Dissonant Wonderfulness: The Rock ‘N’ Roll Scene In Australia

Popular music has consistently been a distinctive cultural carrier to demonstrate Australian ideologies for decades. Along the way, rock music is understood as a primary driver for the construction of Australian sociocultural identity and national image with its unique cultural value. According to National Museum of Australia, rock and roll has contributed Australia to generating its own representative music culture after years of American and influences. It produces a symbolic alignment between the nation and Oz rock in the collective memory of Australian people. Besided, the country and the rock music fit comfortably together as a unique 'scene' to disrupt the society which has significant impacts on Australian’s collective memory about male-advantaged gender hierarchy and unofficial live music venues. The significance of Oz rock to Australian music culture are valued in the process of developing Australian cultural memory through the collective experiences of rock and the social practices associated with it which constitute numerous cultural heritage in the contemporary Australian society. This essay will examine Oz rock in the aspects of music history, physical music sites, music television shows and music performers to illustrate the significance of rock music to Australian music culture, Australian cultural heritage and cultural memory.

The significance of rock music to Australian music culture is far beyond artistic stratification purely as a kind of music genre. It is entangled with history, politics,social structure and national cultural order. Rock and roll encourages Australia to forge its own national identity and thus increase confidence and world-wide attention during the 1980s. ‘Oz Rock’ is a frequently used name to describe a Australian rock style that is usually articulated to a national structure of practices (Homan 606). It incorporates various cultural legacies including Indigenous culture into creation and subsequently deliver diverse content to the audiences offers an openness to Australian music culture and Australian society. Television in the early days played an important role in promoting rock music by commercialising rock music and distributing it to more extensive demographic groups. It is notable that Countdown, during the period when television was intensely imbricated with the cultural nationalizing project greatly assisted rock music to become representative national culture through the program’s cultural nationalizing effect (Hawkings 9). Besides, rock music has contributed to eliminating the race restrictions in the mainstream society by importing the Indigenous artists into this nationalising music field. Six O’Clock Rock featured a number of musicians from non-European backgrounds such as Aboriginal guitarist Jimmy Little (Keane). The importance of Aboriginal language and Aboriginal culture in Oz rock music is a factor that could not be overlooked in examining how rock music is a marker of cultural heritage (Bennett and Janssen 4). Six O’Clock Rock’s endeavors to introduce more Aboriginal artists to the public is a milestone to challenge the social structures such as conventional notions of race differences and 'Australianness' that rock music was coded as English-speaking and it was exclusively for white people. Oz rock has gained unique prestige by dismantling the Anglo-Saxon constructions of music value and authenticity and absorbing more diverse components into music (Bennett and Janssen 5). The dominance of music performed by Anglo-Australians in English language appears to be less taken-for-granted than it used to be in Australia. It is consequently that Oz rock has revolutionary significance to Australian music culture and Australian cultural memory in the aspects of promoting inclusiveness and disrupting social norms.

Rock music has rendered female vaster prominence in cultural memory by normalizing and increasing their involvement in the field rock music which is the most remarkable in within the whole music culture. Australian Independent Record Labels Association newsletter once suggested that in Australia only 20% of the Australian Performing Rights Association's registered songwriters were female and only 20–30% of songs were performed by female musicians on radio despite women accounted to 50% of music students. Meanwhile, the gender wage gap in the arts and recreation industries was nearly two percent higher than the existing high 17.9% national pay gap (Music Victoria). These differences could reflect the exclusion and marginalization of women within the entire popular music culture. For rock music whose musical spaces are generally guarded masculine territories, women artists are facing greater social and regulatory obstacles. At the initial stage, female musicians were unlikely to be able to participate in rock music scenes as equal as male as music was gendered, with rock being perceived as masculine (Cohen 1997). Especially in Australian, the extremely masculine attribute of pub rock reinforced the gender hierarchy in music that resulted in a ack of women in the ranks of leading historical figures in music history. Frith indicates that the connection between popular music and evocation is evident because of its inherently nostalgic properties. This suggests that Oz rock could function as a cultural item to emetically constitute and represent the past in the present. and to emotionally ground them in the present. It is important to explore how women rock and rollers are constructed as being a necessary part of rock music scenes in Australia and how they are currently framed for the cultural memory discourse around music (Strong Gender, Popular Music and Australian Identity 18)

Constructing the memory of Chrissy Amphlett, the frontwoman of iconic Australian band the Divinyls is effective to demonstrate Australia music culture's unique positioning in the world of popular music to influence the gendered expressions and expectations. The death of this rock stars triggered heated online discussions about the exclusion of female in the rock music industry in Australia and the extent to which female rock stars come to signify the complex interplay of historical accounts and collective generational memory. Chrissy Amphlett first came to prominence in the early 1980s with her aggressive on-stage performances and the hardcore style of her band which was shown in a way that did not fit the stereotypical femininity and stood on the opposite of other famous female Australian musicians at the time. Amphlett's claim to a legitimate level in the Australian collective cultural memory has been firmly recognized as she was incorporated into the canon of Australian rock which is instructive to remove the past female were not able to participate in rock (Strong, All the Girls in Town). Meanwhile, Amphlett's death received extensive coverage in Australian including commentary from plentiful influencial figures in Australian popular culture and countless writing with admiration and respect that marked her death by the public. The obituaries and tributes dedicated to Amphlett present legitimizing functions in echoing and consolidating the equality which is the most absolute promise of music culture. This demonstrates a positive moment in the fight to witness women accomplish equal status in the field of rock music and the entire music culture as well. The way that Chrissy Amphlett was framed as having penetrated the barriers for female to legitimize their place in a tolerant and inclusive music field where discrimination does not occur due to gender. In a word, Rock music has provided a compelling platform for anyone to realise themselves by the virtue of its nationalising effect. During this process, glorious moments when female musicians could be profoundly written into the story of Australian music culture has appeared. It is therefore that rock music has peculiar meaning to incorporate the past and present contributions of Australian music culture and produce a framework that encourages the ongoing equal participation to any gender in this field.

A multitude of physical rock music sites has constituted a powerful form of intangible cultural heritage in contemporary society music by functioning as an object of memory. Rock music in relation to discussions of memory and heritage is not merely technologically mediated