms of community found amongst clubbers.

As a result of the success of the application of this theory to research similar to my own, I intend to deploy neo-tribal theory in order to investigate how music festivals may be able to simultaneously represent commodity and community. Furthermore, I investigate the sociality and affinity networks created between festivalgoers at Australian indie music festivals. In the next section, I explore the creation of a community through the concept of the scene. I demonstrate how music scenes and neo-tribes work in symbiosis to create a culture that maintains a sense of community even though it is largely commodity based.
4.4 Music Scenes

A scene is different from a music community, which is understood to be a relatively stable group of people, whose association with music is grounded within a ‘geographically specific historical heritage’ (Straw 1991; 1997:494), such as in Seattle, USA (Pray 1996). A scene, on the other hand, is a ‘cultural space’ within which different types of musical practices co-exist. They interact with each other within ‘a variety of processes of differentiation’ and according to varying paths of ‘change and cross-fertilization’ (Straw 1991; 1997:494). Scenes are generally thought of as consisting of situations in which people come together to create music for their own pleasure (See also Kruse 2003; Shank 1994). In academic discourse, the term scene thus describes the social milieu within which groups of producers, musicians and fans ‘collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004:1).

Grossberg highlights that scenes are characterised by a particular social logic which may transcend a precise musical contextualisation hence allowing scenes to continue over time, even as the music changes (1994:46). This social logic is referring to the flow of cultural commodities within suitable markets and cultural terrains (Straw 1991:374). Straw acknowledges that this social logic is grounded firstly in professionals and other musical intellectuals’ struggle for prestige and status within a given musical milieu. Secondly, it is grounded by ‘the ongoing transformation of social and cultural relations, and of alliances between particular musical communities’ in western cities (Straw 1991:375).
This social logic contributes to the forming of different alliances between scenes, as is the case for Alternative music in North America and Canada. This logic can be empowering for scene members and embraces cross-fertilisation and hybridisation (Straw 1991; Straw 1997). This is most evident in the implementation of combining musical styles such as Hardcore/Metal, Punk/Reggae, Nu-metal and Country/Bluegrass/Rock (Ross 1994). These alliances can also, however, be disempowering for scene members. This is the case for dance music cultures, which are ‘polycentric,’ creating further fragmentation in the community. This fragmentation ultimately divides the dance music scene into newly created styles such as House, HI-NRG and Freestyle (Straw 1991; Straw 1997).

Bennett and Peterson (2004) describe three types of scenes: the local, the translocal and the virtual. Local scenes or music communities are grouped around a specific geographic focus. Translocal scenes refer to more widely spread local scenes that come into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle. Lastly, virtual scenes are ‘newly emergent formations in which people scattered across great physical spaces, create the sense of scene via fanzines and the internet’ (2004:6-7).

I use scene theory to analyse indie music festivals as integrative scenes which simultaneously exist on local, translocal and virtual levels (Dowd et al. 2004b). Festivals are local because they occupy an enclosed physical space such as that of the Sydney showground or the Domain. They are translocal as well because festivalgoers come from ‘far and wide’ to participate in the scene. Lastly, they are virtual because
they are advertised, reported on and broadcast through various media, including radio, fanzines, TV and the internet (Bennett and Peterson 2004).

Bennett and Peterson (2004) argue that whilst most translocal scenes involve the coming together of a number of local scenes, festivals draw ‘dispersed’ individuals on selected occasions. In this sense, the term festival describes:

Large multiday [or one-day] events that periodically bring together scene devotees from far and wide in one place, where they can enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it, with little concern for the expectations of others (Bennett and Peterson 2004:9-10).

Bennett and Peterson further point out that the longer the duration of a festival the more likely the event is to take on the characteristics of a scene. They suggest that a ‘risk-free’ environment, for instance a rural area, is perfect as participants have ‘a chance to enact the ways of life idealised within the scene free of the usual supports of urban life and away from other people and from the agents of social control’ (2004:9-10).

**4.4.1 Scenes and Neo-tribes**

The link between music scenes and neo-tribes can be explained as symbiotic. Neo-tribes form within scenes as they bring together people with shared interests and tastes. For Kruse (1993), ‘the translocal properties of music and its associated stylistic innovations serve to produce affective communities that transcend the need for face-to-face interaction’ (Bennett and Peterson 2004:9). This concept of affectual community is further supported by Maffesoli’s (1996) concept of neo-tribal sociality, ‘where what is important is not some abstract, idealized goal, but rather the feelings of togetherness engendered by one’s own direct involvement with the social group’
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(Sweetman 2004:85). Using this perspective, one can see the formation of neo-tribes within music scenes. Neo-tribes do not always rely on direct involvement with the social group, however, as tribal belonging is part of everyday life: ‘tribal members are never alone because they belong, in fact or virtually, to a vast and informal community’ (Cova and Cova 2001b:71). The virtual aspects of tribal membership are discussed further in chapter six.

Recently David Hesmondhalgh (2005) and Shane Blackman (2005) have criticised the use of the terms neo-tribe and scene. Hesmondhalgh has suggested that neo-tribes are too polarised. While the CCCS may have overestimated the boundedness and permanence of the group identities they studied. Hesmondhalgh argues that to suggest neo-tribes, which are characteristically unstable and temporary, as an alternative to subculture theory does not get us very far (2005:22). For me however, it seems that Hesmondhalgh has missed the point somewhat. It is the temporal and unstable nature of neo-tribal grouping that allows the investigation of fragmented group identities and feelings of group in-betweeness. Neo-tribal theory allows for an exploration of crossover and change between collective associations (see chapter five).

Furthermore, Hesmondhalgh (2005) has critiqued the notion of people liking different musical genres as sustaining a theory of neo-tribalism, saying it is an ‘uncontroversial idea.’ The very concept of liking different genres and having heterogeneous musical and stylistic tastes, as I will discuss in chapter five, may be what differentiates neo-tribal theory from traditional subcultural theory. Traditional subcultural groups are seen as homogenous- ‘you were either a Mod or a Rocker’- as
these groupings were seen as encompassing strict cultural boundaries which were often associated with music and stylistic preferences. In contrast, within neo-tribal groupings ‘you can be a Mod and a Rocker’ at the same time.

Blackman (2005) makes a similar point when he critiques post-subculture theory as having overlooked group centeredness and collectivity citing an example from British dance culture stating how it became a meeting place and recruiting ground for various groups. In response Andy Bennett has argued that:

Such a coming together of these diverse causes on specific sites and at specific times, and the use of the dance music event as a means of voicing their collective concerns, is precisely the type of process that Maffesoli attempts to capture in his description of neo-tribes (2005:256).

It could be further stated that those groups are made up of a heterogeneous range of individuals, which again is characteristic of a neo-tribal group.

In relation to the concept of scene, Hesmondhalgh (2005) critiques it as confusing, due to its widely varied uses by journalists, scene members and academics to convey different meanings. Straw has also noted this confusion, asking ‘how useful is a term which designates both the effervescence of our favourite bar and the total of all global phenomena surrounding a subgenre of Heavy Metal music?’ (2001:248). Straw provides three defenses of the use of scene. Firstly, he observes ‘the term’s efficiency as a default label for cultural unities whose precise boundaries are invisible and elastic’ (2001:248).

Secondly, he argues the term scene is:
Useful and anti-essentializing, requiring of those who use it no more than they observe a hazy coherence between sets of practices or affinities. For those who study popular music, ‘scene’ has the capacity to disengage phenomena from the more fixed and theoretically troubled unities of class or subculture (even when it holds out the promise of their eventual rearticulation) (Straw 2001:248).

Finally, Straw (2001) argues, the ‘scene’ seems to be able to stir up both the ‘cozy intimacy’ of community and ‘the fluid cosmopolitan [nature] of urban life’. As he explains, ‘to the former, it adds a sense of dynamism; to the latter, a recognition of the inner circles and weighty histories which give each seemingly fluid surface a secret order’ (2001:248). In my view, the term scene allows, as Straw has suggested, a new way of understanding contemporary social relations. Furthermore, combining the concept of scenes with neo-tribal theory allows for an exploration of both place and community, without structural constraints (see chapter six).

There is a definite need to rethink the use of the term subculture as suggested by various theorists (see Bennett 1999; Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004; Muggleton and Weinzierl 2003; Stahl 1999). Maffesoli’s theory of neo-tribalism is just one of the ways of rethinking ‘subcultural’ social relationships. Neo-tribal theory is not necessarily superior to traditional subcultural theory; nor should it be considered a replacement. I am simply suggesting, rather, that by using various ‘new’ concepts drawn from contemporary sociological theory, such as tribes and scenes, we may be able to develop new ways of understanding contemporary youth culture.
Within the festivalgoer ‘tribe’ or festival ‘scene’, there is a certain element of the carnivalesque that aids in the development of neo-tribal sociality and helps create a feeling of temporary community within collective associations. The next section explores the role of the carnivalesque and deploys this concept as an analytical tool that could be used for analysing the festivalgoers’ experiences.

4.5 Festivals, Consumption and the Carnivalesque

The term *carnivalesque* was developed by the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1984) who studied festivals through their expression in medieval literature, in particular the work of François Rabelais. Bakhtin was interested in the role that festival and carnival played in medieval popular culture. He argued that Rabelais’ work revealed ‘the breaking of taboos that are perceived as an important part of social order’ (Hetherington 2000:54) and were important with all festivals.

Bakhtin emphasised the importance of the role of laughter and swearing within the festival, including the mocking of civil and ecclesiastical forms of authority in a theatrical way. He further emphasised ‘the ways in which norms are inverted, the wearing of grotesque and playful masks and costumes, ‘fancy dress’ and of making the body appear as something grotesque, challenging ideas of order represented through a more socially acceptable “classical” body’ (Hetherington 2000:54).

For Bakhtin there has always been a connection between carnivalesque cultures, the marketplace and the medieval fair. As noted by Hetherington:

on saints’ days and holy days, the medieval fair became a site for theatrical spectacle in which people were able to wear masks and fancy dress costume and adopt this excessive form
of behaviour in which all conventions of society were turned on their head. In this world turned upside down, they assume a new persona or identity through this performance and were released, if only momentarily, from the social constraints associated with their everyday lives (Hetherington 2000:54).

Carnivalesque has become associated with ritual forms of transgression, that is, with behaviour that temporally suspends and mocks social norms and mores (Strallybrass and White 1997). For Bakhtin, however, the carnivalesque was a way of resisting social norms. This resistance focuses on the consuming body, which is depersonalised and grotesque. Acts of consumption including such things as excessive eating and drunkenness, acts of wastefulness, visible eroticism, the use of sacrilegious and bad language as well as the temporary rejection of taboos, serve to allow the carnivalesque to be seen as the embodiment of freedom in which people can express their desires and their ‘true’ selves (Docker 1994; Hetherington 2000).

The consuming body represents the shift of social order, as ideas about high and low culture are reversed: ‘everything that is low, dirty, glutinous and wasteful is celebrated while all that is high, what represents authority and decorum is openly mocked, ridiculed and dragged through the mud’ (Hetherington 2000:55).

Modern festivals contain a carnivalesque element in that they are spaces in which an:

- expressive freedom from social constraints, through an emphasis on the importance of music and the open consumption of illegal drugs …we can see that the festival provides an opportunity for the playful mockery of authority as well as for the development of alternative kinds of sociality (Hetherington 2000:55).
Kevin Hetherington argues that by only focusing on the apparent disorder of the festival, Bakhtin misses the fact that festivals achieve both order and disorder through the carnivalesque in equal measure. Festivals may appear to be the ‘epitome of disorder’ from the outside, but order is constantly ‘provisional local and specific and not something that can be avoided all together’ (Hetherington 2000:57).

Contemporary music festivals are not a carnival for the people hosted by the people as Bakhtin (1984) proclaims. Rather, they are commercialised events with clearly established boundaries. Although at first glance it may appear that there are footlights between where the stage ends and the audience begins, this is misleading. As Bakhtin argues, ‘carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators, as carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it’ (1984 cited in Docker 1994:273). This will be demonstrated in relation to the festivalgoers’ use of costumes and ‘dressing up’ in chapter five.

Nonetheless, contemporary indie music festivals appear to have this sense of inversion and illusion that are characteristic of the carnivalesque. In particular, the festival embodies the carnivalesque notions of free and familiar attitudes and contact between people, carnival laughter, eccentric and inappropriate behavior (as seen by outsiders), and parody or mocking of authority figures. The elements of the carnivalesque collaborate to create a social milieu in which the festivalgoers are able to interact with other tribal members in an environment that allows them to be themselves without the pressure of the everyday world and hence might re-affirm
their tribal bond (see chapter six). Nowhere is this more apparent than at the Big Day Out’s Lilypad.

The Lilypad

Chris: I try to get down to the Lilypad every year and just watch what’s going on cos it’s always pretty funny. Just for a bit of intermission but yeah not me personally I wouldn’t really get into it but it’s always fun to watch.

Ian: The Lilypad was highly entertaining that day could have been the acid [laughs]. I did spend a lot of hours just sitting at the Lilypad being entertained by idiots.

Jo: Did you participate?

Ian: No. One [festivalgoer] had been covered in dog food and had Labradors sit upon him. The dick size competition, everyone had got up there and they had to strip down naked and the crowd cheered like they go how about this bloke’s dick? Everyone was going ‘yeah’. This guy was jumping around naked going ‘yeah that’s me’.

Kat: Sometimes I like play games and stuff that the Lilypad offer. I like how they have comedians there, and they have like little competitions and stuff. It’s fun.

Jo: Can you remember one of those times?

Kat: Well once, they actually had a huge bong. And the guys [Duckpond and Larry Kronick Jnr\footnote{Duckpond and Larry Kronick Jnr founded and host the Lilypad stage.}] are really sad they were getting members of the audience to come up and smoke the bong out of this huge big hose.
and the bong was like a metre high and umm I remember that I didn’t actually do that but a couple of my friends did. But they just have like sculling competitions and pie eating competitions and stuff like that. They have mud wrestling so people get naked.

The Big Day Out’s Lilypad stage was created in 1995. It was originally known as the ‘Silly Scenario Centre.’ It is the brainchild of Duckpond and Larry Kronick Jnr who were hired by Ken West in 1993 as ‘ambience consultants.’ Basically their job was to add some atmosphere to the festival by any means ‘legally’ possible. DJ Christo and DJ Heavy G are the other two members of the Lilypad team. The Lilypad truly embraces the carnivalesque as it is a zone in which festivalgoers are allowed total freedom of expression. Festivalgoers hang out or ‘chill out’ at the Lilypad and enjoy all the onstage antics which included everything from ‘dick size’ competitions to naked girls mud wrestling (Howarth 2006b). In 2006, the Lilypad was upgraded to become the Lilyworld, described as ‘the glorious bastard child to the infamous, celebrated, unique and totally mental BDO institution, the Lilypad’. It features performance areas, sound systems, pageantry, cocktail bars, sculptures, art installations, sideshows and air conditioning (Big Day Out 15/12/2005).

The carnival life-world is quite the opposite to that of the everyday ordinary life. Carnival suspends many of the rules of order of the ordinary world, among them the ‘hierarchical structure and all forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it’ (Bakhtin 1994:251). This allows for the distance between people, which Bakhtin sees as mainly the result of class structure, to be suspended for the time of carnival allowing free and familiar contact among people. In turn, this
allows for new kinds of relationships to form between people as they are now freed from the authority of the non-carnival life. Bakhtin acknowledges that from a non-carnival point of view these newly formed relationships are seen as eccentric and inappropriate.

In regards to these indie music festivals, I use the term carnivalesque to refer to a form of symbolic transgression. Further, it is important to remember that festivals are licensed affairs, they are a permissible rupture of hegemony, or in other words, controlled chaos. My concern for this research is not about the politics of carnival (such as the reasons for the inversion of all official worlds and hierarchies), it is how the carnivalesque nature of music festivals may foster the development of a scene within which neo-tribal sociality may play a major role for the festivalgoers.

4.5.1 Music Carnivals
A music festival can be thought of as a ‘temporary autonomous zone’ (Bey 1991 cited in Purdue et al. 1997), where the symbolic frameworks of the everyday life are suspended, much like in Bakhtin’s carnival. Alternatively, they could be considered a ‘cultural laboratory in which the dominant codes are scrambled to allow the shaping of experimental identities’ (Melucci 1989 cited in Purdue et al. 1997), or as a form of neo-tribal sociality (Maffesoli 1996), or temporary communitas (Turner 1969). A music carnival is slightly different; it refers to fans following bands from tour date to tour date, such as the Deadheads who followed the Grateful Dead (Bennett and Peterson 2004:9). The Vans Warped tour is a commercialised version of these touring music carnivals. The Big Day Out tour is a mixture of music festival and carnival, as sometimes fans follow the tour around the country.
For Purdue, writing on the British experience of festivals, LETS (Local Exchange Trading Systems) and Veggie boxes within the extended milieu of the new wave of DIY culture and environmental innovation:

festivals are collective events and can involve confrontation with the police and local authorities, but this is only a by-product of the festivals' expression of marginal identities and novel pleasures, rather than an anti-state mobilization deploying standard collective action repertories (Purdue et al. 1997:647)

In Australia, music festivals do not usually involve any confrontation with the local authorities, and in the past there have only been a few minor incidents of clashes between the police and festivalgoers, unlike in Britain where there is what Purdue calls ‘a cycle of conflict running from the Battle of Beanfield to Castlemorton and the Criminal Justice Act of 1994’ (Purdue et al. 1997:647). Purdue argues that this ‘cycle of conflict’ has ‘turned the new age travellers\textsuperscript{45} associated with the festival circuit into the paranoid object of rural Britain. The result has been that ‘Traveller’ culture has lost any utopian edge as a nomadic neo-tribal lifestyle, instead unwinding into emigration and heroin addiction’ (1997:647). Hetherington disagrees with this view. While acknowledging Bakhtin’s concept of carnival, he argues that ‘through their (Travellers’) hedonistic, anti-authoritarian stance, their dress, drugs, visible expressions of release from imposed social constraints, the festival-goers mock, through carnival, all those who hold ideals of progress and satisfaction through effort’ (Hetherington 1992:92).

\textsuperscript{45} New Age Travellers or the ‘peace convoy’ were a new kind of ‘subcultural’ group that travelled between various free festivals in the UK (see Hetherington 1992; 2000; McKay 2000).
Festivals are part of a larger social milieu. As Purdue argues, ‘festivals act as free spaces or primary social networks embedded in the larger environmental movement without being encapsulated into rigid hierarchies’ (1997:653). He sees festivals as ‘a liminal opportunity to experiment with pleasure and meaning’ (1997:660), as festivals are expressive rather than instrumental. This is because festivals rely on social networks. In the case of Australian indie festivals they are embedded within the larger, perhaps global, indie-guitar culture.

4.6 Chapter Summary: Subcultures, Neo-tribes, Scenes and the Carnivalesque

Although, it may be too early to suggest the death of subculture as a useful theoretical approach, it appears there has been a dramatic shift in sociological thinking about the connections between youth, style and music. As Bennett (1999) has suggested, sociologists need to develop new ways of understanding the complex relationships of contemporary youth cultures. This could be achieved, he argues, through adopting a post-subcultural view that values participants’ perceptions of their everyday lives and their own meanings created around their understanding of musical taste and style in a time when consumer choice is more critical and valuable than ever before.

Following Bennett’s (1999) view among others (for example Malbon 1999; Muggleton 2000), Maffesoli’s (1996) neo-tribalism appears to be a more useful way of understanding complex collective associations in postmodern society. In addressing at least some of the critiques of British subcultural theory, neo-tribalism allows for new ways to investigate this phenomenon. Firstly, neo-tribal associations
are formed through communal experiences of ‘being together’ here and now, in the moment, rather than through structural determinants like gender, class or religion. Secondly, neo-tribal theory allows for individual creativity and choice through valuing consumption, as through consumer choices and consumption patterns individuals create new forms of sociality and new ways of being together. Thirdly, neo-tribes are not physically limited to spatial relations, as affectual networks can be created through virtual communities or scenes such as internet chat rooms (see chapter six) and have the same impact as direct physical group involvement such as with a crowd at a festival or a sporting match or through a group of like-minded individuals such as car enthusiasts or fans of a particular television program.

Neo-tribes exist within music scenes; therefore, by focusing on a particular type of scene, that is the indie music festival, I hope to discover collective experiences of sociality among festivalgoers. I will also use scene theory to understand how the indie scene, both in Australia and globally, has created a social logic that has allowed the continued existence of festival culture over the years, and how the festival culture and the scene have embraced musical crossover and hybridisation.

The enduring nature of the carnivalesque within the festival scene allows for temporal social bonds to form, as individuals feel free to express themselves during the festival without fear of disapproval. In the following chapter I present a case study from my fieldwork on t-shirts and festival style.
CHAPTER 5

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE FIELD:

CONSUMING STYLE AND T-SHIRTS.

The aim of the thesis is to investigate the meanings indie festivalgoers attribute to their consumption practices and their sense of community. In this chapter, I analyse the relationship between their consumption practices and their subsequent process of identity formation. Through a case study of the festivalgoers’ ritual clothing- the t-shirt- I argue that by exploring the meaning given by the festivalgoers to this specific act of consumption, we are able to see, even if these consumption patterns are somewhat conservative, the way in which they use commodities in their identity construction. For the festivalgoers, an ordinary t-shirt can become extraordinary, as it can mutate into a ‘linking image’ (Maffesoli 1993). The value of the linking image lies in its ability to create both a sense of individualism as well as a sense of connection to a collective identity or ‘sociality’. Furthermore, I propose that the commercial appropriation of DiY t-shirts has blurred the line between the festivalgoers’ DiY creativity and the t-shirts as commodities, which may result in a loss of meaning for these images. In relation to the aim of investigating festivals as postmodern sites of consumption, I discuss the ways in which music festivals have become anchoring places for neo-tribal groupings

5.1 Indie Music Festivals as Anchoring Places

For Michel Maffesoli, the individual in contemporary society is always inherently tied to the group or to a community through culture, communication, leisure or fashion (1996:81). This has led Cova and Cova (2001b) to suggest that rather than
trying to identify the characteristics of a tribe, it is more advantageous to look for ‘linking images’, signs or tribal traces with which tribes such as the festivalgoers identify. They argue that in order to find tangible evidence of tribes, we need to investigate the spaces in which tribal gatherings take place, as it is in these anchoring places that we may be able to find visible traces of tribal allegiance. These ‘anchoring places’ are spaces where a tribe gathers in a public place to perform its rituals. Such anchoring places provide the tribe with a momentary home. Indie music festivals are just one example of anchoring places.

Festivals in themselves are significant as spaces in which neo-tribal bonds are manifested, as they offer festivalgoers a ‘collective opportunity’ in which performers and fans can experience music and lifestyle. Festivalgoers can immerse themselves in the culture and experiment with different identities (Dowd et al. 2004b). Festivals are gathering or anchoring places for neo-tribal members. They have a ‘pilgrimage-like’ nature as they have the potential to ‘transform’ participants as festivalgoers return home ‘empowered’ by both the music and the experience of being surrounded by like minded people (Dowd et al. 2004b). As festivalgoer Tim highlights:

I think people feel more comfortable to express themselves at festivals. I think because there is [sic] so many freaky people there that they feel that they can just really come out of their shell and be a dickhead and no one really cares.

At indie music festivals, festivalgoers come together to celebrate their shared and diverse musical taste. An indie music festival is an example of a place where small friendship groups unite with other friendship networks over the course of the festival season. Some festivalgoers even return to the same festival year after year. For
example, focus group one consisted of four friends who had travelled together to Splendour in the Grass in Byron Bay for the last two years and intended on going again the following year. This same group of friends attend Homebake and Big Day Out together every year. This familiarity among festivalgoers ultimately creates a sense of a neo-tribal sociality, as this extract from focus group one demonstrates:

Kristen: I sometimes see the same people at gigs…
Nicole: We’ve seen quite a few people at festivals.
Jo: Even like strangers?
Nicole: We see the same faces.
Jo: Do you think there’s a community of festivalgoers?
Kristen: There’s people that go to the Big Day Out every year.
Meg: The same fifty thousand [laughs].

5.2 Eclecticism

The festivalgoers have shared musical and festival consumption patterns. When asked to describe their taste in music, the majority of the festivalgoers I interviewed described their taste in music as either ‘diverse’, ‘eclectic’, ‘varied’ or ‘a bit of everything.’ The following interview extract from Grace clearly highlights this point.

I think it’s pretty eclectic. I’m sort of into alternative… on the sort of border… I don’t know what you would call it…broader description of things. But I don’t just like one aspect of music, so I can listen to stuff on MTV and I don’t mind a bit of Hip Hop, not too much a fan of RnB like I like Ludacris and all of those really bad rappers that I shouldn’t like and then I like heavy stuff like Deftones, or System of a Down, like more folksy stuff like Iota. Although I don’t think he’s very folksy anymore and rock, like 311 they’re sort of Reggae/ Funk/ Rock, everything influence, Punk…Unwritten
Law. Yeah a bit of everything, I don’t discriminate…much [laughs]. Unless it’s Mariah Carey.

Pyesie, another festivalgoer has similar views on his taste in music:

Jo: How would you describe your taste in music?
Pyesie: Varied. Very, very varied.
Jo: What do you mean by that?
Pyesie: At the moment I’ve bought, two weeks ago I went and bought four CDs, I bought Lost Prophets last one I bought Kelly Clarkson’s new album, I bought Gwen Stefani’s new album and I bought Dizzy Rascal’s new album. Whatever sounds good now I’ll listen to it. It doesn’t bother me any more. I sort of lost all my shyness about music, or embarrassment. If it sounds good I’ll listen to it. Nine times out of ten at festivals if there’s a DJ tent that’s where you’ll find me. I just seem to like it more.

Jo: Has your musical tastes changed over the years?
Pyesie: Oh definitely yeah, I always thought it was just gunna be Nirvana and Pearl Jam and Korn and Blink 182, and that would be about it. NoFx and that would be all I’d listen too. But yeah just as you get older you just start to appreciate more and more.

Pyesie demonstrates in the interview extract above the fact that over time or as festivalgoers ‘grow up’ their tastes in music change. In this case, Pyesie’s tastes have become even more eclectic as he states ‘if it’s good I’ll listen to it.’ For him this has meant developing a taste for more ‘mainstream’ artists like American Idol winner Kelly Clarkson and Hip Hop acts like Dizzy Rascal rather than just indie bands like NoFx. How can we account for this diversity in musical tastes? Especially
as the artists mentioned are across musical genres and cross the indie/ mainstream divide?

Thornton (1997) has related these patterns of musical consumption to what she terms ‘subcultural capital’, that is, the framework within which particular musical audiences’ tastes fit. Although I am using a post-subcultural approach to this study (see chapter four), the concept of subcultural capital is relevant to the study of the festivalgoers, as it is a way for members of a tribe to distinguish themselves from others. For example ‘dance music’ clubbers may distinguish themselves from ‘mainstream’ clubbers, or ‘festivalgoers’ from ‘clubbers’. I use the term subcultural capital to demonstrate the ways in which indie music festivalgoers are able to create a ‘sense of otherness’ (Fonarow 1997). Like subcultural capital, the creation of a sense of otherness is fashioned through the idea of being ‘in the know,’ particularly since indie bands are not heavily advertised in the mainstream media. They rely on the local knowledge of listening to the right radio station or reading the right fanzines. To answer the question raised above about the diversity of musical taste, perhaps festivalgoers have a diversity of ‘subcultural capital’ in their knowledge of different scenes and genres as the indie festivalgoer persona may be just one of a series of masks an individual wears when forming their social identity, as I explain in the following section.

5.3 You’re Wearin’ a Mask! Which Mask are You?

Maffesoli argues that the individual ‘is closed, self-contained [as] the person is above all a mask. The nature of the person is that he/she is polysemantic, polyphonic’ (1988:141). The persona or the mask can be changeable and incorporates itself into
a variety of scenes and situations. Individuals, according to Rob Shields (1992a:107), adopt personas which enable them to interact with a group within a certain time and place. The mask, Shields argues, is not just a façade as it has ‘transformative possibilities’ for the wearer and it allows the person to become not someone else but themselves. Individuals are able to express ‘situationally-rooted’ personas which enable them to play different roles within various groups.

For Shields, the group is no longer a focal point for the individual but ‘one of a series of foci or sites within which the individual can live out a selected, temporal role or identity before relocating to an alternative site and assuming a different identity’ (Bennett 1999:605). Therefore Shields describes ‘a postmodern persona, which moves between a succession of site-specific gatherings and whose multiple identifications form a dramatic personae- a self which can no longer be simplistically theorised as unified’ (Shields 1992b:16). This said, the term group can no longer be seen as stable, permanent or tangible as the characteristics, visibility and lifespan of the group are dependant on the interactions of its members (Bennett 1999).

The shifting nature of collective associations in late modern consumer orientated societies has led Shields to suggest that tribal identities help to demonstrate the temporal nature of collective identities in such societies. This is because as individuals move between various sites of collective expression they need to adjust their persona/ identity accordingly. He argues, ‘personas are unfurled and mutually adjusted. The performative orientation toward the other in these sites of social centraiity and sociality draws people together one by one. Tribe-like but temporary
groups and circles condense out of the homogeneity of the mass’ (Shields 1992a:108).

The persona or mask is the link between identity and neo-tribalism which is performed through style. Style is important in regard to elective and affectual identification because it is one of the means through which ‘identity markers’ and indications of belonging are expressed. Hetherington argues that the persona is constructed through ‘a combination of bodily dispositions, situated performances and identification with others that use stylistic effects’ (1998:56).

Neo-tribes are emotional communities that offer empathetic support for those individuals who want to try on a new mask, or as Hetherington suggests, ‘become someone different’ (1998:56). For Maffesoli, identity is about the practices connected with emotional links with others and the elective groupings that emerge. These groupings use ‘totemic symbolism’ and style to express a shared sense of identification and belonging or emotional togetherness, through which their identities can be performed. Hetherington (1998) argues that neo-tribes are significant as they are associated with an apparent ideal identification with others, as a direct and expressive form of sociality.

How this is performed and maintained is the subject of this chapter. Through the festivalgoers’ use of style in the form of ritual clothing, I aim to show that style is important to this group as a marker of tribal belonging. In particular I investigate the use of t-shirts to express shared thoughts and feelings. I aim to show that through wearing vintage, commercial and DiY t-shirts the festivalgoers develop an emotional
connectedness and sense of neo-tribal sociality. I investigate the use of masks in the form of spectacular clothing and costumes, to see whether or not the festivalgoers show empathetic support to the trying on of new masks and being someone else for the day.

5.4 Ritual Clothing: T-shirts

5.4.1 The ‘Merch’ tent

A large crowd had gathered outside a white canvas tent with a large red banner that read in sizeable yellow and white letters, ‘Homebake Merchandise.’ I wandered over to have a closer look. There were about thirty festivalgoers lined up in front of a row of stall tables. They were chatting and leaning over the tables whilst pointing to the back wall of the tent, which was covered in colourful t-shirts pinned up in rows. In the middle of the wall were the Homebake t-shirts. A few different variations of this year’s festival t-shirt were displayed, in such a way to allow the customers to see the front and back of each shirt. On either side of the Homebake t-shirts were representations from the performing bands, fastened in the same way. In between the t-shirts, Homebake stubby holders had been pinned up, in a variety of colours. Underneath the rows of t-shirts and stubby holders was another row of stall tables, with more t-shirts neatly organised into piles by size and type of t-shirt. Underneath the tables were boxes filled with more t-shirts. Each product was clearly labelled with a laminated white sign, that told you the price of the item and for the t-shirts what size they came

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46 A stubby holder is a material cooling device used to hold beer cans or bottles.
Tour merchandising plays an important role for the festivals both in terms of promotion and income. All the festivals included in this study have on site merchandise tents, in which they sell t-shirts, posters, stubby holders and other items emblazoned with the festival name and/or logo as well as merchandise from the performing bands. The profit gained from merchandise is often larger than that of ticket sales or CD sales (Simpson and Seeger 1994). Merchandise also promotes brand, image or trademark of the event because as Simpson and Seeger argue, ‘a fan wearing one of your t-shirts is a walking, self funding bill-board’ (1994:391). Festival merchandise is only sold at the event and serves as a memento of the festival experience for the festivalgoers.

### 5.4.2 Vintage t-shirts

Festivalgoers display varying degrees of commitment to indie music festivals. The simplest and most conservative way for festivalgoers to demonstrate their commitment is through the purchase of a festival t-shirt or of other festival merchandise, such as a stubby holder (Dowd et al. 2004b, see photograph two).

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47 Extract from Homebake 2003 field notes.
Buying a t-shirt proves not only attendance but also tribal allegiance, as festival t-shirts are ‘linking images.’ Band tour t-shirts and festival t-shirts (with dates and cities) are usually only available for a limited time, this makes owning these kind of t-shirts even more valuable especially as they age. Vintage merchandise is a way for festivalgoers to display their ongoing commitment to the indie music festival scene.

As Kevin, a festivalgoer, explains:

I buy t-shirts cos most of the designs are cool. It’s got the band line-up at the back and it’s like you’re saying if I go down to the Falls festival and I’ve got a Sydney Big Day Out t-shirt on, that’s kind of cool for me, or if I go up to Byron Bay and I’ve got a Falls t-shirt on, it’s just kind of cool you know. And plus, you can show how authentic you are by wearing a 1997 Big Day Out t-shirt at the 2005 Big Day Out.
The festivalgoers turn simple t-shirts into ‘linking images’ as it is an image that is shared with others. By wearing a particular t-shirt that they identify with festivalgoers they are openly displaying their tribal allegiance. Furthermore, by having other festivalgoers recognise the t-shirt they are wearing, the festivalgoer is able to show their level of experience (within the tribe) and taste. Wayne, a long time festivalgoer, talked about this:

Yeah, well I usually buy a t-shirt from a festival that I’ve been to. Even wear them just to the concert, but even wear them around. Even wear them around the street and people say ‘Oh you’ve been to’- Yeah like how many people when you wear last year’s Splendour t-shirt, so many people have said ‘Have you been to Splendour?’

5.4.3 Show Your Stripes! Neo-tribal consumption of t-shirts

When asked about what they wore to music festivals, all of the interviewees talked about wearing band or festival t-shirts. In the following interview extract, festivalgoer Nathan talks about what wearing a t-shirt means to him:

Nathan: Usually I wear a band shirt, usually of another band that I’ve seen, just to show my stripes.
Jo: What does ‘showing your stripes’ mean?
Nathan: It means that I’ve been to heaps of festivals and so people see my shirt and go that’s a good band and [they show] respect.
Jo: If you’re walking around at a festival and someone comments on the t-shirt that you’re wearing, how does it make you feel?
Nathan: I just identify with them and think yeah there’s someone that I can get along with and be friends with pretty easily, if they like the same kind of stuff that I
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do. I dunno. Some of my friends have a little joke saying that I only own band t-shirts and that. The other day my mate said, one of my friends told his girlfriend look Nathan’s not wearing a band t-shirt. But, I was wearing a festival t-shirt instead, so.

Jo: So if someone does come up to you is it like more of a fleeting thing like you like the same band as me, but I’ll see you later kind of thing?

Nathan: If it’s a girl yeah. But yeah, have a chat and it breaks the ice if you’re lined up for a beer say and someone goes oh, I’ve seen them there, it’s a good way to start the conversation.

Jo: Is what you wear to a music festival important or meaningful to you, other than showing your stripes?

Nathan: Yeah well, I like to look casual and pretty cool at a festival…but yeah it’s pretty important yeah it shows what kind of person I am I guess.

Jo: Why do you buy the t-shirts?

Nathan: The main reason I buy t-shirts… like I’d rather wear a festival shirt or a band shirt than go out and buy like a Quicksilver shirt or something like that… I used to surf a little bit when I was younger but not any more and it doesn’t mean anything to me now. It just seems kind of try hard to wear it when I don’t do it. But that’s why I buy festival shirts of something that I was interested in or I’ve seen or I’ve done [rather than] something that I just bought from the surf shop or a clothing shop that means nothing to me.

For Nathan, wearing a particular band or festival t-shirt both at music festivals and in his everyday life, is reflective of not only his personal tastes and interest in music but also his level of experience as a festivalgoer. This experience is recognised and respected by others who are ‘in the know.’ Acknowledging other festivalgoers’ t-
Observations From the Field

shirts is a good way to strike up an impromptu conversation with a stranger as Nathan mentions above. This enables festivalgoers to share their experiences with each other.

Festivalgoers, through their consumption of t-shirts are able to communicate shared experiences, thoughts, and feelings to other members of the tribe. As Nathan pointed out ‘people see my shirt and go that’s a good band,’ which shows interconnectedness. The linking value of the t-shirt plays an important role, as the material object creates an emotional connection. This is seemingly in contrast to festivalgoers who create their own DiY t-shirts as discussed below.

5.4.4 Spectacular stylists?
Some festivalgoers design and make their own outfits from second hand clothing on which they add tribal signs and symbols. Photographs three and four below illustrate an example of this style. The photographs show two young girls wearing matching outfits made from old nurses’ uniforms. They have added tribal signs by writing and drawing on the dresses in texta. The fronts of the dresses have flames at the bottom and various patches and stickers from bands like Cog. At the top of the dresses, they have written in blue texta ‘teenage groupie.’ This statement reflects their fan status, concerning the bands and the festival itself. On the backs of the dresses, they have drawn on angel wings, the year they first wore the outfit to the festival, ‘02’, which has been crossed out, meaning that wearing the dresses was meant to be a one off thing but has become a tradition. They have also written the slogan, ‘IT’S ONLY ROCK AND ROLL BUT I LIKE IT.’ One girl has HOME and the other girl has BAKE written on the bottom of the dress. This shows that the true meaning of the outfits can only be realised when the girls are together. Interestingly, the girls have
written the names of their favourite bands on the sleeves on their dresses, like Kasey Chambers and John Butler Trio. They also appear to have some autographs from the band members on their shoulders.

Photo 3: Front view of girls in ritual clothing at Homebake 2003

Photo 4: Back view of girls in ritual clothing at Homebake 2003
Angela McRobbie (1994b) suggests that in the postwar period, second hand clothing or ‘vintage dress’ has allowed young people to participate in the world of fashion, especially during times of recession. For the girls in the above photographs, through their adaptation of the second hand nurses’ uniforms, they have turned their outfits into symbolic, yet conservative and temporal, extensions of their self identity (see Sweetman 2004). Furthermore, by dressing alike, the girls are displaying their connectedness to each other.

The style worn by the girls in the above photographs may have once been reminiscent of ‘spectacular stylists’, those people most often labelled as members of a subculture. But as David Muggleton (2000) argues, in contemporary society stylistic ‘crossover’ is more apparent then ever before. The crossing over of music and style has meant that many different and supposedly distinct groups can now be mixed into one, leading not to cohesion but rather a unique individuality and tribal nonconformity. In his study Muggleton drew the conclusion that even though these ‘spectacular stylists’ appeared to be punks, mods, or rockers they did not label themselves as such. They identified with a number of different styles and often mixed them together to create their own unique spectacular style. Similarly, through my participant observations and interviews with festivalgoers I have found no tendencies towards one exclusive style of music or anything that indicates a classical ‘subculture.’

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48 Conservative, for the purposes of this argument means, traditional or constrained in style. For example t-shirts, unlike tattoos, are an unadventurous form of expression, as they are interchangeable, temporary and do not require any long-term commitment on behalf of the festivalgoer.
5.4.5 DiY T-Shirts (a paradox?)

Kelly, a festivalgoer, sees herself as a pioneer of DiY t-shirt making as she claims she was doing it before it became popular amongst festivalgoers. She talks about her first experience of making a band t-shirt to wear to a music festival:

T-shirts with stuff written on them...in about 1997 nobody was doing it. Actually, this leads on from my very first festival story, after I saw Dave Johnson from Ammonia. I started making my own Homebake band t-shirts. They weren’t obviously band t-shirts. Like the first hit that, well the only hit that Ammonia had was that Drugs song, so I just made a t-shirt that had ‘DRUGS’ written on the front. And to me and my friends it was like an Ammonia shirt and it was cool but I wore it to this festival …Grudgefest. …I was there cos I really like [the band] Bush. I wore it to Grudgefest… it was just like nobody was wearing t-shirts that had stuff written on them and to have this t-shirt which I had made myself that just said DRUGS was like totally out there.

For Kelly and those in the know, her DiY t-shirt had a secret meaning that was relevant only to them. To outsiders, however, wearing a t-shirt that said Drugs was a little strange and perhaps seen as slightly deviant. Why do festivalgoers feel the need to design their own t-shirts? Using interview extracts from festivalgoers Tim and Roxy I investigate this phenomenon further.

When he was younger, Tim, a 23-year-old festivalgoer used to create homemade t-shirts with his friends to wear to music festivals. Below is an interview extract that demonstrates the possible reasons behind this creativity:

Tim: When I first started [going to festivals] I was wearing all sorts of weird shit. I’d wear my school tie or something. I wasn’t extremely out there; you see a lot
of people that go nuts. A couple of times we made our own t-shirts. Once as a whole crew we had t-shirts with Alf Stuart on them.

Jo: Alf Stuart? What was the inspiration behind that?

Tim: We just loved everything he had to say and every t-shirt had a different quote like ‘STONE THE FLAMIN’ CROWS!’ or ‘GET BACK TO YABBY CREEK YOU FLAMIN’ HIPPIE!’ ... I guess that was kind of cool cos you could not only spot friends in the crowd; cos the t-shirts were also bright orange, but also that sense of camaraderie like you’re going to a festival together and you’re all good mates and that kind of thing.

Jo: How did the other festivalgoers react to the t-shirts?

Tim: Yeah quite a lot of them asked us a few questions but I guess these days you get so many people doing that kind of stuff you don’t really get people asking you. People would stand behind us and read the quotes and sort of tap us on the shoulder and give us thumbs up or tell us how he was their favourite as well. And another time I made my own singlet. I think we were seeing the Avalanches or something. And I took a lot of pride in that I had a few people asking me where I got it.

Jo: Did you just write on the singlet or did it have more of a design to it?

Tim: No, it had more of a design to it. I got one of those… ink blot test things. I think it said ‘THIS BOY NEEDS THERAPY’, cos that’s from one of their [songs] ‘that boy needs therapy.’ I had someone ask me where I got

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49 Alf Stuart is a character on the Australia’s famous television soapie Home and Away, aired on Channel 7.
it from cos I think they were expecting to get it from
the merch stand but yeah it was just a home job. It
ended up running completely by the end of the day. So
there wasn’t much left of it.

Another festivalgoer, Roxanne, talks about her experiences of making t-shirts to wear
to a music festival with her friends:

Jo: Has what you wear to a festival changed?
Roxanne: A bit. When I was first going to festivals I was
kind of trying to make a statement. I had like t-shirts,
like I made my own t-shirts for the first couple of
festivals I went to and then after I’m just like I just
want to be comfortable. I don’t actually care, I’m
gonna have fun, not going to have people looking at
me, so.

Jo: So when you made your own t-shirt what was the
inspiration behind that?
Roxanne: I don’t actually know. Me and my friend just
decided to make our own t-shirts and it was also a
friend’s birthday the week beforehand so we were
making her a t-shirt, that said ‘BUY ME A DRINK.
IT’S MY BIRTHDAY!’ and while we were making
her a t-shirt, we [thought we] should make our own t-
shirts… I made one that said ‘BOYS ROCK BUT
GIRLS ROCK HARDER!’ and hers said ‘ALL GIRL
BAND’.

Later in the interview, Roxanne talks about another t-shirt making experience, again
for a friend’s birthday:

[At] Homebake this year it was a friend’s birthday on the day
of Homebake and we bullshited her so well. We told her none
of us were going, [as] there’s gunna be too many people around and these are the bands you see in pubs every fucking week. So she thought none of us were going, but we actually all bought tickets and bought one for her. So cause it was her birthday, my friend ….went as ‘GOON BAG’ cause sometimes she has a habit of drinking to much ‘goon’ at house parties and pinning the ‘goon’ bag to herself and going ‘drink from me.’ So she had a t-shirt saying ‘I AM GOON BAG’ and the rest of us all had t-shirts saying ‘We LOVE GOON BAG!’ It made it easier to find them all [my friends].

For Roxanne, the motives behind making a t-shirt to wear to a festival had more to do with celebrating a friend’s birthday than with the actual festival itself. During the course of the festival, however, she discovered that, by being a part of a group that was dressed alike, the other festivalgoers were then able to see the connection between the girls and it helped the group locate each other throughout the day. As Roxanne pointed out, ‘It made it easier to find them all [my friends]… I went off in one direction and they went off in another direction and [people] ran into another of us and [they] thought you’re friends with Roxanne.’

For Roxanne’s group of friends, the slogans on the t-shirts reflected each wearer’s individual personality and tastes, that of drinking ‘goon’ and liking ‘all girl bands.’ Furthermore, through the linking value of the slogan ‘we love goon bag,’ the girls were able to openly display their emotional connectedness to each other.

Similarly to Roxanne’s experience, when Tim’s group of friends wore their Alf Stuart t-shirts, they were displaying their fandom for Alf Stuart, but more than that,

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50 Goon bag is an Australian slang term that usually refers to the bag from inside a box of cask wine.
they felt a sense of ‘camaraderie.’ Tim feels this was because they were all going to
the festival together, wearing similar clothing and sharing a love for an iconic
Australian TV character. The linking value of these t-shirts allowed a neo-tribal
bond to be created between Tim’s group of friends and the other festivalgoers, which
is most evident when festivalgoers would tap them on the back and give them the
thumbs up after reading the quotes on the t-shirts or would reveal to them that they
too liked Alf Stuart.

Why do festivalgoers make their own t-shirts? McRobbie (1994b) suggests that this
is reminiscent of Punk youth culture’s do-it-yourself attitude, the idea that you can
design your own t-shirt or outfit rather than purchasing one over the counter. The
Drugs, Alf Stuart, Avalanches and Birthday t-shirts talked about by the festivalgoers
in the interview extracts above were ‘one offs’ and it is this uniqueness that makes
the t-shirt ‘cool.’ As Sophie explains in relation to the t-shirt page in her book
Peace, Love and Brown Rice (2006b) that features photographs of festivalgoers
wearing both DiY and commercial t-shirts:

Sophie: I think it’s very Big Day Out. In all those years I’ve
been photographing it, people are always making their
own t-shirts and I think it’s grown. And people would
go ‘how’s that t-shirt thing that goes on at the Big Day
Out?’ And I thought isn’t that interesting cos like I
picked up on it and over years I just photographed
great t-shirts when I’ve seen them.

Jo: Do you have a theory about what it means to
festivalgoers to wear the t-shirts?

Sophie: I just think it goes hand in hand with like an
identification with the festival. It actually celebrates
do anything that you feel like on that day. Say
whatever you want to say, dress up, like everyone wears fairy wings, that’s kind of one road to take. Then some guys dress up in the same outfit or they’ve got a matching outfit and chicks go in a little team as well, wear shades and shorts and socks and stuff. I think it’s just all part of culture and youth culture, how people express themselves. You know just have a bit of fun.

Janet English from Australian band Spiderbait has designed her own t-shirts with a feminist political agenda in mind. Her t-shirts bear ‘thought provoking messages,’ such as ‘SUCK MY PENIS ENVY,’ ‘STUPIDGIRL,’ ‘LOVE INTEREST’ or ‘MISOGYNY.’ She explains:

These t-shirts are one offs and a personal statement only- they are designed for my gratification and pleasure. I enjoy wearing them because I enjoy the joke, and if other people are offended by them, tough! (English 1996:60).

English realises that by wearing these t-shirts, she may appear to be ‘trivialising’ her personal politics, however she finds these images ‘strong and empowering’ and hopes that both sexes can identify with her ideas and be provoked to consider their own political views. Some festivalgoers have, however, capitalised on DiY designs and copies of English’s t-shirts and, paradoxically, they are now sold in the festival markets. These t-shirts are screen-printed rather than handmade using texta or paints. For example, local Australian companies like ‘Mabouziart’ who had a stall at the Sydney Big Day Out, have promoted their business by enabling festivalgoers to design and purchase their own festival t-shirt, which could be printed up right there on the spot. This appropriation of the festivalgoers’ creativity by companies seems to have received little resistance from the festivalgoers.
While the festivalgoers I interviewed did not talk about wearing politically motivated t-shirts, many festivalgoers do wear t-shirts similar to English. These marketed t-shirts are a mix of politically motivated messages, anti-commercialistic messages, funny slogans and drug references. Such as “JOHN HUNT IS A COWARD”\textsuperscript{51}, “McDEATH”, “BEERMAN” or “LITTLE MISS WASTED.”

Increasingly, it appears that the festivalgoers have accepted and even celebrated the dominance of commercialisation in their culture, most probably because of its promotion of strong linking value among the members of the neo-tribes. For members of neo-tribes, consuming is one way that individuals are able to create new forms of contemporary sociality. Through the consumption of t-shirts, festivalgoers are able to express both their individualism and neo-tribal sociality.

\textbf{Photo 5: Group of festivalgoers dressed alike at Homebake 2005.}

T-shirts (both DiY and bought) are linking images for the festivalgoers, as t-shirts have the ability to both create a sense of individuality as well as a sense of connection to the tribe (see photograph five above). By wearing t-shirts, festivalgoers are able to openly display and share their tastes, style and personality. This brings the

\textsuperscript{51} This statement is a pun concerning Australian Prime Minster John Howard.
festival-goers together as a group on an affectual level and results in the festival-goers experiencing a sense of camaraderie or neo-tribal sociality. Wearing a t-shirt to a music festival may seem like a trivial and unimportant thing to do, however this act unites the festival-goers, even if only for a moment. As Paul Sweetman (2004) points out in his discussion on Maffesoli’s neo-tribal sociality, this notion of togetherness by being involved directly with the social group is now more important than any ‘rational or contractual social relationship’ (2004:85). Neo-tribal sociality is about feeling that you are a part of a collective present, part of a collective effervescence in which you can lose yourself in the group (Maffesoli 1996).

Although Sweetman (2004) is fairly critical of current research on the application of neo-tribal theory to youth cultures, due to its perceived failure to acknowledge more permanent markers of allegiance, such as tattooing, I would like to point out that temporal markers of tribal allegiance are not the same as permanent markings. Temporal markers of allegiance like t-shirts suit neo-tribal relations because of their impermanence. T-shirts are a conservative way for young people to express their individuality or identity within the group. That is not to suggest that festival-goers do not have tattoos, as many do. Permanent markings like tattoos are, however, harder to remove, therefore making it more difficult for tribal members to leave their connection to the tribe behind if they change their mind.

People clearly create meaning out of their consumption practices. For the festival-goers, t-shirts are one way in which they are able to engage in ‘reflective projects of the self’ (Sweetman 2004:83) and neo-tribal sociality. By asking young people why they consume, researchers may discover that youthful consumption
patterns are not only about self-identity formation. Through the act of consumption, young people, such as the festivalgoers, are able to connect with other like-minded people in order to form emotional and affectual social bonds. They find a sense of belonging to a larger social group, in which they can either lose themselves or find themselves. Paradoxically, while it may seem that the commercial appropriation of DiY t-shirts may result in a loss of meaning for the festivalgoers, there appears to be no distinguishable difference between commodified and DiY t-shirts, as the festivalgoers have attached similar meanings to these t-shirts as linking images.

The camaraderie or feeling of connectedness is further demonstrated by the festivalgoers during the festival by the act of writing/drawing on each other in thick black texta. Festivalgoers will allow their friends and strangers to write messages, slogans or draw pictures on their t-shirt or naked torso (often the case with drunken shirtless males). Photograph six above illustrates an example of this type of
behaviour. The photograph shows a young man autographing and writing silly messages on a girl’s t-shirt.

In an interview with Chris, a festivalgoer, he commented how he and his friends used to write on their shirts when they were younger:

Chris: I dunno, a lot of people just tend to use their school shirt cos it’s nice and easy to write on I guess. And a couple of my mates just used to wear them out anyway just as a fashion thing. Like wear a shirt with a band’s name, then a school shirt over the top of it. By the end of the day it just turned into rather less focus on the bands but people writing just more about ‘you’re a dickhead’ or just stupid stuff. But yeah it would start off with a name of a band [or] whatever, and then people just chuck their two cents in, and write their name on it or draw dicks or something like that … then like just get people to sign them, just memories I guess.

Jo: Do they ever use t-shirts to pick up girls or anything like that?

Chris: Not shirts that they draw on themselves but a lot of the time they would find a shirt that had a stupid slogan on it or something like that, and use it to draw attention to themselves. It’s always at festival you see that kind of thing, you wouldn’t normally see it out anywhere else. But everyone seems to put on their funny shirt or whatever. Even those t-shirts stands that they have [at the festival]; they’ve always got good stuff. I’ve bought a few of those shirts on the day; just wear them [at the festival].
From my observations in the field and interviews with the festivalgoers I discovered that there are many meanings attached to the reasons behind festivalgoers writing on each other’s t-shirts. Chris pointed out that ‘it’s fun and a good laugh to write silly slogans or to draw funny pictures on your t-shirt.’ Chris also mentioned that people make their own band shirts because it is cheaper than buying one. Other festivalgoers mentioned that designing your own t-shirt was a fashion statement and it was seen as part of creating a unique look. More nostalgically, festivalgoers Nathan and Meg saw t-shirts as serving as a memory of the day and the people that you met there:

Meg: cos all the good times that happen on the day just every time I look at the t-shirt I remember them. Whenever I get to wear the t-shirt like I feel like it brings back the day and it makes me happy.

Nevertheless, it seems the most important factor is how writing (or getting other people to write) on your t-shirt contributes to establishing linking value. This is most evident when the festivalgoers used writing on a t-shirt to ‘break the ice’ with strangers. Often a funny slogan or picture on a t-shirt will help start up conversations with other festivalgoers, as is illustrated in photograph six above. The festivalgoers are able to relate to each other on a neo-tribal level through the experience of creating a t-shirt together, as we saw in Roxanne’s experience of creating a t-shirt with her friends to wear to Homebake in the previous section.

Paradoxically, the DiY t-shirt trend has now been recognised and commercialised by Foxtel’s Channel V who cover most of the music festivals in this study. Yumi, a presenter on Channel V, made the observation that writing on your t-shirt was like a mating ritual for festivalgoers after seeing a girl whose shirt read ‘Call me after
Sleepy Jackson, I’m free [mobile number]’ (Channel V 2003). This was later capitalised upon by Channel V, who ran a competition at the Big Day Out in 2004, in which people had to SMS (short message service) their favourite t-shirt slogan to win a prize. They also asked the bands they interviewed to write or draw a message on white Bonds t-shirts (Channel V 2004).

5.4.6 Identification through Dressing Up

Heather: When I was younger… like 16 or 17 I used to do the fully get all dressed up, dye my hair, wear my best most, you know tattiest clothes you know so I would just look like a fan. Very indie, very Goth, I think I was going through a Goth stage at the time, you know and too much makeup.

Kevin: I was a 16 year old guy thinking I was king shit. In the middle of summer, doc martens, long cargo pants. I think 1997 was the year of the cargo pants cos everyone had cargo pants that when they first started coming out…I had this black shirt, I think I wore a Ministry shirt and I was melting mate. Don’t wear docs to the Big Day Out.

Jo: Has what you wear to a music festival changed?

Kevin: When I was younger I used to go for image like I used to have a special shirt like the Red Eye Records t-shirt with the big eye on it or Ministry or the white t-shirt I have ‘TV is Mind Control’ and now it’s basically either what’s on the floor of the bedroom or what will get me less sunburnt. Yeah, forget image.

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52 Doc Martens are a brand of shoes, boots in particular.
Dressing up at music festivals is part of the carnivalesque nature of the event. Often festivalgoers will design outfits especially for the event. They may do this by wearing an exaggerated/ stereotyped version of what they wear everyday. For example a Mohawk with fluorescent colours or a larger than usual piercing through their lip (see photograph seven). Some festivalgoers, however, take dressing up to the extreme. For example a group of guys who dressed up as Steve Irwin, the Crocodile hunter at Homebake 2003 (see photograph eight below) or a group of girls dressed up as cops with t-shirts that read ‘WE PREVE AND ERECT’ at the Big Day Out in 2005. By dressing up in such an outrageous fashion, often complete with oversized props, these festivalgoers are creating a spectacle.

Style and image are important for neo-tribal members as they are a means of trying out a new look and trying to create a common feeling. But it is also a means of recognition as the image functions as a kind of social cement. Therefore, Maffesoli argues dressing up in line with the nature of spectacle is used to ‘accentuate, directly or euphemistically, the sensitive-tactile dimensions of the social’ (Maffesoli 1988:149).

During the music festival people are engaged in what Maffesoli calls ‘the cult of the body and games of show’ (1988:148). These games of show are meaningful because they are part of an immense scene in which everyone becomes both an actor and a spectator at the same time.
Photo 7: Mohawk  BDO 2006

Photo 8: The Crocodile Hunters
Some festivalgoers are, however, wary of spectacular stylists as not truly being part of the festival culture. There was a mixed reaction from the festivalgoers during the interviews when asked about festivalgoers who dress up. Some of the festivalgoers saw dressing up as fake, arguing ‘you don’t have to dress up to be yourself’ whilst others enjoyed watching the people that had dressed up.

Pyesie has strong views relating to spectacular stylists as he explains:

Jo: Have you ever tried to design your own festival t-shirt?

Pyesie: Never, I was just about to mention that before, I fucking despise that. I dyed my hair once for the Green Day concert and that’s the last I’ll ever play dress ups. Cos I was green from head to toe. Everything turned green so never again, not even hair spray in the hair or anything like that. The way I go to Big Day Out is the way you’d see me at the shops so yeah na never play dress ups. And I used to really despise people that did it. There was a girl at school... I thought she was a techno, rocks up with her striped socks pulled up with fucking All-Stars on and tie on and just shit like that drives me nuts, it’s all about being yourself, you don’t have to dress up to do it. But if that’s how they dress in everyday life fair enough each to their own, when you know, if you don’t know the person then it’s a bit iffy but when you know them and you know that’s not what they’re about that fucking shits me.

Jo: What about the costumes?

Pyesie: It’s just a fashion; you’ve got to be in it to be cool.

53 Converse All Stars are a brand of shoes also known as chucks.
Jo: Do you think they are going to the festival just to play dress up?

Pyesie: Yeah just so they can be remembered, they’ve got a fucking image problem something wrong with them. People remember me from festivals cos I fucking talk them, not because of the way I dressed or anything. That’s how I met you guys at Splendour. I wasn’t fucking wearing a camel outfit or anything I was just standing there and just started chatting cos that’s what you do, that’s how you meet people. … Just to say at Big Day Out I dressed like this or you know or at Homebake I did that…they’re the tossers.

For Pyesie, dressing up is seen as fake, unless the festivalgoer dresses like that in their everyday lives. This is seemingly in contrast to Maffesoli’s argument that neo-tribes offer empathetic support for those individuals who want to try on a new mask. From the festivalgoers’ mixed responses, however, it is hard to determine if this is the case in reality. Perhaps Pyesie’s comment about not knowing everyone and giving them the benefit of the doubt saying ‘it’s ok if they dress like that everyday’ hints at the possibility of emotional support.

Focus group one also talked about the problems associated with dressing up. While it is seen as fun it is also questioned for its exhibitionism, as Nicole explains:

I think sometimes Big Day Out can be a little bit exhibitionist, a lot of performers in the crowd as well as on stage. But that’s fun too like you know all kudos to the PVC\textsuperscript{54} crowd at the Big Day Out… it’s very hot.

\textsuperscript{54} This is a reference to festivalgoers who wear clothing made from PVC or plastic.
Overall, in focus group one there was a clearly identified sense of otherness attached to the Gothic culture. This may have been because none of the respondents identified themselves as Goths. Perhaps as Pyesie noted, festivalgoers are unsure as to whether the people dressed in Goth fashion are playing dress ups or truly identify with that culture. This may explain my respondents’ reluctance to see these spectacular stylists as part of the indie culture. Festivalgoers seem to identify the spectacular stylists as another part of the spectacle of the festival.

Ted Polhemus (1995; 1997) argues that this DiY approach to the clothing style worn by some of the festivalgoers can be traced back to the ‘rapid escalation’ in the number of style tribes formed after Punk in the late seventies. He argues this is when young people first started to have an ever-increasing a range of options, in terms of variety and personal choice available to them. Costumes and interesting dress styles are admired by the other festivalgoers even if they themselves do not see the need to dress up. Chris enjoys the spectacle of watching people who dress up:

Not myself anyway, I’m not big on face paint and that kind of thing not that full on. But I enjoy watching when I go there and see people that have gone to the effort to do all that. It’s always interesting to watch anyway.

Wayne also expressed this same sentiment in his interview but adds that these spectacular stylists seem to want to make a statement:

But I know that a lot of the young ones…it’s a fashion statement. I like the festivals because a lot of the young ones do make a statement. And it’s good. Whatever statement you’re making, good on ‘em, make it. You know. But I personally go comfortable. A change of t-shirt…a bit sweaty in the mosh. [Laughs]
As for the more conservative festivalgoers, their style follows the traditional indie kid look:

Its key ingredients have always been over- or undersized items bought secondhand in charity shops, graphically distinctive t-shirts which indicate interest in some seriously obscure indie band, battered denim jeans (for girls often worn cut off with stripy leggings), army surplus garments and big shiny Dr Marten boots (Polhemus 1995:122).

Whilst this is still the case today and can be seen at Australian music festivals, nowadays, with indie kid style taken up by the fashion industry, you can buy ‘new’ retro t-shirts, ripped and/or faded jeans, hats, pins, and other clothing items that have an underprivileged style about them. Larger festival markets such as at Big Day Out and Homebake have a wide range of stalls selling recycled, hand-made, and new clothing that are mostly run by independent or small businesses. Major fashion labels such as Mooks, Converse, Levis, or Vans do not have stalls in these markets but they do sponsor the events and advertise in the festival program (see chapter eight).

The festivalgoers interviewed in this study were not spectacular stylists, unlike Muggleton’s (2000) study. As the festivals are usually held in the hot summer months and the days are long, comfort often wins out over fashion. As Liz, a music journalist, emphasized in her interview:

Liz: All I’m thinking about is being comfortable on the day. So I’m pretty boring in that respect.
Jo: So is comfort the most important thing?
Liz: Oh yeah, over style. I mean I wouldn’t just sort of turn up in trackie daks but it’s a bit of a sense of, particularly too, that’s the thing too if I’m going as a
reviewer or if I’m going you know, that I’m talking to people that I’ve interviewed in the past or I’m talking to people that I’ve worked with like publicists and stuff that I’ve worked with in the past and I try and look a bit respectable, but at the same time everybody’s kind of out in the skives, nobody’s kind of you know; there’s very few people that are completely dressed up to the nines. So as long as I look okay, but yeah I’m a pretty plain type person. No patterns and that type of thing I think it’s just easier to be neutral you know.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Through the exploration of this case study, I have found that indie music festivals might be anchoring places for the festivalgoers and yet at the same time they are commercialised events. It seems that the dual role of the festival as a representation of both a community and a commodity suits groups like the festivalgoers. The festivalgoer persona is only one of the masks that may be worn by the individuals studied in this thesis. Through wearing the festivalgoer mask, identification with others is created. Ritual clothing, especially t-shirts, are ‘identity markers’ for the festivalgoer as they indicate tribal belonging.

The commodity of the t-shirt could be claimed to be a linking image for festivalgoers. T-shirts, as linking images, have allowed for the creation of a connection between self-identity and collective identity. Festivalgoers use t-shirts- both DiY and commercial- to communicate their shared thoughts and feelings. This ultimately results in an emotional community characterised by neo-tribal sociality.
Festivals are full of spectacle and games of show both on stage and off, as some festivalgoers dress up in costumes or in spectacular fashions. This dressing up is, however, questioned by fellow festivalgoers, who are unsure as to whether people are just playing dress ups or are members of the tribe. It is somewhat difficult to determine if festivalgoers show empathetic support to festivalgoers who want to try on new masks. Yet within the indie culture there is an attitude that you can wear whatever you want as long as you have the confidence to pull it off. So perhaps there is some form of emotional support during festivals. As Chris explains:

I like that fact that you can just wear whatever you like and feel comfortable knowing that everyone else is doing the same thing. But as I dunno no other places I go or other times I go out I’d probably be more conscious of what I was wearing. Yeah it doesn’t tend to matter too much though, and yeah cause like I said a lot of the stuff gets damaged or ripped in the mosh so it’s not something that I put a lot of thought into.

Although indie culture is supposed to be about ‘back to basics’ and DiY culture, it seems the festivalgoers have embraced the commercialisation of their culture, especially in the case of the commercial appropriation of DiY t-shirts. In the next chapter I explore the meanings the festivalgoers attribute to their festival participation.
CHAPTER 6
FESTIVAL PARTICIPATION AND SOCIALITY

This chapter focuses on the creation of group sociality and identification at Australian indie music festivals. I argue that festivalgoers create sociality through the meanings they attribute to their festival participation. I use the community of festivalgoers as an ideal type of what Maffesoli (1996) refers to as a neo-tribe or emotional community. Further, I demonstrate through case studies of moshing and audience behaviours how the meanings behind festival participation are about more than just a fun day out. Although pleasure may be the most significant dimension of these festivals, festivalgoers attribute many different meanings to their festival participation. Even though the experience of attending an Australian indie music festival can be demanding and intense, I argue that it is through this intensity that festivalgoers begin to feel a sense of connectedness and belonging to each other and to the greater indie music scene. I conclude the chapter with an investigation of sociality outside of the festival-going season, through an exploration of the virtual aspects of the scene.

6.1 Ritual Dance: Moshing

The crowd roared and cheered, clapping their hands above their heads as the band walked on stage. The lead guitarist struck the first chord and the music began. From my elevated position I looked over the growing crowd as they began to move. The mass of people were rising and falling like rolling waves in the sea. They sang as they jumped up and down in time to the music. A lone sweaty body then rose from the ocean, flying high above the crowd, which knowingly
outstretched its arms to support the coming body and pass him on as he floated closer to the stage. He outstretched his arms toward the band, forming his hands into a sign language known only to them and then he gave an almighty shout: ‘rock ‘n’ roll!’ He was caught and dragged safely down over the front barricade by the security guards. The song continued and intensified as the front man strutted across the stage and started the chorus. More bodies arose from the ocean of people. Girls and shirtless guys with tribal tattoos in black ink tried to surf above the crowd, but the song got more intense and the crowd moved more vigorously turning into a rough sea. Legs, arms and bodies flew in every direction as the dust rose and engulfed the crowd. Finally the song ended and the dust settled for a brief moment as the sweat-saturated crowd cheered, clapped and anticipated the next song.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Photo 9: Crowd Surfer at Homebake 2005.}

\textsuperscript{55} Extract from 2003 Big Day Out field notes.
6.1.1 To Mosh or Not to Mosh?

The mosh pit is the most commonly described feature of any indie music festival. To outsiders or non-festivalgoers the act of moshing is seen as strange and unusual. Non-festivalgoers find it difficult to understand how a group of young boys and girls violently jumping up and down whilst simultaneously smashing into each other could possibly be seen as dancing. Moshing, however, embraces eccentric and inappropriate behaviour, which is a key characteristic of the carnivalesque.

William Tsitsos (1999) conducted a study in San Francisco of twelve moshers, six men and six women, who were asked to talk about their personal experiences. He found that according to the respondents they mosh and slam dance (see below) because of its adrenaline pumping nature; they can vent their aggression and frustration while showing appreciation for the band. Tsitsos found that moshing was mostly related to punk-derived music bands such as Green Day or the Living End and to a lesser extent to some indie-guitar orientated music. The focus of Tsitsos’ (1999) study was on moshing as a dance rather than the hyped media image. He argues that the media have a misguided image of moshing as violent audience behaviour which is seen as a threat to public safety as fans act out the hostile lyrics of the bands.

Moshing developed from the Punk pogo dance. Pogo dancing is when dancers jump up and down as if on pogo sticks with some body contact between dancers. Moshing differs in that moshers keep their bodies bent over and compacted and they swing either one or both arms across the body. If a moshers swings only one arm, the other arm is used to guard against collision with fellow moshers. The ‘mosh pit’ is the area
in which dancing takes place. It is semi-circular and usually formed in front of the stage. It forms on the first note of a song as people will rush to it. The pit may or may not reform on the next song (Tsitsos 1999).

Along with moshing, slam dancing, stage diving and crowd surfing (see photograph nine above) are also found in the mosh pit. Tsitsos describes slam dancing (or circles) as

…involv[ing] fast movement. Often, this movement takes the form of everyone in the pit running counter clockwise, occasionally slamming into each other. The dance involves some arm swinging, but it is usually just one arm in motion. When dancers are running counter clockwise, the swinging of the right arm serves a double function. On the one hand it allows dancers to slam into people and then quickly push them away and on the other it helps dancers gain momentum while running in a counter clockwise circle (1999:406).

Kat, a festivalgoer and keen moshier, called the area in which slam dancing takes place, ‘punch pits.’ She describes them as ‘that’s like circles, they [festivalgoers] make circles and they run around punching everyone.’ Meg and focus group one referred to slam dancing circles as ‘fruity rings.’ I asked Meg to explain what the experience of being in a ‘fruity ring’ was like:

I was just running around and then you start pushing people and I got out before all the hitting started. I think I was the only girl in there. It kind of just starts off nice and then it gets really violent. People get dragged in or freely join and then it gets bigger. And when it gets rough it starts getting smaller. It’s dangerous fun. When someone starts bleeding it just stops…It gets to the point where everyone just goes oh hang
on a minute there’s a band playing you’ve missed half of it cos you were cheering at the fruity ring or looking at it or you’re in it and the music’s just a background to the violence. I don’t think it lasted that long, they only tend to go for like a minute max. It’s pretty quick.

While it may appear that fruity rings are violent and anti-social forms of dancing, there are unwritten rules of conduct within them. It is traditionally recognised that if someone falls down, the other dancers pick them up and as Meg highlighted if someone gets hurt the circles stop (see Desrosiers 2002).

Stage diving [jumping off the stage into the mosh pit] and crowd surfing [surfing on top of the mosh pit by being held up and pushed by fellow moshers] are also associated with these dancers. Brendan describes the experience of crowd surfing:

It’s just like it’s a weird experience you don’t know if you’re gunna fall or where you’re gunna end up, whether security’s gunna grab you. It’s fun though, you get carried and you get taken down the front and you get sort of kicked out to the back and so you would waste a good spot.

Pyesie, like Brendan, sees crowd surfing as fun but offers some words of advice:

It’s pretty cool if you get a good roll going that’s pretty cool. When you get dropped it’s not so crash hot but if you go all the way up to the front. Not so much these days cause they [security] fucking rip one down and they give you a bit of a flogging from what I’ve seen on the tele. But in the old days they used you know grab you and make sure you’re alright and give you a drink of water and shit and send you on your way to get out there and do it. But yeah mainly when you’re up there I found anyway just sort of go with it. Don’t fight,
kick your legs around cause if you kick someone the first thing they do is either punch you or pull you down and kick you or whatever. So yeah just sort of chill out when you’re up there and you’ll be right.

For most of the festivalgoers I interviewed, crowd surfing was seen as something younger kids do when they first start going to festivals. It is seen as a kind of rite of passage and as something you grow out of. There is, however, an element of a crowd surfing ethic amongst festivalgoers, such as if you are too heavy or too big than it is not ‘cool’ to crowd surf as you could hurt people. As Chris talks about:

Jo: Do you crowd surf?

Chris: I try not to. When I was little I used to and it used to be a big thing, and it was a lot of fun. But yeah I dunno it is pretty frustrating in there some big blokes jump on little kids and just virtually kick them in the head and that kind of thing so. My mates had a few fights in there as well just from people unknowingly crowd surfing and hit him in the head. And just little scuffles like that would break out all the time. And I dunno I used to do it myself but now knowing how much of a pain in the arse it can be to do that, and land on some poor little kid. Probably, try to stay away from it as much as possible. I even find myself trying to protect the little kids in there. I know it sounds stupid but if you get some big bloke and you see him coming, and there’s a bunch of girls in front, and you know they’re gunna head butt, just try to get in and grabbing the bloke’s foot or whatever to try and stop [him] from kicking someone in the face. So yeah I’m a
lot more aware of what’s going now than I used to be, in there.

The element of feeling protective towards girls and younger kids displayed in this interview extract by Chris highlights that there are unwritten rules, mores and norms within the chaos of the mosh pit. The fights that Chris mentions may be a result of some festivalgoers not realising the need to follow these mores and norms.

While the mosh pit can be a violent space, at the same time there is an unquestionable sense of togetherness. This contradiction is a key element of the carnivalesque nature of moshing. In the mosh pit, festivalgoers are able to experience free and familiar contact with others, as they bump and jump into one another.

Simon Frith notes that music provides individuals with an ‘intensely subjective sense of being social’ (1996:273). This intense engagement with the music by the festivalgoers in the mosh pit can create a sense of neo-tribal sociality and belonging. In regards to Maffesoli’s neo-tribalism, traditional distinctions and boundaries like class and gender disappear in the chaos of the mosh pit as the music unites the festivalgoers (see Ambrose 2001b). Frith (1996) suggests that through responding to music we are drawn into affective and emotional alliances. For outsiders or non-festivalgoers, moshing is regarded as eccentric and inappropriate. Yet, for the festivalgoers, the act of moshing demonstrates some tribal alliance. This is most apparent when there are crowd-surfers in the mosh pit. Crowd-surfers are thrown into the air from the back of the pit by their friends, above the heads of the moshers. Fellow moshers then stretch their arms above their head to catch and ‘pass on’ the crowd surfer. This requires a certain amount of trust within the group, especially on behalf of the crowd surfer.
Paradoxically, while moshing can provide a feeling of connectedness for the festivalgoers, both crowd surfing and stage diving have been banned at music festivals as they are extremely dangerous activities that often result in injury (see Ambrose 2001b; Tsitsos 1999). Many of the festivalgoers interviewed for this study told stories about these dangers. I have included two accounts below that demonstrate the overwhelming energy and intimidating nature of the mosh pit. In both cases the festivalgoers feel a loss of individuality as they become part of the mass and a ‘mob mentality’ takes control.

![Photo 10: ‘No Stage Diving’ sign near stage at Homebake 2003](image)

### 6.1.2 Get a Kick in the Head

Jo: Do you have any other stand out memories from festivals?

Liz: Band wise?

Jo: Yeah it can be band wise.

Liz: Big day [Out]. Probably getting kicked in the head at [band] TISM.
Jo: Were you in a mosh?
Liz: Yeah. TISM’s awesome, but I’ve never seen so many huge built-like-brick-shit-house blokes in my life. You’ve just gotta be really, really, careful what you wish for, hey. Cos they just descended and it took about twenty minutes to get out.

Jo: Did you go into the TISM mosh area intending to mosh or was it just to get up the front?
Liz: Yeah. Oh it was both. Because I had had reasonably good experiences and I thought cos I’m one of those short girls and I mean I’m aware of where I should be and where I shouldn’t be. And I mean I’m not one of those tiny little size eight, forty kilo things, but at the same time, sheer height means that I can’t. I’ve just gotta be aware and people just, literally don’t notice you. You know, so umm I thought I had this grand plan, which what I normally do is go up the front but to the side on one side, cause most people when they get really rough and they surge forward would do it directly in front of the band. So I’m just on the side of the bass player or just on the side of the keyboards or whatever is on the other side. I’m generally alright. And before they played I was trying to get up the front cause it was under the big top and umm I sort of got about I guess it would have been fifteen metres from the front but it was in the middle, and I thought oh I’ll be right I’ll just keep, I’ll just move over when I get to the front but I didn’t get there. And like I said, I lasted about a song and a half. And then I thought I’ll try and turn around and get out. And this guy’s gone crack and in the middle and you know everybody was pretty nice about it, but it was just a bit overwhelming, I guess I just thought oh man!
Jo: So, just some crowd surfer came down and smacked you in the head.

Liz: Yeah, yeah and that was enough for me. I’m just gunna go and sit this one out I think.

### 6.1.3 Crowd Surfing as an Escape

Jo: Do you have any interesting mosh pit or crowd surfing stories?

Kara: Well one time I had to crowd surf to get out. That was pretty bad.

Jo: And why did you want to get out?

Kara: Umm cos it was the Foo Fighters playing and I don’t mind them, but I’m not like a huge fan and the crowd was just like really, really tight and rough and everyone was jumping and I just felt like I was going to fall over and I stayed in there for probably like an hour and then I just got so sick of it, and I just said that I wanted to get out and some big guy behind me just grabbed me and chucked me on top of the crowd. I was just like oh thanks. And that was like really bad. My friend, she did the same thing and she ended up chipping her tooth that day.

There is more to dancing at music festivals then just moshing, crowd surfing and stage diving. Festival grounds are filled with regular movement and not just random people walking from stage to stage. In the following section I look at dancing outside the designated mosh pit.
6.2 Dancing Outside the Pit: Random Dancing and Dancing with Strangers

Standing between the ninth and tenth pole on the periphery of the huge circus tent which was appropriately named the ‘Supertop,’ I noticed an unusual style of dancing. I was standing with a group of guys watching Eskimo Joe play, when I noticed the way the guys were dancing. One guy in particular, Joe, seemed to enjoy this style of dancing more than the others, so I enquired as to what he was doing. Joe replied with a cheeky grin ‘I’m random dancing!’ I was not sure what he meant. I guessed it could mean dancing with strangers or random people. So I asked, puzzled, ‘Why?’ He replied, ‘Why not?’ and he continued to dance in this unusual style. I could see from the smile on this face that he was enjoying himself, or was that just a side-effect from the beer?56

I first noticed this behaviour early on the Sunday morning at the 2004 Splendour in the Grass festival, and as the day progressed it seemed to increase. The dance was quite simple like a shuffle backwards and forwards, with the odd turn and maybe a little jump, whilst shaking and twisting your hands around in a mysterious fashion (something similar to skanking57). It seemed alcohol had a lot to do with random dancing; I guess the more intoxicated you became, the more likely you were to feel confident enough to dance with random people.

56 Extract from 2004 Splendour in the Grass field notes.
57 Skanking is a form of dance usually performed to reggae or ska beat. It consists of nodding, swinging your arms at a ninety degree angle or so, and kicking around your feet. It can be done alone but is more fun in groups.
From my observations, I found that random dancing meant, dancing with people a few rows ahead of you who were not already dancing and seeing their reaction. Wayne also called this ‘sneaking’, because you sneak (dance low in a crouching–like position) up on them from behind and then dance around them. The ‘target’ or ‘targets’ are both male and female. In one particular case a very ‘cool looking dude’ (probably in his mid twenties, wearing thick glasses, an old fashioned golf cap and tweed blazer) was watching the band with a girl, dressed in the female version of his outfit (although it had more of a touch of fifties flair to it), when Joe the random dancer squeezed or sneaked his way in between them. He started to dance in a circle around them. Wayne upon seeing this decided to join in, sneaking up from the other side, keeping low, and then popping up in front of the couple waving to Joe and then sneaking off again. At first the couple did not know what to think; maybe they thought Joe was a bit crazy. They smiled and tried to continue to watch the band. Joe then started to make eye contact with both of them, trying unsuccessfully to get them to join him in his dance. So Joe stopped annoying them and danced by himself in a small space in front of them until the end of the set.

The reactions of other festivalgoers to random dancing were mixed; some people became slightly annoyed while others joined in the fun. Sometimes random dancers may meet up with other random dancers. Random dancing can vary in duration from a few minutes, to one song, to a whole set, but usually not longer than that.

What is the rationale behind random dancing? For the most part it is perceived as fun, although it may also be a way to make new friends. From my observations I realised it was a way for the festivalgoers to create personal/ group dancing space, as
quite often when a large crowd is watching a band, it can become quite cosy. There is little space between people in large crowds and dancing allows a space to be created as other festivalgoers do not want to be accidentally hit by flying arms and legs, so they step back from the dancers, resulting in the desired space.

Wayne also suggested the need to ‘fight for the space or to hold the space.’ Every year his group picks a spot to watch bands from and at least one member of the group will stay there for most of the day. This warlike strategy is found to be necessary quite often during the day as the crowd surges. I noticed that between bands, the exodus of the crowd can be quite strong, so the boys form a circle to discourage people trying to shove past them, and continue to hold the space.

From my interviews, I discovered that random dancing or dancing with strangers is a common occurrence as the following interview extracts demonstrate:

Jo: Have you danced with strangers at a festival?
Meg: Not really it’s just kind of on the way past. They see me acting like an idiot join and in and then I just keep going. I think everyone just kind of moves around and stuff.

Nathan: At the Falls festival first time we went two years ago we sang along to *Land Down Under* by Pennywise with a big group of strangers and friends as well. And when they counted in new year’s and some guys that I’d just met two days before which [sic] were friends of friends starting singing this chant and then we all starting singing it and the whole crowd almost started singing it, like half our side of the crowd started singing and it was great. That was our chance when
we knew where everyone was and we all got together right before midnight and then just broke out into a chant.

Heather describes a slightly different experience:

Yeah. I suppose like if you’re in the Boiler [room] and it’s packed you’re necessarily dancing with strangers… Big Day Out this year I wasn’t down on the actual stadium floor I was just like on the concourse cos it was easy to see and I was just dancing up and down to Chemical Brothers being a bit of a dick and this random guy just started talking to me and starting dancing with me for like about 10 minutes, and we were just like standing next to each other dancing and chatting. And then at the end of it he’s like can I dance with you, I’m like but you are dancing with me. He’s like that’s not what I meant, and I’m like I’ve got a boyfriend. He’s like oh. I suppose there’s like dancing with strangers and ‘dancing with strangers’. I don’t normally go out and pick up at a music festival or anything like that…

Dancing may help in the creation of the feeling of temporary affectual communities that are commonly described as a characteristic of neo-tribalism. Jeanne explains her festival dance style and offers an explanation as to why some people do not like to dance:

Jo: What kind of dancing do you do?
Jeanne: Jump around…most of the time you don’t have much room to like bust a groove or anything so it really is just like jumping and stuff like that it does depend on the people that you go with though cos if you’re like at the back and you go like do you want to dance the people around you aren’t dancing. And some of my
friends are like no I don’t want to dance at all, so if you want to dance you go further up the front because most people at the front tend to dance.

Jo: Why do you think some people don’t dance?
Jeanne: I don’t understand why people don’t dance personally like I don’t know maybe they just feel really uncoordinated and can’t feel the rhythm or something.

Jo: They might be a bit embarrassed
Jeanne: Even though everyone else is sort of embarrassing themselves and jumping and stuff like that some people just don’t feel comfortable.

Jo: Have you ever danced with strangers?
Jeanne: If you’re dancing next to someone and you accidentally bump them you sort of smile and start [to] dance with them.

The music festivals studied in this thesis combine various musical genres and hence different styles of dance are commonly seen at festivals. The dance styles are as diversified as the music and bands themselves. I asked the festivalgoers if they danced at music festivals as opposed to moshing and all replied that they did. Tim’s response was particularly interesting:

Jo: Do you dance at music festivals?
Tim: It depends on the music. So if it’s a reggae kind of stuff, you kind of bob up and down or something or if it’s rock you just kind of knock your head or if it’s in the Boiler room you just go nuts chucking your feet and legs around.
Describing dancing at the Big Day Out, Tim recognises that depending on which of the stages you are at, such as the Boiler Room or the Main Stage, the style of music changes and so does your dance style. At the 2005 Sydney Big Day Out, a particularly strange thing happened on the main stage in regard to musical genre diversity as Brendan explains:

Jo: How were the Chemical Brothers at the Big Day Out?

Brendan: Yeah it was good. Cos when they come out and [the song] Hey Girl Hey Boy started and that whole doof doof doof kicked in and the whole crowd has just started dancing as one, like looking around it was funny cos we had just seen a mosh pit a couple of minutes earlier or whatever.

Jo: Who played before them?

Brendan: Beastie boys

Jo: So that was still a bit dance wasn’t it?

Brendan: Yeah a little bit but before that was Powderfinger and that was very moshing.

Jo: Did the moshers kind of leave and then it got dancey?

Brendan: Beastie [boys] had not much of a mosh but like for one of the songs Intergalactic or Sabotage they had a mosh, but then, Chemical Brothers was more people just spaced out and got their own dancing spot and they just went crazy, just like myself.

The change from rock to dance music on the 2005 main stage was a deliberate move on the part of the by Big Day Out organisers. In previous years popular dance acts had headlined the Boiler room which would quickly fill to capacity. This resulted in many festivalgoers being locked out of the stage, who then complained about missing the band. The 2005 main stage was organised to include Beasties Boys and
the Chemical Brothers which meant a sudden shift in audience behaviour from moshing to dancing. This change in musical genre was accepted by the festivalgoers without any controversy. Perhaps this could be seen as further evidence of the festivalgoers having eclectic musical tastes.

In general, dancing at festivals is quite unique, as Liz explains:

> The beautiful thing about those types of festivals is you don’t have to worry about looking like a lame because the guy next to you does. It’s pretty good. And that’s the good thing people dance everywhere. They dance wherever they feel like it, where they hear the music so there’s no … pressure… because it’s such a diversity you don’t have to worry about staying in that … beating one drum kind of thing.

Dancing at a music festival is one element of experiential consumption as after the event no material commodity is taken home, just the memories (see Malbon 1999). Dancing enhances the festival atmosphere as it helps create a relaxed fun-filled vibe, where you do not have to worry about what you are wearing or how bad your dance moves are. As Chris explains further:

> We never get that chance to be that huge group of us dancing and no one cares it doesn’t matter what you’re wearing and that kind of thing too which is also good. So even like, my brother will never dance anywhere but when we go there [the festival], we always have a good time, everyone just dances and no one gives a shit, so it's always good.

Another aspect of festival dance mentioned by Nathan, below, is emulating dance moves from their indie idols like Rob Harvey from band the Music.
Jo: Do you dance at music festivals?
Nathan: I try to. I dance pretty badly.
Jo: What do you call the style of dancing that you do?
Nathan: Yeah I’d say crap. My special dance move is the fist pump in the air.
Jo: Is that its name?
Nathan: Yeah I haven’t patented it but I don’t think anyone else will. But my other friends they really get into the music and try and emulate umm Rob Harvey from the Music. They dance like him, which gets pretty dangerous cos it’s fairly crowded.

Even the rain does not stop the dancing at music festivals. I remember a very rainy Homebake back in 1998, nick-named Mudbake by the media. A huge muddy puddle had formed near the main stage. Girls and guys were dancing in the puddle, their bodies covered in mud, their hair was dripping wet, yet they skipped and jumped, arms flapping in time to the music, as they spun around with huge grins on their faces. Dancing is a common element at all music festivals, whether it is moshing, slam dancing, crowd surfing, random dancing or just general daggy dancing. Many festivalgoers love to dance and move to the music.

Through the act of dancing at a music festival the festivalgoers develop a sense of identification and temporal community. While dancing, the festivalgoers’ individual identities then become superseded by their identification with the group which continues into a kind of emotional community in which the festivalgoers can engage in neo-tribal social relations.
6.3 Kills, Pills and Sunday Thrills

In this section I investigate other key elements of festival participation in order to discover further ways in which neo-tribal sociality forms at indie music festivals. Firstly, I explore the non-verbal interactions among festivalgoers. I then look at how drug and alcohol use affects the development of sociality. Finally I investigate how a shared sense of fandom creates a sense of belonging for the festivalgoers.

6.3.1 Rock On! Festivalgoers’ Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

The symbolic sensual language of the festivalgoers is evident during the festival, in both verbal and non-verbal forms. Cova and Cova (2001a) relate the verbal form to magical or ritualistic words which for festivalgoers include words such as mosh, crowd surf, rock on, gig, set and pogo, for example. Non-verbal forms of communication or body language are commonly used during festivals due to the noise. Hand gestures often replace words as a sign of approval or disapproval of certain bands. Hand gestures include horns (little finger and index finger pointed up whilst the other two fingers and thumb form a kind of triangle. See photograph eleven below), rock-on (similar to horns but the thumb is also pointed out), peace (index finger and middle finger make a V shape, all remaining fingers are down), power (fist in the air), ridgie didge (little finger and thumb out with the rest of the fist closed) and sticking up the middle finger to show degradation or mocking of authority.
As mentioned in the observation at the start of the mosh section, festivalgoers have their own non-verbal language. During bands’ performances, especially in between songs, fans will applaud and cheer but in a very rock and roll way. Often you will see the crowd outstretch their arms above their heads and pointing their index finger towards the band, displaying such hands gestures as rock on, power and so forth. Also during the chorus of a song, whilst singing along out aloud they will strike the air with a closed fist, in time to the music, to show their appreciation for the band.

6.3.2 Sociality and the Consumption of Alcohol and Illegal drugs

The consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs is another element of festival participation. The consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs, before and during the festival, may contribute to a releasing of inhibitions thereby allowing the festivalgoer to become more social (See Matheson 2005). As Jeanne told me:

It [drinking] kind of loosens you up a bit. You’re not as likely to just stand at the side. You’re like sort of up around a bit, you chat to more people and just more open to the general experience. I don’t think I’ve ever got absolutely smashed at
a festival, never reached that point where I’m like stumbling around and can’t remember where my tent is or anything like that. But yeah I definitely drink a bit.

The consumption of alcohol in a ritualistic manner as described by Chris and Kat below demonstrates the significance of drinking, as one of the ways festivalgoers create sociality and a sense of identification with each other:

Chris: Every year, cos I’ve got two brothers that are pretty much my age so, well we’re all friends with their friends and what not, and every year before the Big Day Out we meet up at the pub down the road... nice and early at about 10 o’clock and get started straight away. And basically there’s a lot of people that go, a lot of my brothers’ friends that I don’t really see, besides when I see them that year. I always get together and everyone talks about it [the festival] leading up to it and that. So it’s like just meeting everyone again, well since the year before, and yeah just get stuck into the drink pretty early and just talk about the day ahead and plan what you’re gunna see and what time things are on, that kind of thing. So there’s normally a big group, there’s probably about fifteen or sixteen of us every year that do it.

Kat: We, my group of friends, go around to one of our friends’ places and just there’s probably about twenty of us. And he’s got like this little shed and we just all sit in the shed and get pumped up and listen to music really loud and this is like 8 o’clock in the morning and we’ve already got the beers cracked open. So
that’s probably a ritual and then we catch a mini bus up [to the festival]

Jo: So when you go to your friend’s house in the morning and you’re all getting pumped up, what are some of the things you do? Like do you listen to the music that’s going to be played at the festival?

Kat: Yeah I guess we do actually. We do. There’s like for instance last year the Foo Fighters played that was like a huge thing for us cos everyone just loves the Foo Fighters in our group so we had them pumping really, really, really loud. Probably really annoying the hell out of the neighbours.

For the festivalgoers, attending a festival is a special celebration and in many cultures, alcohol plays an important role in celebrations. As Pyesie explains:

Hand in hand it goes together…it’s hot, summer, sun’s out, have a nice cold beer or four or five.

For Australians, the consumption of beer ‘is an important component of self definition’ (Mackay 1989 cited in Pettigrew 2002:108). It is ‘a mechanism that communicates group membership, giving drinkers a way of differentiating themselves from some other social segments and aligning themselves with others’ (Mackay 1989 cited in Pettigrew 2002:108). This is especially the case for the festivalgoer as drinking is a feature of the festivals.

Festivalgoers through their consumption of alcohol give symbolic meaning to the product. They create a relationship between the product’s meaning and their sense of self. This means the consumption of alcohol then becomes a ‘communication tool’ allowing the festivalgoers to be able to express themselves non-verbally (Pettigrew
2002). In his interview Nathan talks about a photo he took at festival that demonstrates this:

I’ve got a photo from the Falls festival from two years ago, of this guy standing on a barricade with a beer bong pointing to the bar and getting his mates to bring more beer back. I took a photo of it cos I thought it was great. He had the big screen behind him and the band was playing and he was chugging a beer bong and everyone was cheering.

Along with alcohol use, illicit drug consumption is also present amongst festivalgoers. The illicit drugs used by the interviewees included ecstasy (pills) and marijuana (weed, joints, hash cookies). Only a minority of those interviewed indicated recreationally using or experimenting with drugs at festivals. As Nathan explains:

I think it’s unavoidable. Like there’s always gunna be people using drugs at festivals; it’s just part of it. Yeah I admit to it. I wanted to experience it. I was young and umm wanted to try it and see what it was like.

Tim also experimented with drugs. He explains his experience of taking ecstasy:

I guess up til last year I wasn’t really into the whole experimenting with substances thing and I kind of avoided and got really annoyed about that kind of stuff when other people did it. And when I was at the Falls festival I actually tried it. Well just tried an Ecstasy and I could understand why people take it. And so there’s this whole other thing now about going to festivals. I can understand why people wanna do that kind of stuff. So it was a bit of a pivotal moment in my life just realising that people wanna do that and that’s cool as well.
Drug use is to some extent ‘normalised’ as part of the experience of festival culture (see Duff 2003). Not all festival goers chose to experiment with drugs and the use of such substances is not condoned by the festival organisers. The festivalgoers generally accept, however, that drugs and alcohol are part of the festival culture. As Liz jokingly commented, ‘sometimes the gig hasn’t really started until you can smell the pot.’

6.3.3 Audience Behaviours: Fandom and Sociality

The Silverchair Explosion

Sophie: I reckon one of the standout memories is that of Silverchair in Melbourne. Cos Silverchair were one of the first home-grown or Triple J [acts] and I remember hearing about them but I hadn’t actually gone to see them. When I turned up at Big Day Out and everyone’s like you’ve really got to go and see this band Silverchair. I went over there and I just could not believe it. Like in Sydney there was people just hanging off poles, trees and you look out, and everyone’s struggling for a position. Some people I speak to now, they’re like we couldn’t even get near it, we had to go and see something else, we couldn’t even get in that area. And the one [BDO] that happened in Melbourne when that guy did the summersault off the roof and the same thing like you look along the roof that there’s kids are sitting on and there’s a security guy and he’s trying to control, it’s absolutely impossible, there’s no way he can control what’s going on. And people are hanging off rooves and the drains coming off and dudes in doc martens and ripped jeans and flannies and it’s all about the style of the time. And that was even before the band
played and when the band played it was absolutely even crazier.

Meeting PJ Harvey

Kat: We got up there [Byron Bay] on the Friday. And on Friday night, me and my friend decided to go out to the pub. And we were just hanging around the pub and then we saw this girl there, and were like hey that looks like PJ Harvey. And so, it was her. And we’re pretty big fans of her, so we decided we really didn’t want to bother her because she was just sort of keeping to herself a bit. So we just went up sort of around her and starting talking to some guys that were with her. And it turned out it was her band, her roadie, her tour manager, her sound engineer and everyone, so we started talking to them and stuff and they were really cool. Well umm, we ended up talking a lot to PJ and stuff and then she ended up playing my favourite song for me at Splendour and we were in the front row and the guitarist after she played it, he said, pointed to me and goes ‘that was for you.’ And that was really cool and then the next day, after Splendour on the Saturday night we saw them out at the pub again and then they asked us if we wanted to go to their sold out secret show the next night for free. And so they put us on the guest list for that and yeah it was pretty fun.

These two accounts could reflect two types of fandom/neo-tribal sociality found at music festivals. The first type of sociality is found among the festivalgoers. This was demonstrated in Sophie’s account of the Silverchair explosion at the Big Day Out above and in pervious chapters. With Sophie’s case, festivalgoers had a shared
fandom for Silverchair and tried their best to get a good view of the band. The second type of sociality is found between the festivalgoers and the bands. This was demonstrated in Kat’s story above, in which she was able to interact with PJ Harvey and her band.

All the festivalgoers I interviewed were to some extent fans, either of certain bands or of the festivals themselves. Barry Divola (1998) in his writings on fandom has suggested that all fans, no matter what type of music, have a shared bond of their obsessiveness. This bond unites the festivalgoers and creates a feeling of neo-tribal sociality.

Divola (1998) has identified ritual fan behaviors which can be used to explain the ways in which festivalgoers are able to participate in a festival. These include: the cigarette lighter aloft during the ballads, girls up on shoulders and throwing things up on stage. These illustrate the fandom neo-tribal sociality found among festivalgoers and between the festivalgoers and the bands. These ideal types of fandom neo-tribal sociality are explored in the examples below.

Cigarette lighter aloft during the ballads

The cigarette lighter in the air during the ballads refers to the moments during a band’s performance when they slow things down a little to play a ballad. For instance, at Splendour in the Grass in 2004 during Powderfinger’s performance of These Days from their Odyssey Number Five album, festivalgoers lit their cigarette lighters and held them at arms length above their heads, swaying and singing along.
As Brendan explains below, however there has been a change in this behaviour at festivals:

Brendan: I used to see a lot of cigarette lighters during songs but you don’t see it as much now, you see these instead [holds up his mobile phone]. People hold up their phones for songs like. I have a few times.

Jo: Is it to record the song?

Brendan: Na, just to for like people who can’t make it, like my older sister I hold it up for certain songs if she wants to hear it. You see those more now than cigarette lighters.

This is an interesting observation made by Brendan. Unlike holding up cigarette lighters which usually only happens during ballads, illuminated mobile phones may be held aloft during festivals at any time. The reason Brendan gives for this is to enable the person on the other end to be able to hear the song and feel a connection to the festivalgoer and the band even though they cannot physically be there. As suggested in chapter four, this example shows that neo-tribal membership exists at all times. In this case, members of neo-tribes do not have to be physically present to feel part of the scene.
As photograph twelve above illustrates, girls (and guys) get up on other festivalgoers’ shoulders during a performance in order to get a better view of the band. Some of the vertically challenged festivalgoers explained to me that they would ask their friends or even strangers to put them up on their shoulders for one song so they could get a good view of the band and thus a stronger ‘fandom’ sense of connection. Amanda and Charmaine recollect about Silverchair’s performance at the 1995 Sydney Big Day Out:

Amanda: I remember being so crowded and we pulled over some bins and me and a friend stood on them and there was people climbing the poles on the side of the stage. It was great fun.

Charmaine: Yeah it was Silverchair. Oh it was awesome. I was so excited and I hopped on some guy’s shoulders. I think it was because they [Silverchair] were so big at the time as well.

Jo: You just grabbed some random guy and got on his shoulders?
Charmaine: I couldn’t see cos I was very short so this guy offered.

It can get quite crowded at festivals during popular bands’ performances. Often festivalgoers need to resort to more than just getting on someone else’s shoulders to get a good view of the band. Festivalgoers will climb up poles or on top of bins, buildings and whatever else they can to get a better view of the band. At Homebake 2004, during the Machine Gun Fellatio set which was held under the big top to a full capacity crowd, two festivalgoers, a guy and a girl, decided to climb up the two main tent posts to get a better view of the band. The crowd cheered as they raced each other to the top of the pole. When the band realised what was happening they told the dare devils to get down. At first the pair did not listen. So the band informed them that they would not play until they came down. This naturally upset the fans in the crowd, the same people who had moments earlier supported this stunt. The crowd booed and the band started a chant ‘get down, get down, get down.’ When the dare devils were safely on the ground the band continued their set.

*Throwing things on stage*

Divola (1998) has suggested that fans show their appreciation for a band by throwing things up on stage. During Jet’s set at Homebake 2003, festivalgoers were throwing glow sticks up on stage, at one point hitting the lead singer in the head, but the band played on regardless. This is perhaps because the crowd was disappointed with Jet’s performance. At other times festivalgoers will throw things on stage to show their admiration for the band, such as blown up condoms, shoes, water bottles, beer cans or anything else that is floating around the mosh pit. Some performers like Spod and
Peaches like to get in amongst their fans and share the ‘love’ as part of their performance, which in a carnivalesque way blurs the line between the performers and the stage. Kara talks about her experience of throwing things on stage, when she was watching Peaches at the Big Day Out in Melbourne 2004:

Yeah we gave Peaches a necklace one time at the Big Day Out, last year, no this year. It was just some crap umm 50 cent necklace or something that my sister was wearing… because Peaches kept jumping up in the audience and stuff. So my sister like put it on her and then she was like ‘thank you’ and then she ran around with it and it got all tangled in her hair. So then she put it in her mouth and started running around with it in her mouth.

In this section I have demonstrated two types of ‘fandom’ neo-tribal sociality found at music festivals: firstly, fandom sociality among the festivalgoers and secondly, fandom sociality between the festivalgoers and the bands. From my observations and fieldwork I have found through these three examples of ‘fandom’ that neo-tribal sociality between the fans and the bands leads to an innate feeling of sociality between the festivalgoers themselves (the first type of neo-tribal sociality identified), making these two ideal type closely interrelated.

Overall, it can be argued that the festivalgoers have created a sense of togetherness and neo-tribal sociality through their festival participation. But other than pleasure gained from these experiences what meanings do festivalgoers attribute to these experiences of neo-tribal sociality?
6.4 We are all in this Together. The Meaning Festivalgoers Attribute to their Festival Participation

woke up this morning
i suddenly realised
we’re all in this together
i started smiling
cos you were smiling
and we’re all in this together (Lee 2005).

As an Aussie music fan, I religiously attend Homebake every year. In 2005, I took my sister and her friend to the festival. It was their first festival experience. I was excited about taking them because it was a chance for me to pass on my many years of festival going to a new generation. The day became a real family affair when we met up with my sister, her husband and a group of their mates. We sat in the shade of the fig trees that are dotted throughout the domain and watched the action on the main stage. In the early evening, after many hours of dancing in the sun, Ben Lee was due to perform on the main stage. My sister and her friend were looking forward to watching him, and never having seen him live before I was keen to check out his set. I danced and sung along to the songs with my sister, her friend and a few strangers that happened to be standing nearby. What amazed me about his set was how it brought everyone who was watching together. There was a feeling in the air of belonging. His music was uplifting and celebratory, especially when he played ‘We’re All in this Together,’ and everyone sung the chorus in unison. Then, at one point in the song, he changed the words to ‘Homebake: we’re all in this together.’ It just fitted the moment so perfectly, as we were all truly there for the same reason: to celebrate Australian music.
For Stanley Waterman, ‘festivals are cultural artefacts which are not simply bought and consumed but which are also accorded meaning through their active incorporation into people’s lives.’ He argues that festivals embody the representation of contemporary gatherings through spectacle and consumption in an era of flexibility (Waterman 1998:56). Similarly, Gibson and Connell argue that festivals are one of the ways in which individuals construct their personal and collective identities, as through participating in the festival, festivalgoers are able to shape and contest their field of meaning (2005:250).

From my interviews with Australian indie music festivalgoers, I found that for them, pleasure was the most important aspect of the festivals. As Brendan commented on what a festival means to him:

A fun day out. A chance to see some bands that you probably wouldn’t see. A chance to see different styles of music.

Music festivals involve what Michael Clarke refers to as ‘transitory pleasures’ (1982: xi). Festivals are infrequent and short-lived events that permit festivalgoers to indulge in temporality and pleasure. This is especially evident if attending a weekend camping festival, like Falls or Splendour in the Grass, which can involve a festivalgoer travelling long distances. In order for the festivalgoers to commit themselves to a long journey there has to be an anticipation of pleasure. As Nicole explains:

My favourite festival was Splendour in the Grass. I think it was the whole package of the holiday. We went up [to Byron Bay] and it was a great experience. We all went up in the
It was Byron Bay. Who could complain? I loved the line up, I loved where we got to like we were standing really close [to the stage]. It was great fun. My cousins were up there who I never see so that was great. And I just remember it being so much fun.

The pleasure gained from attending a music festival is not, however, the only meaning attached to it. Other meanings festivalgoers attribute to their festival participation include seeing bands, experiencing new music, ‘hanging out’ with friends, meeting and ‘hanging out’ with like-minded people, drinking beer and enjoying summertime.

Even if the festive pleasure is gained individually, this chapter argues that attending a music festival is nevertheless an intensive and shared experience that links participants. There is a real sense of ‘we’ (as all festivalgoers) rather than of ‘I’ (the individual at a festival having fun) at music festivals as Ben Lee’s lyrics at the beginning of this section suggested: ‘we’re all in this together’. This ‘we’ is a type which Maffesoli refers to as a neo-tribe or emotional community that are bonded together through their collectively shared thoughts, feelings, emotions and experiences. Maffesoli sees sociality as dealing with ‘the development of the organic solidarity of the symbolic dimension (communication), of the non-logical, the concern for the present’. Sociality takes into account ‘everything previously considered frivolous, anecdotal or nonsensical’ (Maffesoli 1990:86)

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58 Kombi is an Australian slang term for the Volkswagen Kombi Van.
In order to discover if neo-tribal sociality exists amongst the festivalgoers from their point of view, I asked the interview participants if they felt like they were a part of a musical community or scene. Many of the interviewees had not really thought about it before, but agreed that they did feel like they belonged to a group of music lovers or festivalgoers as opposed to clubbers, as Meg suggested in chapter three.

Heather feels like she is part of a scene because she watches a lot of live music and goes to many music festivals. She expresses that having a common interest and love of music is what creates a sense of community at a festival:

Heather: I suppose so without sounding like a wanker about it. Yeah like I do go out and see quite a bit of music at the moment … Yeah I suppose I’m part of a scene.

Jo: When you’re at a festival is there anything that happens that makes you feel part of a community?

Heather: I suppose just because like for everyone their music is like a pretty important part of life and like everyone can strike up a conversation and you know you’ve got something in common and I think as well you kind of tend to have the same sort of attitude on life. You’re not like all up tight and pretentious and I mean let’s face it you can be one of those like horrendously wanky people that’s just like ‘I saw these guys like five years ago when you know they were just a garage band and they were so much better then’ you know what I mean. But most of the time people are just laid back and there for a good time and everybody is just happy to have a bit of a chat.

Sophie had a similar outlook to Heather, as she too saw music as being the thing that ties people together:
Yeah I see myself as being part of the Big Day Out family... you sort of all come together and work on this one project and make it the best you can and everyone’s got their own individual role, working as separate entities but you know you’re together as a team. I guess it could be like anyone if you had a local pub and you know that every Friday night everyone meets down there to have a beer at the end of week. It’s sort of the same thing, like particular bands you go to, you know like everyone’s going to be going to that show. You almost don’t have to call anyone and you know you’ll turn up and there everyone will be. It’s definitely like a community, that one thing that ties you all together.

Music is one of the key elements that bind festivalgoers together but there is also a sense of familiarity amongst the festivalgoers. As Meg commented, ‘you see the same faces’. Meg believes there is also an innate understanding of how other people are feeling on the day:

It’s usually hot at Homebake and Big Day Out. Everyone just understands how everyone else is feeling and you know you can just look at people and they’ll spill water on you or something like that. That’s cool, that’s something that you won’t do on the street. That makes you feel like you’re part of something cos everyone knows how you’re feeling at that particular moment which is pretty cool.

The festivalgoers did, however, indicate a sense of loss of community or authenticity at larger festivals like the Big Day Out. As Grace notes:

Sometimes I’m reluctant to go to things like Big Day Out, it’s a different atmosphere sometimes. It does seem more commercial because you will get just everyday Joes that just
go there cos it’s Big Day Out not necessarily because of the bands.

Grace feels that the popularity of the festival has attracted a different crowd in recent years, people who go to the event because it is ‘the Big Day Out’ and it’s the cool thing or the ‘in’ thing to do.

Sophie also shares this sense of loss:

Like Big Day Out now it’s gone massive and I find that a little bit intense, I guess, and that idea of the spontaneity is not there anymore. Other things take over from the spontaneity like there is a formula and it does work very well. You know it’s a slicker production but with the slickness like they get bigger bands, better bands, you go and better rooms to see the bands in and it all runs smoother or differently I guess.

The massiveness of the Big Day Out is thus valued positively thanks to the better bands it brings and to its better venues, but the spontaneous connection to other festivalgoers is claimed to be lost.

Rick also indicates this:

Once you start going to festivals and you have to check your life at the door. Festivals like the Big Day Out… going back to when you just rock up in a paddock with all your drugs and you know and books and whatever for two or three days and you might actually meet some people and talk and stuff like that. When you start getting to those festivals where it’s all organised around consumption and buying the add on products and stuff it’s just not the same. It still can be good; you still see some great stuff. But the Boiler Room at the Big Day Out has been just brilliantly organised really well
scheduled and really well done for a long time and it actually
gives the festival another focus, that’s really important.

Rick is expressing a sense of loss of authenticity, indicating that Big Day Out is not like Sunbury or Glastonbury or other ‘hippy’ festivals for want of a better term. He also points out that as festivals get bigger; they seem to diversify the music styles and become multi-focused, which may also create divisions among people.

Nevertheless, is this sense of community or connection really lost at larger festivals like Big Day Out? It may be the case that, at Big Day Out, it is harder to connect to people because there is so much going on and so many people. In my fieldwork experience, however, people will still tend to have a chat with you even if it is only brief. Meeting people at festivals and the ability to strike up random conversations with fellow festivalgoers as mentioned by Heather above, was one of the things that made the festivalgoers feel part of a scene. As Nathan said:

Nathan: I’ve shared a lot of experiences with people [at festivals] and meet people and that’s how I meet them that’s how I know them and that’s why we’re staying together. That’s the only thing that we’ve got a connection with them so it’s a scene or whatever.

Jo: When you’re at a festival like Falls what makes it feel like a community?

Nathan: Well you talk to people and say did you see De La Soul they were heaps good and someone says yeah, yeah I saw them. And you just talk about what bands you’ve seen and it’s like a good sense of community. Someone says have you seen such and such they were really good. That’s what makes it seem like a community, everyone sees the same things or different things and talking about it and sharing their
experiences. Saying I was right at the front for John Butler [Trio] or we were at the back but it’s still good.

There is definitely a sense of togetherness to be found among the festivalgoers. Tim sums up this feeling of togetherness perfectly:

Yeah I do [see myself as being part of a scene]. I always feel a connection whenever I’m seeing a band. Especially at night when the lights are coming on and the sun’s going down you just look around and just see everyone having such a good time you kind of feel like you are kind of part of that bigger group. And then among friends as well a lot of the friends that I hang out with have similar music tastes.

Overall, the experience of participating in a music festival is more than just about pleasure for the festivalgoers. As demonstrated in this chapter, the festivalgoers have created a neo-tribal sociality within the festival going scene through their shared experiences and feelings of togetherness. But what happens to the scene outside of the festival going season?

6.5 But in the Meantime: Festivalgoers and the Virtual Aspects of Scenes.

During the festival season, festivalgoers are able to participate in festival culture. The question however remains as to how do the festivalgoers stay in contact or maintain an allegiance to the festival going scene outside of the festival season? In other words, what happens in the meantime? A further question that may be asked is do they need to maintain a connection to the festival in their everyday life? Or do they join other tribes and only reunite with the festivalgoers during festival time?
Through the virtual aspects of the scene, which is one of the three aspects of scenes identified by Bennett and Peterson (2004) that I discussed in chapter four, especially through the use of the internet, festivalgoers are able to participate in the festival scene outside of the festival season. Bennett (2004b) has suggested the internet has had a major impact on communication and social interaction, and in the case of these festivals the internet offers virtual spaces in which new online identities can be constructed. This relationship between the festivalgoers and virtuality might allow for the enhancement of social relations and might foster a new kind of sociality.

Neo-tribal social relations are an ideal fit to the mediated world of the internet as ‘virtual tribes’ can be found in cyberspace (Bennett 2004b). The vagueness and intangibility of neo-tribes allows for freedom from commitment and other social relationships for group members. Increasingly, youth cultures might be becoming cultures of ‘shared ideas’ that take place in the virtual realm of the internet. This ideology challenges traditional ideas about youth cultures as having membership only based on style, collective knowledge and face-to-face interaction. Hence for this research, it could be argued that the internet is the ultimate space in which neo-tribal bonds based in indie music festival culture may be manifested outside of the festival season.

The enhancement of social relations can be demonstrated by the importance of keeping festivalgoers virtually ‘in the know’ (see below). The internet has made it easier for festivalgoers to keep up to date with the latest festival news, prior to which festivalgoers had to rely on word of mouth and other media sources such as local radio stations, music television programs, street press and fanzines.
The festival website is an important communication tool for the festivalgoers as it provides essential festival information as well as forums for gossip and unofficial news and events. It also provides news about upcoming festivals and posts review of previous festivals. Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly informed me that Falls has had its own website since 1997. Big Day Out, Livid, Homebake and Splendour in the grass also have official festival websites (see table five).

Table 5: Official festival website information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>1st Website</th>
<th>e-list</th>
<th>Forums</th>
<th>Archives</th>
<th>Site address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bigdayout.com.au">www.bigdayout.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livid</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.livid.com.au">www.livid.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falls</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.fallsfestival.com.au">www.fallsfestival.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.homebake.com.au">www.homebake.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendour in the Grass</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td><a href="http://www.splendourinthegrass.com.au">www.splendourinthegrass.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Official festival websites keep festivalgoers updated throughout the year through their news section. Festivalgoers can subscribe to e-mail lists put out by the festival organisers. Through these e-lists festivalgoers receive regular updates via e-newsletters about a festival including such things as news, sideshows, new ticketing systems, band announcements and other festival-related projects. Similarly, through subscription to e-newsletters from affiliated websites like Fasterlouder.com, Channel V, Triple J or bands such as Machine Gun Fellatio or the White Stripes, festivalgoers are able to stay in the know. It is important to point out, however, that these e-lists are one-way communication.
Subscribing to e-newsletters allows festivalgoers to stay ‘in the know’, however as this is only one-way communication, it does not indicate a subculture or community or a stable group by any means. Rather such e-newsletters are important ways for tribal members to gain information needed to participate in the offline aspects of the tribe.

Online forums (also known as discussion/ bulletin boards) might be the place where we can find ‘virtual tribes’ as they allow the festivalgoers to discuss and debate topics both festival and non-festival related. The topics of discussion (also know as threads) allow the festivalgoers to start new conservations or join existing ones. Threads range from rumours about upcoming acts to reviews of the last event, to outrage over ticket prices, scalpers or missing out on tickets to a sold out event or to talks about sideshows. Out of the five festivals investigated by this thesis the Big Day Out and Livid are the only official websites to offer forums for the festivalgoers.

The Big Day Out forum is divided in two: a general discussion about the Big Day Out and ‘Your Music’, which is a place to promote your music. The Big Day Out forum has around 4339 registered users\(^59\). The Livid 2003 forum, which was still active in July 2006, has only one discussion board with 2174 members\(^60\).

Affiliated websites such as Fasterlouder.com or band fan sites and unofficial websites are also sources of information which are not exclusive to festival talk. They usually offer more general music discussion boards with festival or gig threads.

\(^{59}\) Registered users on the 18/7/2006

\(^{60}\) Registered users on the 18/7/2006

Forums allow festivalgoers (as well as newcomers and outsiders) to pose questions to a large group of people ‘in the know.’ Take for example the following post which is a reply from Nick to Dexter Ramone on the ‘all about music’ thread, under the topic ‘Homebake 2006’:

Nick (28/7/2006) Quote: Originally Posted by Dexter Ramone: Yeah, what is up with Bjorn Again being on the list? Isn’t that a [sic] Abba cover band? Or am I way off track!

Yeah, but they hold the honoured position of being the only band Kurt Cobain went out to see when he was in Australia (Nick 2006).

In this post Nick is educating Dexter Ramone about the connection that the Australian cover band Bjorn Again has to the indie music scene. Users can ‘tap into’ computer-mediated communications (CMC) communities for information. They do not have to interact with the site they may just ‘lurk’ in the background reading posts.

61 Registered users on the 18/7/2006

62 Lurkers are people who read posts but do not post messages themselves. Only registered members of a forum can post a message.
In my experience, festivalgoers may also keep in contact via personal emails with other festivalgoers they have met over the years. They may plan to meet up at a gig or the next festival. I often would receive emails from interviewees asking if I was going to an upcoming festival or a gig.

Naomi Watson’s (1997) study of Phish.Net investigates the online/offline connection in contemporary youth culture. Phish.Net is a website created by fans of the band Phish. The site is used by fans to discuss and debate, and a large amount of what is discussed online comes from face-to-face experiences. From Watson’s research, it appears that the members of Phish.net know each other both offline and online, as the community is very small. It seems unlikely; however, that the festivalgoers would know each other in the same way, as members of Pish.net, as they are a very large community. This means that forums and websites designed for festivalgoers are not as intimate as Watson’s Phish.net tribe but can nevertheless create a sense of community as new festivalgoers would have online and offline.

It seems from my observations of the Fasterlouder.com, Livid 2003 and Big Day Out forums that there is some communication between the ‘posters’ who reply to each other’s posts (although not always sincerely). This is evidenced through quoting text from a previous message in the thread. See the example below from the Fasterlouder.com ’All about music’, Splendour in the Grass thread:

Stormin_Norman (24/2/2004) : **Splendour In The Grass**

anyone heard any rumours as to who'll we'll be seeing?

i_have_ADD (24/2/2004): apparently dandy warhols let it slip when they were here for the BDO that they'd be coming back. meh.i want to see pixies and blur!!!
Stormin_Norman (24/2/2004): better put up a better show then we saw that the BDO up here! id love to see le tigre!
cletus (24/2/2004): the electric six are coming.. check out their site...the oz dates:
   Jul 22 Sydney, Austrailia - Gaelic Club
   Jul 23 Melbourne, Australia - Corner Hotel
   Jul ?? Byron Bay, Australia - Splendour in the Grass Festival
i_have_ADD (25/2/2004): that's awesome! electric 6 are cooooooool. i seem to remember hearing the first round would be announced march 1... i could be wrong though.
nojman (25/2/2004): Are blur still holding their pledge of not performing any of their old songs or did they break that long ago? Would love to go to this festival some time, sounds awesome :)
the_pezman (26/2/2004): really hoping to make it along this year!
Stormin_Norman (26/2/2004) Quote: Originally Posted by 

   cletus: the electric six are coming… check out their site...the oz dates: Jul 22 Sydney, Australia - Gaelic Club Jul 23 Melbourne, Australia - Corner Hotel Jul ?? Byron Bay, Australia - Splendour in the Grass Festival

Great news. I’m going to have a cold shower to calm myself down. After that ill [sic] put up a review of their album. if electric six were Peter André then the man in the hat would be telling you to do yourself a favour and go to the festival just for these guys! The question is what stage will they be on?
The above extract from Fasterlouder.com was found on a thread entitled Splendour in the Grass. The posters were discussing rumours about the upcoming festival in July. The fact that this discussion took place in February, five months prior to the festival demonstrates the festivalgoers’ commitment to the festival and their excitement of talking about the possible bands that will be playing. (This is an example of festival intensity) (see chapter seven).

Excessive posters are likely to be familiar with each other and recognise their usernames. Watson argues, however, that ‘frequent postings do not indicate whether the posters are interacting with each other, nor does it guarantee the sincerity of the interaction’ (1997:107). The reason for this may be that the posters take on an online persona or identity that may have little similarity to their offline/ everyday identity.

Overall, the internet is becoming an integral part of young people’s lives and is beginning to play a more prominent role in the construction of individual and collective identities. This section has only touched on this aspect as it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to demonstrate the virtual aspect of the scene and the possible virtual neo-tribalism operating outside of the festival season. More research needs to be done to study the intricacies of offline and online identities, but it is beyond the scope of this research.

6.6 Chapter Summary

Participating in a music festival is about more than just a fun day out for the festivalgoers. It is an opportunity for them to gather together with like-minded people and share the experience of being a member of the festivalgoer tribe. I have
illustrated this through discussion of moshing and other audience behaviours. Although it may be argued that pleasure seems to be the foremost significant dimension of participating in these festivals, other meanings arise from the festivalgoers’ interactions during their participation. There seems to have developed an innate sense of togetherness and neo-tribal sociality amongst these festivalgoers. The intensity and demanding experience of attending a festival fosters the opportunity for a sense of connectedness and belonging to develop among festivalgoers both offline and online. I will explore in the next chapter how it is that postmodern sites of consumption like music festivals are able to foster such sociality through an examination of three key characteristics of the music festival scene: intensity, boundary work and impact.
CHAPTER 7
INTENSITY, BOUNDARY WORK AND IMPACT

In this chapter I investigate the festival scene using a conceptual framework developed by Timothy Dowd, Kathleen Liddle and Jenna Nelson (2004b) which employs three interrelated characteristics: intensity, boundary work and impact. Dowd et al’s work has set up the foundations of these characteristics and employed them in analysing aspects of music festivals. It is my intention to build upon Dowd et al’s theory as it provides a solid grid of analysis. I further show how these characteristics impact on neo-tribal sociality, which is something that has not been studied before now.

Intensity refers to a festival’s atmosphere, vibe or ambience. It is emotionally and physically experienced by festivalgoers. Dowd et al (2004b) argue that the intensity of a festival compensates festivalgoers for their infrequency. They further argue that the intensity of the festival allows festivalgoers to immerse themselves into the festival culture as well as experimenting with different identities.

Due to time and space constraints, festival organisers participate in what is known as boundary work. The organisers make logistical decisions about who can attend, what type of music will be included and what bands to include. This boundary work has a major effect on shaping how the festival relates to the commodified scene/s.
Festivals often have impacts outside their boundaries. These impacts can be social, cultural, economic and environmental. In turn these impacts can have both positive and negative effects. Some of the positive impacts highlighted by Dowd et al (2004b) are that festivals create, mobilise and rejuvenate both performers and audiences. I would further add that festivals through this rejuvenation and celebration reconnect to the local scene. But they may also have contributed to the cross-fertilisation of indie music which may have a major impact on these Australian indie music festivals. I want to approach each one of these characteristics individually in order to explain their importance for Australian indie music festivals. Then I will show through the example of a camping festival experience at the Falls festival in 2003, how these concepts of intensity, boundary work and impact relate to each other.

7.1 Intensity and the Creation of the Festival Vibe

Jo: Is there a festival vibe or atmosphere?
Ian: Anticipation of listening to someone. They walk out; you see them set up…
Kate: And yeah the waiting.
Ian: And then you think they look like they [the band] might be all right.
Kelly: They have a different sort of look at a festival.
Matt: If you go to a normal concert you know the sort of songs that you’re gunna listen to, you know the band that...if you go to a festival and you don’t know, for instance when we saw Jet…never heard of them before just saw them set up. And looking at the band members, I’ll hang around for this.
Ian: You haven’t seen them before and how they develop their act. The things I wanted to see I didn’t think, wasn’t the best band I’ve seen. Last year at the Blues and Roots festival when James Brown came, and we were waiting for him, certainly a lot of the bands and how they start up but the way they develop their act like James Brown didn’t come onto the stage for 20 minutes after the thing started. The first couple of people would come on start talking up James Brown and get the crowd going and playing a few instruments, and other people would come on and another couple would come on…

Kate: Did you like that? I was going hurry up!

Ian: I’m just saying seeing new bands and checking them out, seeing what their show and that was phenomenal and I think there was 18 or 19 people involved in the act and he was sort of the 18th or 19th person on the stage. Yeah he didn’t do much…the two blonde chicks in the American Flag hotpants dancing beside him were pretty entertaining.

Jo: Does that create atmosphere? [Laughs]

Ian: Yeah, I think you get the point just seeing new bands and seeing how they perform on their physically as not just their music but how they put together a show.

Matt: Especially when you get there early even if it is someone you do know or someone that you don’t know and they’re really good, it instantly puts you in a really good mood. So you can’t wait to see the next band or the next, it doesn’t matter who it is you just can’t wait for the day.

In the above dialogue, the festivalgoers are attempting to verbalise the emotionally and physically experienced festival atmosphere. What is most striking about this
conversation is that the festivalgoers have not mentioned the music alone. They have identified rather crudely two important factors that apply both to individual sets and to the festivals themselves as a whole: the waiting and the show.

*The Waiting*

Atmosphere is built up through the anticipation of waiting for the band to come on stage. Often background music will be played as the roadies pack down the gear from the last set and set up the next band’s gear. This wait is lessened on alternating stages like the Big Day Out main stages. As the crowd draws in and waits for the next band’s performance they may start a chant to call the band out, especially if the band is headlining. For acts earlier on the bill, the crowd may not be familiar with them so there is an element of the unknown that Matt mentions above. Even if the band is known, there is no guarantee as to what songs they will play. As Matt observes, ‘you don’t know what to expect.’

*The Show*

Atmosphere is created by the band during their performance as Ian mentioned in the opening dialogue in regard to James Brown’s performance at the East Coast Blues and Roots festival. Through stage setup, song choice and other props, bands create a vibe. Both the audience and the band need to work together, feed off each other in order for the vibe to work. I observed an example of this during Slipknot’s performance at the Big Day Out 2005. Slipknot are an American Heavy Metal band with multiple members who each wear a different grotesque mask. The band put on a powerful performance and this was reflected by the crowd through intense moshing, crowd surfing, head banging and screaming. As Ian highlighted, for him festivals are
about seeing new bands and experiencing not just their music but their whole performance. Matt added that a good show puts the crowd in a good mood and ‘you can’t wait for the next thing to happen.’

The symbiotic relationship between intensity and atmosphere is a key aspect of any music festival. Creating the balance between these two aspects is fundamental to the ongoing success of a scene. Festivals are intensive experiences for the festivalgoers. The atmosphere of a festival describes not only the feelings experienced during a festival but sums up the totality of the experience from the feeling or mood of the crowd, to the weather, the decorations, or the music.

For Nathan, festival atmosphere is something that you physically experience:

It’s not just the music it’s the whole experience of the crowd and you feel the music going, like the vibrations in your chest if you’re too close.

Likewise, Heather describes the physical experience of being in the atmosphere:

Just in the atmosphere with like minded people where it just doesn’t matter and you can just be yourself and you know like you always have a good time, and you know you always get a little bit pissy but that’s like part of the fun.

However as Kara talked about, festival atmosphere is not always positive:

I think sometimes [the atmosphere is] really good and sometimes it’s bad. Like Splendour was really good cause everyone was just like having such a good time and umm there wasn’t like any rough things or something. Like sometimes I don’t like it when just say Big Day Out 2004 Metallica were playing and I heard that some of the crowd
were giving crap to some of the bands playing before Metallica. They’re just like yeah ‘get off, bring Metallica’ and stuff and I don’t really think that’s very nice.

Intensity involves a degree of commitment from festivalgoers, especially for the longer camping festivals like Falls and Splendour in the Grass, as festivalgoers need to take time off work, arrange accommodation, travel and they need to be able to buy a ticket. The indie music festivals I studied required little of festivalgoers once they had purchased a ticket (or snuck in) other than good behaviour and to have fun. There are, however, opportunities for festivalgoers to become more involved in the festival; for instance at the Big Day Out, festivalgoers can volunteer as a crowd carer or participate in the games on offer at the interactive Lilypad stage. At the 2006 Splendour in the Grass festival festivalgoers could participate in belly dancing and other workshops on offer at the workshop and performance stage. Similarly at the Falls festival, festivalgoers can volunteer to help clean up the festival site in the mornings (a bag of empty cans for a beer token) or can perform on the APRA (Australasian Performing Right Association) people’s stage (see photographs 13, 14, and 15 below). Most festivalgoers, however, just purchase a t-shirt or other festival merchandise to prove their attendance.

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63The Big Day Out crowd care team was introduced in 2002. They are volunteers who assist festivalgoers with any questions, water distribution and help monitor the audience, especially away from the stages.
Photo 13: Crowd Carers at the Sydney BDO 2005

Photo 14: Lilypad at the Sydney BDO 2004
At the weekend-long festivals like Splendour in the Grass and the Falls festival, spontaneous ‘jam sessions’ break out from time to time in the camp grounds, creating a constant musical presence. These ‘jam sessions’ usually occur in the mornings or late at night when there are not many bands playing or activities going on. Most often someone will get out a guitar and start strumming, then other members of the group may join in by singing along or drumming a beat. It is a way for the festivalgoers to entertain themselves. Throughout the day there is a constant flow of festivalgoers between the camp site and the festival grounds, as festivalgoers take time out from the festival.


7.2 Boundary Work

Part of the festival organiser’s role is to put in place systems to allow for this atmosphere to be created. ‘Festival organisers weave a loose social fabric which the individual may embroider in different ways’ (Purdue et al. 1997:661). The decisions made by the festival organisers such as the setting up of multiple sites, stages, bookings or ‘whether there should be hot tubs, or compost toilets, engages a specialist network’ (Purdue et al. 1997:661). As Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly explained to me:

> It’s very deliberate. We consider atmosphere to be a really critical part of our festival and there’s a lot of things we do that people probably have no idea that we do and that that’s our motivation for doing it. Part of it’s the line up. Part of it’s the infrastructure on site, I mean putting shade tents in the main arena. I’d say Splendour’s a great one for that. They have fantastic décor in their environment and that’s all part of [the] atmosphere. Falls is lucky in that we’ve got such a stunning natural environment; that alone creates a lot of the atmosphere. But definitely I think just our format that everyone does stay on site and that it’s a pretty cruisey kind of schedule.

It is these deliberate choices made by the festival organisers that help to establish the overall atmosphere of a festival. Daly further pointed out that she believes creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the success of a festival.
7.2.1 The Line-Up

Some festival organisers choose band line-ups based on their own choice. As noted by Splendour in the Grass festival organiser Jess Ducrou:

> It [Splendour]’s quite a small festival, so we don’t need large acts and so often we put on a lot of bands that we personally like, so it gives us a fair bit of latitude there (Channel V 2005).

Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly disagrees with Ducrou. She argues that ‘it’s not about putting on bands that you personally like but rather putting on bands that you think can do the job.’ Daly further notes:

> You don’t do it quite that personally but yeah we choose our line up. Obviously we get a lot of push towards us as well, we get hundreds and hundreds of bands and agents and record labels and friends of …you know whatever. So a lot of music is brought to our attention but we’re very deliberate about who we go after as well so there’s a bit of both in there. It’s definitely our choice; there’s no one else. We’re not influenced and have no connection and no pressure from anything other than our own choices.

Festival organisers are pressured by the music industry- that is band managers, agents and labels- to put certain bands on the bill. Although promoters have the freedom to choose what acts they want to include on the bill, sometimes promoters will prefer certain bands. This can happen if the promoter is also a booking agent. For instance Jess Ducrou is the booking agent for Powderfinger, Spiderbait, Rocket Science and You Am I so it is not surprising that these acts are rotated each year on the Splendour in the Grass line up. For Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly, however, the case is slightly different as she does not have any affiliations within the music
industry. Her choices, as she stated above, are more about who she thinks can do the job.

Furthermore, festival organisers will often release line up announcements in two or three stages. The first announcement is designed to promote the festival and attract interest from potential festival goers prior to ticket release. If the line up is popular with festival goers, tickets will sell out quickly. The second and third announcements are made after tickets go on sale to continue the festival’s hype after the initial rush of ticket sales and to maintain media interest. Often headline acts will then be promoted in fanzines, on the internet and on radio stations. For example if Drum Media is sponsoring a festival like Big Day Out or Homebake, they will dedicate a whole issue to the festival the week before. The issue will include stories on the performing bands and festival information such as maps and timetables.

Choice of performers, especially headliners, is important to making a festival appeal to the right type of scene members. Homebake organiser Joe Segreto commented that festivals may no longer focus on a particular style of music:

When Homebake started it was an indie alternative which featured bands like Silverchair and Tumbleweed. Mid-90s that’s what everybody wanted. You either liked alternative or you liked mainstream. That doesn’t exist anymore….You’d draw the line at a band like Human Nature it wouldn’t work. Rumba is an avenue for acts like that (SMH 2002).

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64 Drum Media is a free street press available in Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and Canberra.

65 Rumba was a pop music festival that toured Australia in 2001 and 2002 featuring acts like Pink, Shaggy, Craig David and Bon Jovi.
Festivalgoers recognise that there are ‘festival bands’- that is bands more suited to performing in an outdoor festival environment. The Cat Empire is an example of one such band as Kelly explains:

I think it’s like a different vibe at festivals for me, I saw the Cat Empire twice at Byron and they are just such a festival band like they’re just great. I think there are festival bands too. I remember The Cure played at Livid. Oh The Cure… it doesn’t work I’m afraid. And like I saw The Cure when they came to Sydney and that was great you know but that was just The Cure, it was just their concert. And I thought I wouldn’t go to a festival to see The Cure. It’s stupid!

The wrong choice of performer can often alienate the very audience festival organisers want to attract. For example, there was some controversy created in the local media in 2004 when Homebake organisers failed to invite Delta Goodrem to perform, whilst acts like Kasey Chambers, Jet, and Pete Murray, also successful Australian Record Industry Award (ARIA) winning artists, were included. Some debate began as to when artists become too mainstream (Sams 2004). It also pointed to the risk of commercialisation as perhaps this was a conscious decision by the Homebake organisers not to be seen by the festivalgoers as ‘selling out.’ This is highlighted in the interview extract below:

Jo: Are music festivals too commercial?
Liz: Yeah, is it too commercial? Well they still said no to Delta. Homebake said no to Delta.
Jo: What do you think would have happened if Delta Goodrem played Homebake?
Liz: Well, the same thing that always happens. There’s always people that think it’s sold out. There’s always people that will sit there and go you know I can’t
believe… I remember when they started including big names like, when Powderfinger got big; it's not really about them it's about what the band has done. So you know once they [Homebake] start selling a lot [of tickets] people go oh!

7.2.2 The Stages

The diversity of the festivalgoer tribe is reflected in the spatial layout of the festivals. As Purdue notes, ‘multiple music stages, often specialising in different styles of music, theatre and dance, are now the hallmark of the bigger festivals’ (Purdue et al. 1997:660). Table six below illustrates the diversity of stages at these indie music festivals.

Table 6: Diversity of genres on display at Australian indie music festivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival</th>
<th>Stage/s</th>
<th>Musical genre/s performed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2005</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>Australian indie rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Big Top</td>
<td>Australian Dance/ Hip Hop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dome</td>
<td>Australian indie rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hopetoun</td>
<td>Upcoming local indie rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out Sydney 2005</td>
<td>Main (Blue and Orange)</td>
<td>International/ local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>International/ local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Converse Essential</td>
<td>Local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boiler Room</td>
<td>Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hothouse</td>
<td>Hip Hop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lilypad</td>
<td>Comedy and DJs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E.A.R / V Local produce</td>
<td>Local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livid</td>
<td>Main</td>
<td>International/ local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival</td>
<td>Stage/s</td>
<td>Musical genre/s performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney 2003</td>
<td>Triple J Big Top</td>
<td>International/ local indie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FBI</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Annex</td>
<td>Dance acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Loudmouth</td>
<td>Punk/ Ska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Net MD Walkman Break</td>
<td>Break dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendour in the Grass 2005</td>
<td>Supertop</td>
<td>International/ Local indie bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mix-up Tent</td>
<td>Dance/ Hip Hop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Splendid Lounge Bar</td>
<td>DJs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dance Inc: Tipi Circle</td>
<td>DJs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Falls festival</td>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>International/ local indie bands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorne 2005</td>
<td>Big Top</td>
<td>International/ local indie bands plus DJs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to the variety of stages and performance styles, members of the Big Day Out, Homebake and Livid festivalgoer tribes may be viewed as more diverse than the members of the Splendour in the Grass or Falls festivalgoer tribes. This is not to suggest, however, that the audiences are mutually exclusive, making the boundaries between groups of festivalgoers who attend the different indie music festivals extremely fuzzy.

### 7.2.3 The Site Infrastructure

The site infrastructure is an important element of the festival organisers’ boundary work as little things like the amount of toilet facilities, the inclusion of markets,
artwork and other attractions like the artist signing tent can help to create the festival atmosphere.

### 7.2.3.1 Toilets

Lines of blue portaloos are dotted throughout the festival, boys’ are one side, and girls’ on the other. Early in the day they are safe enough, fairly clean with the chance of some toilet paper. As the day progresses, however, and more people arrive at the festival, the toilet queues grow longer and longer. Girls take the risky move of going into the male toilets and the boys, well, they just find the nearest tree, building, fence, creek. The interesting thing about waiting in a toilet queue is chatting with the person either in front or behind you about their day. What have they seen? Who are they looking forward to seeing? Then finally you get to the head of the queue...only to find the need to ask ‘Is there any toilet paper in that one?’ to the person emerging from the loo. ‘No’. Luckily I always have a pocket full of tissues.⁶⁶

I’ll never forget the 2004/05 New Year’s Eves at the Falls festival in Lorne, arriving at midday to find a surprising lack of amenities. Fair enough Falls is held on a farm in the middle of nowhere, so it is difficult to put in showers (I had already come to terms with the idea of not showering for three days) but at least last year they had portaloos. After setting up camp, I went for a walk to investigate the toilet situation. I discovered to my horror, that this year the festival was trialling compost toilets. Basically this meant ‘doing your business’ into a hole beneath which stood a garbage bin

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⁶⁶ Extract from 2006 Splendour in the Grass field notes.
which could be replaced when full. Afterwards, you were to throw some sawdust and lavender over the top. In theory a winning idea to protect the environment but after a day of use by 13,000 festivalgoers the novelty of protecting the environment was beginning to wear off. Shortages of sawdust and lavender turned a good idea into a stinky, flyblown mess. The pranksters who decided to use cherry bombs to blow up a couple of toilets late on New Year’s Eve did not help the situation.67

As Naomi Daly explained to me, ‘toilets are the bane of the festival organiser’s life.’ The toilets at any music festival are notorious for being smelly portaloos. To outsiders the idea of having tens of thousands of people using portaloos is incomprehensible. The festivalgoers realise, however, that using portaloos is a sacrifice they have to make. Festival organisers seemed to resolve this problem, for the Big Day Out, by moving the Sydney site to Olympic park which meant better facilities as well as added extra demountable toilet blocks. For most festivalgoer organisers, however, the toilet situation at festivals remains a contentious issue.

Interestingly, waiting in a toilet queue provides a time for festivalgoers to engage in sociality as the first part of the extract from my field notes above demonstrates. It gives festivalgoers a chance to chat to each other about their day, whether they talk about what bands they have seen or what bands they are looking forward to seeing. While waiting in a toilet queue may be inconvenient, it does add to the festival vibe as often festivalgoers’ stories involve funny situations that occurred in or around the toilet block.

67 Extract from 2004/05 Falls festival field notes.
7.2.3.2 Markets, Artwork and Other Attractions

The infrastructure on site includes more than just stages. The 2005 Homebake promotional poster advertised the band line-up as well as information on other festival attractions:

Four stages (main stage, the big top, the dome and the Hopetoun), Homebake cinema tent, international food fair, market stalls, artist signing tent, roving performers, rides, youth and community information and awareness stalls and more.

Likewise, the 2006 Splendour in the Grass promotional poster advertised the band line-up but added these additional festival attractions:

Camping, big top stages, global food fair, Splendid lounge bar, Mr. Chow’s outdoor cinema, the healing fields, tipi forest, organic wine bar, bric-a-brac markets, performance and workshop stage, the church of the spiritually enlightened, and top notch visual art installations among many other odds and sods.

These added attractions help to establish a festival vibe or atmosphere.

Often music festivals will have a theme which is reflected in the festival artwork, including promotional posters, programs, tickets, banners, and decorations. The Big Day Out and Splendour in the Grass are intentionally themed events. A spokeswoman for Big Day Out described the choice of one theme as follows: ‘One day we were just sitting around the office playing a space invaders pin ball machine and we decided it would be a cool theme for the next year’s event.’ Themes also reflect world events or anniversaries such as the Big Day Out’s tenth anniversary in
2002 which had a ten-pin bowling theme and their 2005 theme which promoted peace, love and understanding in wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

7.2.3.3 The Artist Signing Tent

The Signing tent is a special area at music festivals where the performing bands meet and greet their fans. Band members sign autographs and have photos taken with fans. Both Homebake and Splendour in the Grass have signing tents run by local youth charitable organisations. Kevin recalls his experience of meeting one of his favourite bands at the Splendour in the Grass signing tent in 2003:

I met The Music… There was a signing tent [at Splendour in the Grass] and we [other festivalgoers] waited in line. A bit of rain sprinkled on us and we were waiting and we didn’t think it was gunna happen cos it was going over time and the production team managers were rushing everyone else on and trying to hurry up. I go in and the guys are good. They take their time, spend their time chatting with me and one of them liked my beanie. I said that’s good because you can’t have it [laughs]. And yeah they were all pretty stunned. It’s like getting average people in there and it was pretty cool. They’re all down to earth; I enjoyed that. I had my photo taken with them. And yeah the manager loved the Goodies shirt I was wearing, he was going off about it, he just wouldn’t shut up and it actually made me a bit scared so I kind of wanted get out of there.

The artist signing tent at a music festival allows fans a chance to meet their idols and express their fandom. As we saw in chapter six, all fans, no matter of what type of music, have a shared bond of their obsessiveness (Divola 1998). Through demonstrating their fandom at the artist signing tent, festivalgoers are able to engage
in conversations with fellow fans and the band. Through doing this the festivalgoers create a sense of belonging to a larger group or community (see chapter six). It can, however, also mean despair, betrayal, disappointment and so forth when bands sell out or break up (see chapter six).

### 7.2.4 The Timetable

For festivalgoers the spatial layout and timetabling of the festival is very important in creating an atmosphere; if the festival site feels overcrowded or too hectic then festivalgoers feel overwhelmed. Meg, a festivalgoer, describes this in the interview extract below:

> Big Day Out is massive... [it] just packs so in on like ten stages or six stages or something. And if you want to go see someone you’ve basically got to go at the expense of someone else. And you go there and you want to experience new music but then you go I really like this band, I would really like to see them, so it’s hard to juggle. I find at Homebake, they tend to spread it out a bit more and you can kind of go from one stage to next and catch all your favourite bands and experience new stuff and you don’t really miss out on anything. And at Homebake the stages are in relation to each other a bit closer, and you’ve kind of just got one way to get there, whereas at Big Day Out you know the markets are just winding footpaths and they’re so far away it’s hard to get places and figure out where you’re at.

The timetable is an essential tool for the festivalgoer as it plays an integral role in their planning for the event. The day or a few days before a festival, festivalgoers like to either print out a copy of the timetable from the internet or cut it out from a
local street press like Drum Media. They then highlight the bands they want to see. This is especially important at larger festivals like the Big Day Out as Kevin explains:

I like to see the timetable beforehand and mark out what I want to see… [the] music timetable at the Falls festivals is non-existent for me cos I just like to stroll. There’s only two stages. I think the more stages there are and the further they are apart, a timetable is needed but Falls I don’t think so. At Falls I spend most of my time hanging out in the shade.

Festivalgoers usually have one or two bands that they have ‘got their heart on seeing’ but otherwise they ‘go with the flow’. As Heather describes,

If there’s like a band that I’ve got my heart set on seeing, I’m like nup definitely have to see them, but na if it’s just like couple of ones that you wouldn’t mind seeing and you know it’s not gunna matter if you see one band and miss out something else yeah.

At the larger festivals like the Big Day Out, there is inevitably going to be some clashes between bands, as there are six stages playing bands simultaneously. Kara mentioned how annoying that can be:

I work out what bands I’m seeing when and where I have to be at certain times and stuff. It gets annoying if there are a few bands on at the same time that I want to see. That’s happened a few times.

For festivalgoers, the timetable is an important way to organise their day. Highlighting what bands they want to see on the timetable is a ritual some festivalgoers engage in before the festival. It helps the festivalgoers to ‘get excited’
about the festival and the bands they will see there. While you need to be a little bit organised before a festival in knowing who is playing, where and when, this is not strictly adhered to. As Grace explains:

If you don’t know when the bands you want to see are on you’re pretty screwed. Yeah you’ve got to organise it beforehand. You won’t necessarily follow that when you get there; as long as you know which bands you want to see.

This organisation can be taken to the extreme in some cases. Roxanne recounts a story about a friend’s timetable solution at the Big Day Out:

My friend is insane, you know when you get the Big Day Out timetable you just highlight what you want to see one or two o’clock, he printed out the time and just like the band names and he folds this piece of paper like ‘It’s two o’clock let’s check out who’s playing?’ I was like you freak. It’s a piece of paper and you’ve got the times across one side, and the bands that are playing in kind of a gradual swoop of the times so then you fold the paper at the top it says twelve, two, four, kind of thing. You fold it at four o’clock and you can look down and see that Magic Dirt are playing at this stage and MGF are playing at this stage and…the first year he showed to me he’s like isn’t this cool, I’m like …that’s not cool at all.

7.2.5 The Festival Milieu

The festival milieu, or the social setting in which the festival takes place, plays a crucial part in creating the festival vibe or atmosphere. Rural settings are ideal as the natural landscape creates a perfect back drop. As Naomi Daly commented about the Falls festival:
We’re lucky in that we’re got such a stunning natural environment that alone creates a lot of the atmosphere.

Rural settings also provide the festivalgoers with a sense of adventure and escape. As Heather explains about the Falls festival:

I think that [Falls] was very, kind of well, almost hippyish; do you know what I mean? Like you know let’s go and camp in this beautiful… in the middle of nowhere and get back to nature and we won’t have any showers or any flushing toilets.

Festivals set in an urban milieu, while more convenient for many festivalgoers in terms of both location and accommodation options, face the problem of their industrial setting and festival organisers’ need to find sites that include a natural element. For long time festivalgoer Wayne, the idea of being surrounded by trees and grass rather than concrete was particularly important as he told me when comparing the original Sydney Big Day Out site to the new Homebush site.

Yeah well it [the original Sydney Big Day Out site] was more Homebake, yeah you know, I dunno, it felt, you felt, I felt better. I felt nicer in that environment... I think the first Big Day Out I went to at Homebush, I think Coldplay played at about one o’clock or two o’clock in the afternoon and no bullshit it was forty five nearly fifty degrees. You can’t have fun and you got no breeze, it’s Homebush. You got no breeze, the sun’s out in the middle of the [stadium]. You know there’s no breeze...at least at the showground you had a little bit of air. You got nothing there [at Homebush], you’re in that big showground...you can’t get out. You can go and sit up in the stands but you know, do you wanna sit down? Well, I can’t sit down. I can’t sit down and listen to music. So yeah, I like a little bit of ambience.
7.3 Impacts

Dowd, Liddle and Nelson (2004b) have stated that festivals have impacts outside their boundaries. In the case of the festivals studied for this research, there are two significant impacts. The first is the cross-fertilisation of the festivals themselves and the indie music scene in general; the second is that they allow festivalgoers to develop a sense of commitment to the festival and the festival-going scene. These two impacts are briefly discussed below.

7.3.1 The Cross-Fertilisation of the Indie Music Festival

The cross-fertilisation of ‘indie’ music has had a major impact on Australian indie music festivals. This is especially apparent when supposedly indie-guitar orientated music festivals allow the introduction of other musical genres such as dance and hip hop into the festival mix, as the following interview extracts explain:

Kevin: A couple of years ago can you remember the Big Day Out having a hip hop tent they had their own little special hip hop tent. I thought that was awesome the way they did that they have their own hip hop tent so if you like hip hop [you] go to the hip hop tent. But now they got rid of the hip hop tent and they stick hip hop all over place. Fair enough they try to cater for a lot people.

Phil: If it’s a long event you need to have some variety. You wouldn’t want to hear the same style of music the whole time…it sort of like it breaks the night up cos you’re hearing rock, rock, rock, or you hear a bit of hip hop and then there’s this dance combo playing and you get back into it.
Tim: I don’t know if I notice it [the different styles of music at festivals] as much these days. I guess at the Big Day Out you’ve got the Boiler room which has got the full on dance music but even now [dance act] the Chemical Brothers are playing on the main stage this year. I think more than anything that’s just showing how diverse music is becoming and how well accepted it is to have a diverse taste in music.

This line-up change could be an example of Straw’s social logic that exists within music scenes. If the festivals did not expand to include new forms of music then they would cease to exist. As Straw’s (1991) own study of indie music in North America and Canada found, however, the indie music scene is more accepting of change and cross-fertilisation and this is empowering for the scene as it allows it to develop and change over time whilst introducing new music. Like Straw, I have found that Australian indie music festivalgoers are to some extent accepting of the introduction of new music to their scene. For instance Big Day Out’s introduction of the Boiler Room in 1993, as Tim talked about above, or the recent transformation in 2003 of the Hothouse into the hip hop stage have allowed for a shift in the social logic of the scene. Festivals are able to maintain a sense of ‘authenticity’ through the appearance of legendary indie acts and idols, such as the 2006 appearance of Iggy Pop and the Stooges or the 2003 performance by Jane’s Addiction at the Big Day Out. The festivals further maintain their indie ‘authenticity’ by not allowing mainstream/pop acts to be included in the line-up.
The success of the Big Day Out and the sell outs of all major indie festivals in Australia in recent years has seen the emergence of several new music festivals. These include:

- A Day on the Green
- Come together Festival, Luna Park Sydney NSW
- Cockatoo Island Music Festival, 2005, Sydney NSW
- The Festival of the Sun, 2005, Port Macquarie NSW
- The Pyramid Festival, 2005, Phillip Island VIC
- The Great Escape Festival, 2006, Parramatta NSW
- St Jerome’s Laneway festival which tours around Australia

### 7.3.2 Commitment

All festivalgoers I interviewed had been to at least two of the five indie music festivals studied on two or more occasions, and they tended to have a sense of commitment to returning to their favourite festivals. As Pyesie observes:

> Just the bands cos I’m up here [Gold Coast] now and I don’t know many people up here, it would just have to be something that would really want me to go. But as of next year I’ll be coming back down to Sydney for Big Days Out cos I’ve got like Splendour is only gunna be an hour away from here and things like that I’ll go. Just cos I can, sort of thing. But to travel long [distances] it would have to be, apart from Big Day Out, something pretty cool going on to get me there.

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68 Except Phil who had only been to one Big Day Out in 2004. Phil was included as a festivalgoer as he has attended the Meredith Music Festival many times over the years. He has also been to Pushover and the St Kilda festival.
The commitment shown by this festivalgoer to his favourite festival, Big Day Out, demonstrates that the intensity of the festival appeals to committed fans (Dowd et al. 2004a; Dowd et al. 2004b). Even if festivals appeal to people for many other reasons such as value for money or the band line-up, this thesis argues that it is the atmosphere that festivalgoers are looking for. As Kat and Tim explain:

I mean they got like at the Falls, like umm overseas bands and like Australian bands which is really good. And umm, yeah I just think overall that like the atmosphere is the main thing, that just makes it so great. Everyone is just so happy and excited.

Great atmosphere. I think except for Parklife, the atmosphere at every festival I’ve been to has been great. I haven’t really had a problem with bogans or anything. You know that there’s people that go there to get absolutely slaughtered [drunk] and kill as many brain cells and liver cells that they can, but I think mostly people are just friendly and happy to help you out. I don’t really do the mosh pit thing these days. There’s definitely a negative experience with those. I kind of felt like I had to get as close as I could, but that just meant being where all the sweaty, rock hard violent people were as well. But even then if someone fell over people would pick them up, so rough as it was, there was still some kind of respect there.

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69 A bogan is an Australian slang term. It is a derogatory term for a white working-class person, particularly a young male. Female adherents of the stereotype do exist, albeit with somewhat different, gender-specific characteristics. Like the British term chav and the American term white trash, the term is supposedly based on behaviour rather than class alone.
For Mark, attending a music festival is like having a birthday. It is a chance to catch up on new music and not so new music:

It’s like a birthday now for me. Why do you have a birthday every year? It’s an event that you go to and plus to see what new music’s out there and catch up on music you may have missed from the past. The mix is good.

Heather noted that commitment to festival-going is more apparent at camping festivals, as it requires an investment of time:

Yeah, Falls is very sort of well it’s not as mainstream I suppose because it’s a camping one and because you’ve got to make the effort to go for three days. It’s not the sort of the thing that you do if you’re just only casually interested in it or like going to be seen rather than to see the bands.

Nonetheless, it could be stated that music festivals are ‘total-immersion’ training grounds for potential scene members. They are non-threatening places where new members can experience and experiment without fear of disapproval, as Tim explains:

I think people feel more comfortable to express themselves at festivals. I think because there is so many freaky people there that they feel that they can just really come out of their shell and be a dickhead and no one really cares.

Music festivalgoers often say that music festivals are about something more than ‘just the music.’ Of course the music is a key element in attracting people to a festival as they enjoy watching bands, dancing and listening to live music, but there is something else found at large music festivals, a sense of temporary communitas or
community. Festivalgoers know they have a shared common interest from the start, which often makes it easier to strike up conversations with fellow festivalgoers.

At the one day events it is harder to see or feel any sense of camaraderie or community but at the camping festivals one can truly feel a sense of camaraderie. In the next section I will present two stories from my fieldwork that demonstrates this sense of community for festivalgoers, in order to discover how temporal social bonds are formed amongst festivalgoers. The first story is about the first time I travelled to the Falls festival. The second story talks about my arrival at the Falls festival campsite and my introduction to my fellow campers.

7.4 Camping Festivals as an Example of the Connection between Intensity, Commitment and Neo-tribal Sociality

7.4.1 Travelling to a Festival

It’s a long boring road between Sydney and Melbourne, and driving in an uncomfortable campervan without adjustable seats doesn’t make it any easier. The sun belts down on the highway and the hilly countryside, and no matter how far you drive, it never seems to end. Looking out to the distant horizon there is no change. ‘Thank God for air-conditioning’ I say to my partner. ‘Imagine how horrible this trip would be without it. Ten hours on the road in the middle of December. Crazy.’ The radio plays tunes from the national radio station Triple J. Every now and then, the signal fades and I change the frequency to find the station again. It becomes a game between the two of us. ‘Is this it? Yes I think so.’
The even crazier thing about this trip is not the ten hour drive to Melbourne, but the fact that it is the peak tourist season, meaning that every road house was packed, especially Yass, our first pit-stop for lunch. ‘Did you know that AC/DC wrote Highway to Hell about the road trip to Melbourne?’ my partner informs me in a trivia-like way. ‘I can see why’, I joke. The petrol station at Yass is packed so we decided to push on to Gundagai. Gundagai is a small town just off the highway; it is most famous for the tourist attraction of the dog on the tucker box. ‘Are you guys heading to Albury?’ a twenty-something blonde-haired surfer asks me at the Gundagai servo while surveying the campervan. My partner quickly stepped in. ‘I’m...um ...not sure...um’. I interrupt ‘Yes why?’

‘We’re on our way to the Falls festival and my car has broken down. They don’t reckon they can fix it here’ the young man replied. ‘We’re on our way to the festival, too.’ ‘Yeah. Our mates are driving ahead of us and have stopped at Albury. I thought we’d see if we could get a lift to Albury and meet up with them.’ I replied: ‘Yeah sure, why not?’

My partner was not too keen on the idea, but I assured him that guy looked friendly enough and anyway they were travelling to the festival just like us. The guy and his girlfriend get their gear out of their car and jump into the back of the van. Campervans don’t make conversation easy, between the road noises and having to turn around constantly to talk, so there was not a lot of conversation. Plus they had just spent a few hours in Gundagai trying to get the car fixed. I’m sure that they feel a bit pissed off and quiet. So I just turn up the volume on the radio.
I manage to gather that they live on the central coast and that this is their first trip to the Falls festivals. They had borrowed a car for the trip, because they didn’t think their Kombi would make it. They had also just got back from a trip to Canada where they had been snowboarding. They were also thinking about spending a few days down on the Great Ocean Road surfing; that was before the car trouble.

Albury is about two hours or so from Gundagai, which is a long time to spend with strangers. Yet upon arrival in Albury a friendly shirtless surfer and his blonde girlfriend in a Kombi greet us. We drop off our visitors, who again thank us. And we go on our way. ‘Why didn’t their friends drive back to pick them up?’ my partner inquired. ‘I have no idea, but that did seem a little strange.’

7.4.2 Arriving at the Falls Festival

Lorne is a small coastal town on the famous Great Ocean Road. The farm where the festival was held is located 8km north of the town, up a very steep hill, right near Erskine Falls. We arrived at the festival site at about seven pm. A festival worker greeted us as we drove up to the main entrance. She gave us a map and collected our tickets. Then we were directed to a security checkpoint where the van was searched for any illegal items. All glass bottles and beer were confiscated. We were then directed down the hill to our camping spot for the next few days. All the campsites were closely packed together, so we ended up being practically on top of our neighbours, who were in another van. This was

70 Extract from Falls festival field notes December, 2003.
beneficial because it forced us to talk to them. Before I had even got out the van a blonde-haired surfer came up and stuck his face on the passenger side window.

Guy: ‘Hello’ He smiled. I waved back and rolled down the window.

Jo: Hi.

Guy: Whoa! I didn’t expect you to do that.

Jo: Could we have parked any closer? [laughs]

Guy: I guess this just means that we will have to make friends then?

Jo: Yep

Guy: Well, Hi my name is Guy

I introduced my partner and myself, then finished setting up camp, which in a campervan takes about two seconds. My partner and I then sat out the back of the van and watched our neighbours setting up tents. Guy invited us into us to his group. We laughed with them about having to put up tents and they were very jealous of our van. Then we went and got some beers and settled in for the night with our new friends.  

The two anecdotes above illustrate the sense of temporal community found amongst the festivalgoers. In the first story, about travelling to the Falls festival, I discovered that the commonality of the festival journey allowed me to break down the boundaries with total strangers who in everyday life would have been viewed as hitchhikers. Yet through our common goal of our commitment to attend the festival my partner and I felt a connection to this couple which encouraged us to help them out. The first story demonstrates the intensity and impact that festivals can have on

71 Extract from Falls festival field notes December, 2003.
their participants. Intensity creates a sense of togetherness and a ‘vibe’ amongst the festivalgoers, even before arriving at the festival, as they share the excitement and anticipation of experiencing the festival. The impact of such intense feelings is that the festivalgoers develop a shared sense of commitment or emotional bond due to their common experience of travelling to a festival. They share the knowledge of feelings of disappointment, if they were to miss out. It was this feeling of commitment which further encouraged my partner and I to help our fellow travellers.

The second story about our arrival at the Falls festival shows how from the start the festival experience can be quite intense. First you need to get through the security and ticketing procedures at the gate, then you are directed to a camp site, then you set up camp and adjust to living in tight quarters with people who are friendly but at the same time complete strangers. The allocated small camp sites are a direct result of the boundary work of the festival organisers. On the one hand, small camp sites give festival organisers more space into which to fit more people. Yet on the other hand, having small camp sites where groups of strangers have to share a small area helps to create a festival milieu or atmosphere. Through my experience, I have discovered that this helps to foster a sense of neo-tribal sociality and community, as you get to know the people camped around you.

The concepts of intensity, boundary work and impact can be linked with sociality in postmodern sites of consumption such as music festivals. As we have seen in the two stories presented above, intensity, in terms of the proximity of people, activities and atmosphere helps to create a ‘state of mind’ in which festivalgoers are able to escape from their everyday lives and engage in an alternative lifestyle. The boundary work
of the festival organisers enables this to happen through the provision of site infrastructure, band line-ups and good timetabling. Finally, the impact of the intensity and good boundary work allow the festivalgoers to develop and engage in neo-tribal social relations.

### 7.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the important characteristics of festivals through the concepts of intensity, boundary work and impact as suggested by Dowd, Liddle and Nelson (2004b). These concepts are deeply interconnected. Through taking the different approach of using these three concepts I was able to validate in another way than in chapter five the existence of neo-tribal sociality within Australian indie music festivals. Further, these three concepts, or axes of analysis, have allowed the research the element of ‘atmosphere’ so central to neo-tribal sociality and so difficult to study from a sociological perspective.

Through an investigation of the concept of intensity I found that these festivals are intensive experiences for the festivalgoers, which was experienced through the atmosphere created at the event. The festivalgoers experienced this intensity both emotionally and physically which may explain the resulting sociality found amongst them. Further, I found that a balance between intensity and atmosphere needed to be created by festival organisers as this was found to be essential to the festivals’ ultimate success or failure.

An impact of festival participation was the commitment displayed by the festivalgoers. I argued that if a festival experience was positive, festivalgoers might
return the following year and if the experience was negative they may not return. Further, it was argued that due to the increasing popularity of events like Big Day Out and Splendour in the Grass, which can sell out in record time, the commitment displayed by the festivalgoers needed to become more intense. The festivalgoers need to know the months when line-ups will be announced, when tickets will go on sale and finally the dates of the event itself, in order to secure their attendance to the event. This commitment on behalf of the festivalgoers further demonstrates their neo-tribal sociality.

Finally, through an analysis of the boundary work done by the festival organisers I argued that the crucial decisions they make concerning the festival line-up, timetabling, venue choice, stages and other site infrastructure helps to create the atmosphere within the festival. These choices made by the festival organiser ultimately decide what kind of audience they attract. Getting the boundary work right is essential to creating a successful and perennial festival. The impact of such boundary work has lead to the commercialisation of the festivals which I discuss in the subsequent chapter.
CHAPTER 8
CONSUMERISM IN POSTMODERNITY

This chapter revisits the idea of postmodern consumerism in light of my study of the festivalgoers. I investigate the festivalgoers as both consumers of indie music and as a neo-tribe and what could paradoxically be called a ‘brand community’ (see below). Furthermore I investigate the impacts of commercialisation on these festivals in terms of branding. I also explore the connection between indie music festivals and global corporations in terms of festival sponsorship using Australian indie music festivals as well as the American Vans Warped tour as an example. I examine the impacts of commercialisation on the meanings attached to the festival by the festivalgoers. I sum up the chapter with a discussion of the community/commodity dialectic, through analysis of the role each of these concepts play in the creation of the festivalgoer identity.

8.1 The Branding of the Big Day Out: Commercialisation, Brands and Indie Music

Karen Halnon (2005) has suggested that people listen to indie music as a way of escaping the trappings of commercialism. Ironically, however, indie music is not exempt from the commercialisation of music that is often found in consumer society. As Steven Miles explains:

For consumers of many ‘indie’ bands, the idiosyncratic identity of the label is important in their relationship with the music concerned. Indie kids may take a lot of pride in the fact that their favourite band can be perceived to be more
autonomous and creative than the majority of the ‘pop fodder’ available on the market. Yet, ironically, such independence is often a façade which amounts to little more than a sophisticated marketing ploy on the part of the majors [labels] (1998:118).

The same could be said about Australian indie music festivals. Although not directly controlled by the major record labels, they do receive considerable commercial sponsorship from companies looking to tap into the niche market of festivalgoers. Before coming back to the Australian scene, the explanation of an American case might shed some light on this paradox.

Dowd, Liddle and Nelson (2004b) use the example of the American Vans Warped tour, which features Skatepunk music, to illustrate how commercialisation can affect a festival. They argue that the tour is primarily sponsored by Vans Inc, a shoe and clothing company, which has strong ties to skateboarding. This infusion of commercial interests into Skatepunk through corporate sponsorship of the festival intensifies tensions within the scene and threatens its core values (Dowd et al. 2004b:158). Festival organiser Kevin Lyman turned to sponsorship in order to finance the festival which made it decidedly commercial from the outset. Dowd et al. (2004) argue that the Vans Warped tour organisers use existing boundaries regarding suitable performers and desirable audiences however they defy Skatepunk ideals by relying on corporate sponsorship.

The Vans Warped tour could be seen as a brand community based on the Vans brand name. Muniz and O’Guinn define a brand community as ‘a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships
among admirers of a brand. It is specialised because it is centred on a branded good or service [or event]’ (2001:412). Similar to other communities, brand communities are manifested by a shared consciousness, rituals, traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility. These characteristics are, however, situated within a commercial and mass mediated culture. Brand communities are players in the brand’s overall social construction and perform a vital role in the brand’s ultimate legacy.

Brand communities share some similarities with neo-tribes as consumption practices are one of many things that can hold tribes together. Indeed, we saw in chapter five how the festivalgoers created linking value through their consumption of t-shirts. Muniz and O’Guinn argue that in contemporary societies, like Australia, ‘consumers are very aware of the commercial milieu in which they live’ (2001:416). They suggest that the postmodern consumer is self-aware and self-reflexive about issues of authenticity and identity (see table seven). This postmodern attitude towards consumption practices is evident in the festivalgoers’ use of t-shirts as ‘linking images’ at Australian indie music festivals.

Table 7: Characteristics of brand communities, neo-tribes and scenes

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<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
<td>Specialised, non-geographically-bound community based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand</td>
<td>Tribes are informal social networks or collective associations that are bounded not by traditional modern structural organisations, but which refer more to a ‘certain ambience’ or ‘a state of mind’ that is expressed through lifestyles that favour ‘appearance and form’</td>
<td>A scene is a cultural space in which different types of music practices co-exist. It consists of situations in which people come together to create music for their own pleasure</td>
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### Consumerism in Postmodernity

#### Commercialism

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Commercially</td>
<td>Both commercial and non-commercial</td>
<td>Both commercial and non-commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception</td>
<td>Informed by mass-mediated susceptibility, a union of mass and local</td>
<td>Interpersonal and local but can be virtual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Communal self-awareness</td>
<td>Limited communal self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>Self-reflexivity</td>
<td>Constantly shifting identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of the group</td>
<td>Less ephemeral, relatively stable groupings, strong commitment</td>
<td>Informal, ephemeral temporal and fleeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral responsibility</td>
<td>Limited and subtle yet important</td>
<td>Unimportant</td>
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Unlike the American Vans Warped tour, Australian indie music festivals are not explicitly sponsored by one major corporation. All the festivals in this study, however, have sponsorship deals with corporations and to some extent have become brand names in their own right. For example, Scatena described the Big Day Out to young Australians as a ‘bona fide cultural institution, a pop icon, a brand name as recognisable as PlayStation’ (2005a:4). This is becoming the case for all the indie music festivals investigated in this thesis.

The branding of the Big Day Out was exemplified in 2004 on the festival tour t-shirt that clearly and boldly stated ‘BIG DAY OUT. BRAND. TRADE MARK REG.’

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72 Coincidently PlayStation are a major sponsor of the Big Day Out tour.
Furthermore the festivalgoers have begun to recognise the Big Day Out as a brand name. As Heather explains:

> the Big Day Out has just become like a brand name more than anything. Do you know what I mean? I can remember reading an interview with Ken West in the [Sydney Morning] Herald just last weekend or week before. He was just like it’s taken on a life of its own and he can’t control it anymore or something like that. The smaller ones [festivals] I think if they’re commercial, they market to like the indie sort of crowd and because they market to that crowd they go out of their way to avoid becoming commercial. Does that make sense? Whereas, you know, like Rumba, that just had like advertising plastered all over it. I think like the smaller ones get like one company to sponsor the beer tent, do you know what I mean and they can make money from that. And yeah they make more of an effort to be authentic so they don’t alienate the people that they want to come.

There are, however, limitations to this commercialisation. In 2000, Big Day Out organisers West and Less were approached by Clear Channel, a US broadcasting giant, who offered to buy out the festival. Their offer was rejected (Shedden 2005). This rejection perhaps shows that Big Day Out organisers still feel the need to maintain a sense of the festival’s authenticity and identity.

The success of Australian indie music festivals raises once again the debate about selling out, however as music festivals are postmodern consumption sites the integration of leisure and commerce appears to be a natural progression in postmodern societies. Further, festivalgoers seem to have accepted the role of sponsorship and branding as necessary for the festivals’ survival (see chapter two).
Australian festivals like the Big Day Out have not, however, sold out to the level of sponsorship in which the festival itself has been branded, like the Vans Warped tour. The Big Day Out shows itself to maintain a connection to the local indie scene and refuses to be bought out. But for how long will indie music festivals in Australia be able to maintain this? This is a question that will only become answerable in time.

### 8.2 Sponsors, Advertising and the Festivalgoers as Consumers

As previously discussed, Muniz and O’Guinn (2001) have argued that in late contemporary societies consumers are ‘very aware’ of the commercial milieu in which they live. They further suggested that the postmodern consumer is self-reflective and self-aware, especially about issues of authenticity and identity. The postmodern consumer makes consumption choices based not only on use value but on the good’s symbolic meaning or linking value as well.

Neo-tribal groupings like the festivalgoers may base communities or scenes on their consumption practices which have meaning for tribal members and are more than just ‘compensatory acts’ (see Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). It does not matter if the product or brand is deemed to be commercial or non-commercial. To what extent, however, is this the case for the festivalgoers?

As previously discussed in chapter two, within the Australian and perhaps to a larger extent the global indie music scene, there are issues surrounding its supposed ‘sell out’. The question is not about the selling out of the indie music scene, however, but rather how scene members accept or reject elements into their culture. Will the
festivalgoers accept any form of commercialisation? As demonstrated in chapter five, the commercial appropriation of DiY t-shirts has not proven to be an issue for the festivalgoers. To what extent does this paradox exist in terms of the festivals as a whole?

The indie music festivals under investigation were decidedly commercial from the outset, in terms of putting on bands for money. The promoters of the very first festivals (see chapter two) took major financial risks and did not intend to make money let alone a career out of organising a festival. Nevertheless, nowadays, the promoters do view the festivals as a business as Falls festival organisers Naomi Daly explains:

Jo: Do you view the Falls festival as a business?
Naomi: I guess you have to in the level of responsibility that goes with it. I wouldn’t have thought, I’d say it didn’t really start out that way. It was more something to do, I think there’s just too much at stake now to view it as something other than a business but I think we’re incredibly lucky that it’s one that revolves around us and revolves around things we love and yeah I don’t think there’s that many people out there enjoying what they do quite as much as we do and the way that we can incorporate our life into it.

In 1992, Big Day Out promoters Ken West and Vivian Lees were commercially lucky that they had booked Nirvana for their first Sydney show. In the weeks leading up the festival Nirvana became one of the biggest bands in the world which assured the festival’s viability. The rise of grunge and indie music in the following years
assured the festival’s continued success. For West the Big Day Out is a business but it is also part of a creative process:

To Viv [Vivian Lees], yes, it’s a creative process, but it’s a business. And I see this as an artistic statement that has to be a business (cited in Scatena 2005b).

Unlike the American Vans Warped tour, Australian indie music festivals have maintained unbranded festival names or have in the case of the Big Day Out become brand names in their own right.

Sponsorship plays a major role in the financing of Australian indie music festivals. Festivals can be extremely expensive to run; therefore, incorporating sponsors helps to ease the financial burden on festival organisers. Sophie argues that sponsors are part of life nowadays and can be a good thing as they help out financially with the festivals:

It’s money that can actually help your festival and it’s money that you don’t have to draw out of your pocket. But for a sponsor it’s a two way thing; they’ll get something for their advertising and their money that they put in. I think it’s a hard one.

The type of sponsorship will ultimately impact on the festival’s credibility. Festival sponsors need to make sense as Naomi Daly explained to me:

We certainly have sponsors. But they all make sense - they all relate somehow to what were doing. It’s not Doritos or something like that. That just doesn’t fit with what we do. So [the] only sponsors we work with are ones who have a logical reason for being involved in what we’re doing and have some meaningful way of adding to the value of what we do. Sponsorship is certainly important to us, because we’re a really tight budget festival cos we keep our ticket prices just
ridiculously low for what we do and we definitely don’t have big budgets so sponsorship is a critical part of our funding but we’re fortunate. But I guess it’s a decision. You can have lots and lots of sponsors and then you dilute the messages and then it wouldn’t be worth as much. I’d rather deal with less sponsors and give them good value and yeah do it that way.

Companies are not the only type of sponsors. Government grants are also available to festival organisers as Naomi Daly explained:

Jo: Do you get government grants?

Naomi: Yeah we do actually. We’ve just for the last three years had a Tourism Victoria grant because the Victorian event became increasingly national, I mean it’s not money for nothing it’s basically we could promote our festival to a Victorian market and save ourselves a lot of money but just in part of spreading the benefit of a festival and particularly a traveller’s festivals umm yeah we have an interstate campaign which has been effective in drawing a crowd from interstate. So, and in Tasmania, we had some arts funding. We had a little bit, but grants are hard work.

The festivalgoers are aware that the festivals are sponsored to some extent. However, not all festivalgoers see themselves as ‘anti-commercialistic’ in the way that Halnon (2005) describes. For festivalgoers like Chris, who sees himself as a bit

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73 Karen Halnon argues that the problem for youth today, as music consumers, is one of commercialism or as she suggests ‘the synergistic mass marketing of processed, image-driven and formulaic music styles’ (2005:441). For alternative youth cultures, she argues, the aim is to avoid the trappings of commercialism and one way they do this is through their rejection of major record labels.
‘commercial’ in terms of his musical taste, the Big Day Out offers a ‘good mix’.

While it may be an expensive day out, ‘it’s worth it’ as he explains:

> What’s appealing to me [about the Big Day Out], it is in a way commercial cos it’s got bits of everything but no, I love it. I think it’s the prefect mix, cos I myself am not normally, it might be friends as well, out of my close group of friends, I’m sort I dunno I used to get paid out for going/ liking that kind of thing, so I’m pretty commercial myself I think but this is something that is accessible to me and I don’t really care. Like I don’t, like more underground things I wouldn’t be in to it. So I think it does appeal to me because it is fairly commercial and I don’t have a problem with that.

Other festivalgoers like Brendan are in two minds when it comes to the issue of commercialism. On the one hand Brendan believes that festivals have become more commercial as a result of their increased popularity. Yet on the other hand he believes that festivals like the Big Day Out still try to maintain ‘a hippy element’, as the interview extract below demonstrates:

> Big Day Out is commercial but of course it is like it didn’t start out commercial but it’s just gotten so popular over the years that it is commercial. Everyone knows about it. They’ve still got that little bit of the alternative element, cos the alternative hippy kind of thing, it makes the mix a bigger one.

The festivalgoers seem to be quite aware of the commercial nature of festivals, especially the Big Day Out. The quote below from Kristen and Karina comparing the commerciality of Homebake and Big Day Out demonstrates this:
Karina: I think the Big Day Out is a bit commercial because they use like sponsors … like the sponsorship is just so excessive like the beer.

Kristen: Like we only know the sponsors for the Big Day Out. Like for Homebake we probably have no idea.

From my experience of attending the festivals and from the interviewees’ responses, it seems that festivals set in an urban environment tend to be seen by the festivalgoers as more commercial than those set in a rural environment. Festivalgoers recognise that out of all of the festivals under investigation in this thesis the Big Day Out is the most commercial, followed closely by Livid and Homebake whilst the Falls and Splendour in the Grass are seen as less commercial. As indicators to these observations, it is possible to situate the amount of advertising and the number of sponsors a festival has. For example the Falls festival is not heavily advertised in the mainstream media and relies on its website, street press like Drum Media, national radio stations such as Triple J and word of mouth to promote the festival. The Falls festival organisers also consciously limit the number of sponsors they have. In contrast, Big Day Out advertises through underground media as well as mainstream television advertisements. There are also sponsors’ television advertisements promoting competitions to win tickets to the festival. Further, the Big Day Out sponsors’ promotion of the festival is carried onto the products themselves. For example, Tooheys Extra Dry beer cartons or Duracell batteries display the Big Day Out logo. As Nathan explains:

I think particularly like the Big Day Out these days is becoming a lot more mainstream and a lot more commercial... Like this year they had promotional girls everywhere selling Cat stuff but at festivals like Falls, probably Falls is the least commercial and then maybe
Splendour in the Grass is a bit more commercialised and the Big Day Out is fairly commercial. Well, they’re sponsored by [Tooheys] Extra Dry and there’s a lot of promotional stuff going on there.

Further evidence of the overwhelming sponsorship found at Big Day Out compared to other festivals like Homebake or Splendour in the Grass was discussed by focus group one. Karina pointed out that at Splendour in the Grass she hardly noticed the use of sponsors. Similarly, Meg and Nicole agreed that Homebake may be less sponsored or sponsorship may not be as noticeable as it is at Big Day Out. They point out that Big Day Out has sponsors like Java Coffee, Virgin Mobile, Cat and the promoters allow the use of promotional gimmicks like girls giving away free energy drink vouchers.\(^74\)

The postmodern consumer is bombarded with advertisements on a daily basis, through various media such as television, radio, magazines, billboards, and product placements in movies or on the side of buses and taxis. Consumers become blasé and ignore the majority of advertisements unless it ‘speaks to them.’ For advertisers, this means they need to find ways to link products to people’s everyday lives (see McCracken 1987; 1990).

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\(^74\) Not taking into account that the festivalgoers felt that the Big Day Out was the most commercial urban festival, none of the informants clearly stated they preferred rural to urban festivals due to less commercialisation. Although festivalgoers experienced a stronger sense of sociality at rural events, it was not necessarily due to the lesser commercialised aspect but was most likely due to the length of the festivals, which ran for three or four days as opposed to the one day urban festivals.
From the sponsors’ point of view, music festivals are events that allow them to interact with their customers whilst having fun and creating an association between their brand and music. Sponsors spend a lot of money in order to reach the youth demographic that festivals attract. They may supply water, a place to ‘chill out’ or the opportunity to go back stage (Plaskitt 2004).

For instance in 2004, Cat footwear used the Big Day Out to launch its product into Australia, as festivalgoers were its prime target audience and they wanted to associate their brand with music. Their sponsorship involved naming rights to the ‘Cat Essentials Stage’ (see photograph 16 below) as well as the ‘Catapult’, a side show ride. They also offered festivalgoers the chance to go backstage to meet the bands as well as giving away free shoes and associated merchandise like bandanas. Whilst it is not known how much this sponsorship cost, Adam Zammit of Peer Group Marketing suggests sponsors will pay anything from $50,000 to $500,000 for sponsorship alone (Plaskitt 2004). Other examples of brand activity at Australian indie music festivals are listed in table eight below.

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75 Peer Group Marketing holds the commercial rights to the Big Day Out.
Table 8: Examples of brand activity at indie music festival and its relationship to the festivalgoers as consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Festival/ Year</th>
<th>Sponsor/Activity</th>
<th>Connection with festivalgoers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out 2004</td>
<td><strong>Lion Nathan – Tooheys Extra Dry</strong> Inflatable wave bar including inflatable bar, bar stools, lounges and a wave for people to sit on while being refreshed by a special water mist.</td>
<td>Provides festivalgoers with a chill out space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out 2004</td>
<td><strong>Levis</strong> Sponsored a giant water tank and had staff walking around with backpacks filled with water to give out to festivalgoers.</td>
<td>Water is essential for festivalgoers and although this brand has nothing to do with water the idea was to have a giant water tank, so festivalgoers could refill their bottles free and could use the water tank as a meeting spot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out 2004</td>
<td><strong>Optus</strong> Had a recharge room where festivalgoers could relax and charge their mobile phones.</td>
<td>Festivalgoers use mobile phones to keep in contact with each other during the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival/Year</td>
<td>Sponsor/Activity</td>
<td>Connection with festivalgoers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td><strong>Jack Daniels</strong></td>
<td>Took photos of festivalgoers that could be collected free of charge from their website after the festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>Many festivalgoers do not bring cameras into the event so it is a good way to capture a memory of the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td><strong>Motor Accident Authority</strong></td>
<td>Gave fans the opportunity to interview their favourite bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows the festivalgoers the opportunity to go back stage and hang out with their favourite bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td><strong>Duracell</strong></td>
<td>In 2005 Duracell sponsored a tesla coil sculpture entitled Cauac by Syd Klinge and in 2006 they sponsored the Lords of lightening performance of a dual tesla coil battle and the giant water tank.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 and 2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provided the festivalgoers with an artistic and high voltage spectacle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Day Out</td>
<td><strong>V Energy drink</strong></td>
<td>Sponsored a water misting tent called the invigorator and has the naming rights to the V Energy local produce stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows festivalgoers to walk through and cool down on a hot summer day. Having a local produce stage means local bands get the opportunity to play at the festival and support independent music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2005</td>
<td><strong>Sydney Morning Herald</strong></td>
<td>Gave away a free CD with their Saturday morning edition the week following the festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows the festivalgoers to relive the experience of the day through listening to music from the festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2005</td>
<td><strong>iTunes Australia</strong></td>
<td>Set up an itunes tent. Gave away collectable iTunes download cards. Three Homebake bands exclusively released their brand new singles via iTunes Australia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enables festivalgoers to get free music downloads from festival bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2005</td>
<td><strong>Triple J</strong></td>
<td>Festivalgoers could enter a competition to win a flight for two to Sydney plus accommodation and tickets to Homebake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows the festivalgoers the opportunity to go back stage and hang out with their favourite bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2005</td>
<td><strong>Fasterlouder.com.au</strong></td>
<td>Festivalgoers could enter a competition where they get a chance to hang out with Wolfmother at Homebake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allows the festivalgoers the opportunity to go back stage and meet their favourite bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival/ Year</td>
<td>Sponsor/Activity</td>
<td>Connection with festivalgoers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2004</td>
<td>STA Travel</td>
<td>The idea of the promotion was to make festivalgoers feel like rock stars by offering them the chance to win their own world tour. Ran a competition called the round the world challenge where festivalgoers could win an around the world flight drawn on the day. To win, festivalgoers had to go to the STA Travel Kombi Van and grab a passport. The festivalgoers had to go to various locations around the festival to have their passport stamped. Once festivalgoers got all the stamps, they filled in the details on the passport and drop it in the entry box.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebake 2004</td>
<td>Hopetoun Hotel</td>
<td>Gives local acts a chance to play to a large audience and hang out with industry people. Ran the Homebake Hopetoun incentive program which gave new local bands that have performed there over the past month the opportunity to be judged in order to win the opportunity to open the Hopetoun Stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendour 2004</td>
<td>3D world</td>
<td>Many festivalgoers do not bring cameras into the event so it is a good way to capture a memory of the day. Took photos of festivalgoers that could be collected free of charge from their website after the festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splendour 2003</td>
<td>Channel V and Byron Youth Activities Centre</td>
<td>Enabled festivalgoers to meet their favourite bands and get an autograph. Supported the artist signing tent where festivalgoers could meet their favourite artists and get an autograph after making a small donation or buying a raffle ticket.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livid 2003</td>
<td>Kwala Skateboards</td>
<td>Gave festivalgoers the opportunity to go to the festival and win skate gear. Sponsoring a skate demonstration meant festivalgoers could watch and meet US professional skateboarders. Gave festivalgoers a chance to win a double pass to Livid, a pair of Orisis shoes and a skateboard autographed by US professional skaters Ali Boulala, Alan Peterson and Chris Pastras. The company also sponsored the skate demonstrations at Livid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zammit from Peer Group Marketing is quick to point out that the festivals do not accept sponsorship deals from just anyone. He commented that the festivalgoers ‘have to see the value from the brand, rather than it just being parasitic to the event’ (Plaskitt 2004:1). Sponsors for Big Day Out in particular need to be creative about
their marketing campaign. Zammit suggests they need to bring something positive and enjoyable for the festivalgoers. In other words they must do more than bring their brand to the event. In 2002 the Big Day Out introduced a free festival program, which included festival information, timetables, maps and advertisements from sponsors such as Mooks, Levis, V and Jack Daniels. This is yet another way for sponsors to advertise their brand and their relationship with the festival.

It is important to remember that sponsorship is a partnership, wherein there is a co-depandant relationship between the sponsors and the festivals. Festival organisers need sponsorship dollars for the festival to work and sponsors need brand visibility at festivals in order to reach their target audience of festivalgoers (for a Finish example see Eriksson and Voutila 1999).

8.2.1 Positive and Negative Aspects of Sponsorship

In their discussions of the impacts of sponsorship on Australian indie music festivals, the festivalgoers talked about the positive and negative effects of issues that arise from sponsorship such as the types of sponsors, the number of sponsors and the impact that sponsorship deals have on the festival scene. Interestingly, the festivalgoers did point out that in contemporary societies like Australia, advertising and sponsorship is a normal part of everyday life:

Nicole: It’s no different from daily life. We are bombarded by advertising…I can’t say I feel it’s overwhelming at the Big Day Out.

Meg: You’ve got a choice to ignore it.

Karina: It’s never been an issue for me.
One of the benefits of having sponsors is that they can play a major role in the financing and promoting of festivals, as well as keeping the festival accessible in terms of ticket prices. Focus group one discussed this aspect of festival sponsorship at length as the following interview extract demonstrates:

Nicole: I have mixed feelings about the commercial aspect because it is what keeps the price down, cos that’s important for accessibility for people. If there was no sponsorship or if they were banned then perhaps the price would increase. I think that it’s important, so that a lot more people can go.

Nicole: I think accessibility is a big thing that makes music festivals work. So perhaps the commercial side is a necessary evil to keep prices down.

Karina: There’s an actual stage that’s named after a company.

Nicole: I feel naive that I didn’t know that.

Karina: They’ve got that in sport like the Pura Milk Cup…. 

Meg: It’s not gunna be like the Pura Milk Big Day Out.

All: [Laughs]

Nicole: Would anybody here not go if that did happen?

Kristen: I haven’t really noticed.

Meg: I was gunna say that it doesn’t affect the day.

Nicole: I’m not sure if we should think about it more but we don’t.

This conversation between the members of focus group one illustrates the festivalgoers’ general feelings towards festival sponsorship. As Nicole acknowledged, sponsorship is a ‘necessary evil’ as it keeps festival ticket prices down which in turn keeps the festival accessible for people. Meg and Nicole did not see sponsorship as a major issue for them, as they agreed that it is easy to ignore the advertising within the festivals. When Karina brought to their attention to the fact that there was a stage named after a company, however, it exposed feelings of
naivety amongst the group. Focus group one also brought up the interesting comparison between festival sponsorship and sport sponsorship using the example of Cricket’s Pura Milk Cup. Nicole asked the group if any one would not go the Big Day Out if it was sponsored by a major corporation like Pura Milk. While the group did not seem too concerned with major sponsorship of this type, Nicole raised the point that perhaps it is something they should ‘think about more’; that is, be more aware of commercialisation in their environment and how it affects young people.

Another benefit of sponsorship is that sponsors can play an educational and meaningful role within the festival. Falls festival organiser Naomi Daly argues that sponsors need to deliver a message to young people, whether it is about drink driving or the environment. Due to the rural location of the Falls festival, Naomi is able to engage in boundary work that the urban festivals cannot have control over. She has a controlled rural environment in which only approved messages are on display. Naomi believes that when choosing sponsors, they need to have a logical reason for their involvement in the festival not a purely economic one. She explained to me a hypothetical example of chip company Doritos sponsoring the Falls festival, which would not make sense as Naomi argues that Doritos ‘does not fit’ with what Falls does.

Likewise, Nicole and Meg highlighted the educational role of sponsors such as Durex condoms, who promote safe sex and the Binyabutt program developed by the Bryon Environment Centre.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{76} The Binyabutt program supplies Splendour in the Grass festivalgoers with a free pocket size ashtray made from recycled film canisters (Splendour in the Grass 2004).
Nicole: I don’t mind some of it either, like the condom that’s purely educational. And there was also at Splendour… who was it that was giving out those cigarette things so as not to litter cigarette butts.

Meg: That was an environmental thing…

Nicole: So that was great and that was some sort of sponsorship and some community education aspects to the festival that are perhaps dictated by sponsorship.

A further benefit of sponsorship is ‘experience enhancement’ as sponsors add another dimension to the festival (Doyle 2004). Experience enhancement involves sponsors doing more than just bringing their brand to the event. Sponsors can enhance the festivalgoers experience through creating fun and interesting things to do and see. Examples of experience enhancement can be seen in table eight above. The use of the right kinds of sponsors can create a vibe or atmosphere within the festival.

As Meg explains:

It definitely doesn’t take away from… if anything it probably adds to it a little bit more. It just means that there’d be more funding from the companies so that means it can be better for the people going. Better facilities and stuff like that.

This response from Meg is interesting as it ties in with Zammit’s comments above about sponsors needing to be creative and to add to the festivalgoers’ enjoyment of the festivals.

Another way sponsors enhance the festival experience for the festivalgoers is that they allow for more variety at the event. For example in the beer tent as Kevin explains:
But on the other hand I kind of enjoy a bit of that commercialisation in saying there’s more beer available. Before there was only VB and light beer and now there’s Carlton Draught, there’s Extra Dry, there’s Jack Daniels, Southern Comfort, vodka, there’s all this different types of stuff that maybe a Big Day Out licence couldn’t afford at that time but now they can cos they’re getting sponsored.

Similarly, Roxanne sees the value of having sponsors like Jack Daniels. She believes ‘they do a lot for music,’ even though they are also attempting to associate their brand with music and festival fun. Sponsors like Jack Daniels enhance the festivalgoers’ experience as they support new music by putting on bands and having band competitions outside of the festival season. As Roxanne notes, the use of sponsors in promoting the local scene is important yet she still has some nostalgia towards a completely independent festival. She comments:

I think [festivals] can be [commercial] but well last year Big Day Out was sponsored by Jack Daniels and Jack Daniels were actually trying to do a lot for local music, like they were doing the Jack Awards, and a lot of stuff like that. And this year they’re sponsored by Extra Dry and I just see ads for Extra Dry next to ads for Big Day Out, like on the TV. It would be nice if music festivals could exist without that but I don’t think it’s actually viable at all and ticket prices can get stupidly expensive but everyone’s still willing to pay it so I don’t see why they would try and take them down.

On the other side there are negative aspects to festival sponsorship. Festivalgoers become concerned about increasing sponsorship turning the festivals into a
commodity which they feel devalues the festival. They question the use of sponsors at festivals, and the relationship between brands and festivals.

Excessive or pointless and inappropriate sponsorship or brand placement at indie music festival such as having a stage named after a company is viewed negatively by the festivalgoers. As Kevin explains:

The Cat stage I don’t know I don’t understand how Big Day Out can charge over a $100 a day…and then cram pack so many people. You couldn’t walk anywhere else and have people sponsoring a stage…Cat sponsor a whole stage and have all these sponsors and they’re still charging so much money. I think it’s cos they’ve gone commercial I think they’re going for the dollar.

This product integration is designed to create an association between Cat and the Big Day Out. Some of the festivalgoers, however, feel that it takes away from the festival experience as the festival becomes more about product awareness and advertising then it does about music.

Festivalgoers are concerned about the impacts of advertising on young people: ‘are these the right kind of sponsors to have at festivals like the Big Day Out?’ asks Nicole. This is because sponsorship may widen the ‘target audience’ of the festivals. As Kevin highlighted:

I remember Big Day Out only used to advertise in the Drum [Media]. You didn’t want to get people, you wanted to get an audience. But now I’m seeing Duracell advertising for the Big Day Out a million hit wonder oh wow Big Day Out. Tooheys Extra Dry cases with Big Day Out and you could
Festivalgoers like Kevin are concerned about the fact that festivals like Big Day Out are being advertised to a wider market through television advertisements which indirectly market the festival through the sponsor’s advertising and running competitions. For instance Duracell and Tooheys advertisements prominently feature the Big Day Out in the weeks prior to the festival. The festivalgoers are concerned that the use of indirect television advertising is changing the festivals’ target audience and mainstreaming the festivals.

A further negative impact of sponsorship of festivals is the income generated from it. Some festivalgoers see festival sponsorship as being about making money. The festivalgoers feel that the organisers are ‘out to make a profit’. As Grace explains:

For example that Big Day Out where they had two in Sydney because of Metallica that was a commercial reason cos they knew that it would sell out twice over cos they had Metallica there. So if they didn’t think they were gunna make money out of the second act they wouldn’t have done it.

For Wayne, the inclusion of sponsors is about the exploitation of youth culture, as he explains below:

They really exploit the young people. Well I bought a T-shirt [for] $40, you know like you know you buy a beer [cooler]...$10 for a little bit of wetsuit material with Splendour on it. Like they [festival organisers] know the young ones are gunna buy it and they’re gunna do it. They can exploit the young ones for selling the alcohol cos they
know the young ones are gunna buy it. It’s an age that they don’t mind exploiting [chuckles].

In contrast to the other festivalgoers, Wayne is talking about the commercial nature of Splendour in the Grass. He is concerned over changes to the festival and its increasing popularity:

Well they’re just setting them up aren’t they? As long as people keep buying them [festival tickets]. When Splendour in the Grass can sell out in like a month, are they gunna sell more then 5,000 tickets next year? I dunno. That’s where it’s gotta be capped. Someone’s gotta be able to look at it and say it’s got to be comfortable. Yes, it was comfortable there at one stage but Xavier Rudd was scary. You know not scary, but for some who’s just up there a one man band, I don’t know other many people [festivalgoers] were looking at other venues or other people singing at that time but that was just covers. That was unbelievable, that was a you know…a Limp Bizkit [laughs] there was a lot of people there. Yes they will continue to exploit the young ones because the young ones have got the money. They [young people] don’t go…yes they’re exploiting them…yes I think they’re exploiting them. But you know… we’re a throw-away society aren’t we but people just… do they care? I don’t think they care. They’ve got the money. That goes for everything; fashion, alcohol, everything. They are the ones that are spenders.

Other festivalgoers like Tim feel that the festivals’ use of sponsors may have added to them ‘selling out.’ Tim feels that sponsorship devalues the festivals and the festivals start to lose their meaning as corporate sponsorship and national advertising
campaigns are seen by some of the festivalgoers as de-valuing an event they regard
as ‘special’. As Tim explains:

I think yeah looking at commercial on two different levels
cos there’s whole corporate sponsorship part of it and then
there’s the whole word of mouth or advertising thing. There’s
like the whole tall poppy syndrome and kind of question
where something’s sold out or not. I think there’s a lot of
festivals now that are a little bit too big for their boots. …
like Big Day Out, to think that they started off as such a small
thing or even Falls festival that just started off as a new
year’s eve party with like four bands that were from Victoria
to something so huge. And I guess yeah I mean they are
becoming a bit commercial and a bit like marketing
companies or like marketing departments of companies are
definitely seeing it as a tribe now. Like they break everything
down into tribes and it’s definitely one of the main tribes that
they try and market towards. Cos I think even now Extra Dry
and the Big Day Out, Extra Dry’s… Toohey’s doing this
massive marketing campaign which I guess I mean it works
well cos it keeps the ticket prices down, cos they’re able to
put so much money into it. But it also kind of feels like
something that’s part of your life or something that you hold
special to yourself is being broadcast to the nation and you
just kind of question how special it is as well.
8.3 Community, Commodity or Both? Festivals and Consumption in Consumer Society

Postmodern sites of consumption such as music festivals are spaces in which leisure and consumption activities form two sides of the one coin. As Edwards (2000) noted, no activity or human need avoids commodification in consumer society. Whilst the festivalgoers may wish for a truly independent festival untouched by commercialisation, commercialism in the form of sponsorship has proven to be an integral aspect of these festivals.

Through an investigation of the festivalgoers’ views on the negative and positive aspects of sponsorship, I argued that consumerism is empowering, allows for individual and group expression, and is also a form of exploitation. On the one hand the use of creative sponsorship enhances the festivalgoers’ experiences and creates a way for festivalgoers to develop a connection between the brands and perhaps other festivalgoers who also identify with that brand. These ‘commercialised’ connections might thus lead to the creation of a brand community or neo-tribe. Yet, on the other hand, sponsors exploit the values of the local scene as was seen in the extreme case of the Vans Warped tour.

Although this has not been addressed, throughout the thesis I have argued that Australian indie music festivals are postmodern sites of consumption (see chapter one). Up until this point I have explored these festivals as spaces in which leisure activities and social exchanges are performed by the festivalgoers. I have demonstrated this through the examples of dressing up, moshing, crowd surfing, singing aloud and other audience behaviours (see chapters five and six). Furthermore, I have explored these festivals as spaces in which consumer activities or economic exchange takes place. I have demonstrated this through the example of the merchandise tent and t-shirts purchased by festivalgoers (see chapter five). In this chapter I focus more on the economic side of festivals and how this impacts on the commodity/community relationship within these festivals.
As Mike Featherstone (1991) points out, the economic value of commodities is not the whole story as individuals who consume these commodities will appropriate them and give them new meanings. We have seen in the case of the festivalgoers, the way they have used the festival commodity to create a community or network to belong to. Festivalgoers, through their use of and identification with indie music festivals and its associated commodities, have demonstrated that consumers do use objects to classify themselves (Featherstone 1991).

In this thesis I have attempted to explore the relationship between the festivals as a commodity and the festivalgoers as a form of temporal community or neo-tribe. I have argued that the connection between commodification of the festival and the creation of temporal communities within these festivals can not be broken. While it may seem that there is a conflict between the commodity-community relationship, as modernists such as Scott Lash and John Urry (1994) and Anthony Giddens (1991) would argue, the idea of having a commodity and a community working together may not seem to be contradictory in the case of this research, as in postmodern conditions, postmodern spaces appear to allow for communities to form around commodities (see Edwards 2000; Featherstone 1996; Shields 1992b). I argue that this is a paradoxical division that creates a special social milieu that fosters the development of these tribes.

Neo-tribal groupings like the festivalgoers are a type of community formed around ‘weak social ties.’ Barry Wellman and Milena Gulia argue, in relation to their work on internet communities, that ‘weak ties are more apt than strong ties to link people with different social characteristics. Such weak ties are also better than strong ties for
maintaining contact with other social circles’ (1999:8). The festivalgoer neo-tribe exemplifies how weak ties enable group members to form a community or network that is flexible and interchangeable.

Postmodern individuals, such as the festivalgoers, seek out products and services for their linking value rather than their use value. Linking value may be seen as a weak social tie, but it forms the basis of the network or community for neotribes. Commodities such as t-shirts are given such meanings by the festivalgoers. In postmodern societies the meanings of objects are not necessarily fixed or connected to their function, but contain free floating signifiers. This enables individuals to ascribe different meanings to objects. This is a part of the creation of linking value as groups of consumers attribute objects with similar meanings.

In consumer society, people increasingly use commodities in their creation of social bonds and self-identities. Consumption has become the central feature of postmodern lifestyles. As Maffesoli (1996) suggests, groups are no longer bound by categories of class, ethnicity, gender or age; rather, groups or communities are formed around neo-tribal networks that express through lifestyle a certain state of mind that is reflected in people’s consumption patterns. The festivalgoer tribe is just one ideal type of a community that is based around consumption patterns. Festivals are not only commodities but are spaces that allow for the creation of communities or networks. Festivals are spaces for fun, experimentation and experiencing festival culture and lifestyle. They achieve this through their unique place as a postmodern leisure space in which commodities and communities collide.
8.4 Chapter Summary

The boundary work of festival organisers has been proven essential in minimising or increasing the impact of sponsorship on the festival. For instance we saw how on the one hand Big Day Out organisers have demonstrated their anti-commercial stance through their rejection of a proposal to buy out the festival by an American corporation. On the other hand, however, Big Day Out is the most heavily sponsored festival.

The inclusion and use of sponsors is viewed both positively and negatively by the festivalgoers as sponsorship impacts upon the festival’s perceived sell out and their authenticity. While it is recognised that festival sponsorship from both government organisations and commercial enterprise is necessary in funding the festivals, it appears that festivalgoers still approach the idea of commodification of the festivals with caution.

For the festivalgoers, consumerism is not just a pointless or mindless activity. Festivalgoers use commodities in order to create both personal and collective identities. It is important to point out as I have argued in this thesis, however, that commodities must a have linking value and have symbolic meaning for the festivalgoers in order for them to integrate them into their everyday lives.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: NEOTRIBALISM AND THE FESTIVALGOERS

Sophie’s comments at the beginning of this thesis framed the idea that there is some ‘sense of loss’ felt by the festivalgoers as a result of the commercialisation of Australian indie music festivals. But what is felt to be lost? Perhaps this indicates a loss of community? I have used these questions as basis for my investigation into the relationship between the festivalgoers’ notions of the community/commodity dialectic, which I argue can be found at festivals of this type.

In order to investigate this seemingly paradoxical relationship between the festivalgoers’ notions of community and commodity, I took a post-subcultural approach. I used the festivalgoers as an ideal type of a neo-tribal grouping as I believed that Maffesoli’s theory of tribalism could shine new light on the relationships between youth, music and style.

Traditional subcultural and post-subcultural theories explore many of the same issues as before, such as the formation of alternative cultures, appropriation of material goods for new purposes, symbolic dress, appearance, language, ritual occasions, styles of interaction, and music (Jenkins 1992). The post-subcultural approach can, however, be seen as a new and critical line of attack that highlights the flaws in traditional subcultural methods which focused on subcultures as an expression of class and generation. Neo-tribal theory, in particular, permits a more fluid conception that takes into account the weakening impact of class, locality, gender, and the
increasing importance of multiple identities and multiple sites within which these identities can be played out (McDonald 2006:93). Overall, the post-subcultural approach is found to be a more appropriate way to deal with the dynamic, heterogeneous and fickle nature of contemporary alliances and individuals’ feelings of group ‘in-betweeness’ in late capitalist/ global consumer society.

Through applying Maffesoli’s (1996) neo-tribalism to theories about consumption, I argued that in postmodern consumer societies people are affected by constant social changes as the market allows people to combine commodities and meanings like never before. The result is that in a neo-tribal world, people work on their self-definition and in finding ways to relate to others through consumption. For the indie music festivals investigated in this thesis, which were initially ‘non-commercial’ events, consumption has helped to create solidarity, structure and continuity for the neo-tribes.

The central question of this thesis addresses how festivals are able to simultaneously represent notions of community and commodity. I have answered this question through my case study of the Australian indie music festivalgoers, in which I investigated the festivalgoers’ consumption practices. I found that by exploring the meaning given by the festivalgoers to their acts of consumption, I was able to detect, even if these consumption patterns were somewhat conservative, the way in which festivalgoers used commodities in their identity construction.

In chapter two I introduced the concept of postmodern sites of consumption, which are spaces that contain a combination of leisure and consumption practices. I have
argued that Australian indie music festivals fit into this category as they are spaces where groups meet and participate in face-to-face communication. These sites are characterised by neo-tribal sociality as festivalgoers engage in sociality as well as commodity exchange. The act of consuming these festivals has become a way for the festivalgoers to identify with others while at the same time creating a sense of personal identity.

Chapter two also provided background to my case study of Australian indie music festivals, which was used to investigate the meanings and paradoxes of consumerism found amongst festivalgoers. I discovered through investigating the historical development of these festivals that these unintentionally commercial festivals had integrated themselves into the indie music scene through their promotion as a space for the expression of a sense of collective identity. As a result they solidified themselves as a way of connecting the festival commodity to the local scene which perhaps helped in creating a festival community.

In addition, I found an ongoing debate amongst festivalgoers about the festivals’ supposed ‘selling out.’ This debate failed to bring to light, however, any meaningful resolutions about the relationship between the indie and mainstream music scenes. Rather, I found that it was more important from a sociological point of view to analyse the ways in which indie music festivalgoers chose to accept or reject certain elements into their culture. More importantly, I established that within indie guitar culture there was a self-constructed ‘sense of otherness’ which was used to create a sense of group solidarity between both fans and the bands. The problem of the paradoxical nature of striking a balance between authenticity and commercialisation,
however, remained.

In chapters three and four I defined and justified my methodological and theoretical approach. In chapter three I debated the usefulness of becoming an insider researcher and introduced the research participants that I called the festivalgoers.

In chapter four I debated the death of youth subculture and the possibility of a neo-tribal new beginning. I argued that while it may be too early to suggest the end or indeed the death of subculture as a useful theoretical approach, there has been a dramatic shift in sociological thinking about the connections between youth, style and music. In a time when consumer choice is more critical and valuable than ever before sociologists need to develop new ways of understanding the complex relationships of contemporary youth cultures. I argued that this is best done through the adoption of a post-subcultural view which values participants’ perceptions of their everyday lives and the meanings they create around their understanding of musical taste and style. The inclusion of Maffesoli’s (1996) theory of tribalism when studying youth cultures appears to be a useful way of understanding complex collective associations in postmodern society as it addresses some of the critiques of the British subcultural theory and allows for new ways to investigate this phenomenon.

There is an intimate relationship between neo-tribes and music scenes. I discovered through my focus on the indie music festival scene, the presence of collective experiences of sociality amongst the festivalgoers. Through an analysis of scene theory and neo-tribalism I developed an understanding of how the indie scene both in
Australia and globally has created a social logic that has allowed the continued existence of festival culture. This further accounted for the acceptance of musical crossover and hybridisation within the indie scene. Furthermore, the enduring nature of the carnivalesque within the festival ‘scene’ has allowed temporal social bonds to form between festivalgoers.

In chapters five, six, seven and eight I presented and discussed the results of my fieldwork. In chapter five I made the case that music festivals were anchoring places for neo-tribal groupings like the festivalgoers and yet at the same time commercialised events. It seemed that the dual role of the festival as a representation of both a community and a commodity suited the festivalgoers. The festivalgoer persona was found to be only one of the masks that festivalgoers identified with. Maffesoli (1996) argues that neo-tribes show empathic support to members who want to experiment or try on new masks. I found it somewhat difficult to find evidence of this, however, as most festivalgoers seemed cautious of ‘spectacular stylists.’ I concluded that through wearing the festivalgoer mask, festivalgoers were able create a sense of identification with others.

To illustrate this point I employed a case study of t-shirts (worn to festivals) which were viewed as both ritual clothing and a commodity. I found that t-shirts were ‘identity markers’ for the festivalgoers as they indicated tribal belonging. The commodity of the t-shirt had become a linking image for festivalgoers as it allowed for the creation of a connection between self-identity and collective identity. Paradoxically, I found that festivalgoers used both DiY and commercial t-shirts to communicate their shared thoughts and feelings. Although indie guitar culture is
supposed to be about ‘back to basics’ and DiY culture, it seemed that the festivalgoers had embraced the commercialisation of their culture, especially in the case of the commercial appropriation of DiY t-shirts and used it as a way to create a sense of community and neo-sociality.

In chapter six I investigated the ways in which festivalgoers participate in music festivals and how this participation allowed them to create neo-tribal social networks. I found that there were two types of neo-tribal sociality expressed by the festivalgoers. The first type of sociality was found between the festivalgoers and the second type of sociality was found between the festivalgoers and the bands. This was illustrated through the case studies of moshing and other audience behaviours. The mosh pit was discovered to be a complex social organism within which many social relationships took place. Furthermore, I found that there was an intense connection between neo-tribalism and development of the carnivalesque in the mosh pit.

Australian indie music festivals provided the festivalgoers with a space for the expression of ‘togetherness’, as they were based on fun, relaxation and pleasure. Festival participation was argued to be one of the important ways for festivalgoers to form temporal engagements and neo-tribal associations. Groups provided the festivalgoers with a sense of belonging and identification as well as a sense of individual identity. Participating in a music festival was about more than just a fun day out for the festivalgoers. It was an opportunity for them to gather together with like-minded people and share the experience of being a member of the festivalgoer tribe.
Although pleasure seemed to be the foremost significant dimension of participating in these festivals, other meanings emerged from the festivalgoers’ interactions during the festivals. They seemed to have developed an innate sense of togetherness and neo-tribal sociality as the intense and demanding experience of attending a festival fostered the opportunity for a sense of connectedness and belonging to develop among festivalgoers.

This was further investigated in chapter seven, where I integrated neo-tribal theory with Dowd, Liddle and Nelson’s (2004b) conceptual framework of intensity, boundary work and impact. I found that the intensity of the festivals was experienced both emotionally and physically by the festivalgoers. It was this intensity that allowed for the creation of an atmosphere or ‘vibe’ within the event, as the festivalgoers where engaging in vigorous consumption patterns whilst at the same time participating in neo-tribal sociality. The intensity and creation of a festival vibe was a delicate balancing act for the festival organisers and was seen by the festivalgoers as an essential element to the success or failure of a festival.

One of the impacts of festival intensity was the commitment displayed by the festivalgoers. The increasing popularity of events like Big Day Out and Splendour in the Grass, which sell out in record time, means the commitment displayed by the festivalgoers has become more intense. This is because festivalgoers need to know months in advance when the festival line-ups will be announced, when tickets will go on sale and finally the dates of the event itself, in order to secure their attendance.

The festival organisers were found to play a crucial role in the boundary work of the
festivals, as they made critical decisions concerning the festival line-up, timetabling, venue choice, stages and other site infrastructure. The choices made by the festival organisers impacted on how the audience got attracted to the festival. Getting the boundary work right was essential to creating a successful and perennial festival. A negative impact of the success of these festivals was, however, their increased commercialisation.

The impact of the commercialisation of these festivals was further investigated in chapter eight. I examined the branding of festivals and their use of sponsors. I found that the festivalgoers viewed sponsorship as having both positive and negative impacts upon the festivals’ perceived sell out and authenticity. The festivalgoers recognised that festival sponsorship in the form of government grants and commercial enterprise was a ‘necessary evil’ in funding the event. This did not, however, mean that the festivalgoers completely accepted the commodification of the festivals; rather, they seemed to approach the idea with caution. I found that the boundary work of festival organisers was essential in minimising or increasing the impact of sponsorship on the festival. For instance we saw how on the one hand Big Day Out organisers had demonstrated their anti-commercial stance through their rejection of a proposal from an American corporation to buy out the festival. On the other hand Big Day Out is the most heavily sponsored festival.

Overall, it seems that for the festivalgoers, consumerism is not just a pointless or mindless activity. Festivalgoers actively use commodities in order to create both personal and collective identities. It is important to point out as I have argued in this thesis that commodities must have a linking value; that is the commodity must have a
meaning attached to it that is shared by others. The symbolic meaning attached to the commodity becomes more important than its use value. The festivalgoers then integrate these commodities into their everyday lives and use them to create neo-tribal networks.
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References


References


References


References

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# APPENDIX 1: FESTIVALGOER/ FOCUS GROUP

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background information</td>
<td><strong>Could you tell me a little bit about yourself</strong> (occupation, age, martial status, etc)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Festival Experience</td>
<td>Have you had any interesting music festival experiences that you would like to talk about?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you have any festival stories or stand out memories from a music festival?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What was the first music festival you went to?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What are some of the music festivals that you have been to in Australia and overseas?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Which one was your favourite? What makes it your favourite music festival?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Which one was your least favourite festival? What makes it your least favourite festival?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Musical Influence</td>
<td>What role does music play in your life?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you play an instrument or sing?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of music or bands are you into?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How central are music festivals to your everyday life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clothing Style</td>
<td>What do you usually wear to a music festival?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is what you wear to the festival important or meaningful to you? Why?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you wear the same kind of clothing at the festival as you do outside the festival? Do you wear it everyday?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you have any rituals concerning the clothes you wear? (Or any rituals in general?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
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</table>
| General opinion of festivals | In general what is your opinion of Australian music festivals? (E.g. Big Day Out, Livid, Falls, Homebake, Splendour)  
What about the different styles of music? Bands?  
What do music festivals mean to you? |
| Commercialisation         | Are music festivals too commercial (in terms of ticket prices, merchandise etc)  
Do you buy festival merchandise? |
| Indie or Mainstream       | How would you describe (a festival) to an alien from outer space?  
In your opinion are Australian music festival indie, commercial, mainstream or something else?  
What is your understanding of the term indie? What is your understanding of the term mainstream?  
**Do you see yourself as being part of particular music community or scene?**  
What do you believe is the message behind the festival-identity or promoted image? |
| Age restrictions          | Are you ever too old or young to go a festival? |
| Safety                    | What has festival security (safety) done to the atmosphere of the festival if anything? |
| Friends                   | Who do you go with to music festivals?  
Are you friends with the people you attend the festivals with outside the festival?  
Do you stay together all day during the festival? |
| Drugs/ Alcohol            | What is your opinion of drug use at festivals?  
What is your opinion of drinking at festivals?  
Does drinking help you dance? |
| Mosh pit                  | Do you have any interesting mosh pit stories? |
| Politics                  | Are you a member of any political groups? Why or why not?  
How did you become a member? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Are your friends also members of this group?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you think festivals like the Big Day Out are political?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-verbal language</td>
<td>What do these hand gestures mean to you? (Do horns, rock on, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exp</td>
<td>Do you experiment or try new things at music festivals?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Are there any quirky or strange things that you do at festivals (or games you play)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Why do people write on their t-shirts at festivals? Have you ever done this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>Do you dance at music festivals?</td>
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<td>What kind of dancing do you do?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have you ever danced with strangers?</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Why do you keep going back to music festivals?</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# APPENDIX 2: FESTIVAL ORGANISER INTERVIEW

## SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background information</td>
<td><strong>Could you tell me a little bit about yourself</strong> (occupation-role in relation to the festival, age, etc)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival Organisation</td>
<td>How did you get into the festival business?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Could you tell me a bit about your role in organising the festival?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How long have you been doing this (or with this festival?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target audience</td>
<td>What kind of people come to the Falls festival (or what’s your target audience)?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do you attract that audience? Is it through band choice?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do you choose the bands that play?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How do you decide on the types of stalls and activities to have at the festival?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General opinion of festivals</td>
<td>What do music festivals mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercialisation</td>
<td>What was the inspiration for the first Falls festival?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>How has the Falls festival changed over time?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What was the motivation behind extending the festival to Tasmania?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indie / community</td>
<td>What does the term indie mean to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Do you see yourself as being part of particular music community or scene?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the Falls festival helping to serve that community?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>What is the message that the Falls festival is trying to promote to young people?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have noticed that Falls is sponsored by the Tourism Victoria and many Green organisations. What was the motivation in having this particular sponsors and not some of the larger</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
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<td>corporations that sponsor other festivals?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you try to minimise the amount and type of sponsors?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Do festival organisers play a role in creating the ‘festival atmosphere’? If so how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Influence</td>
<td>What role does music play in your life?</td>
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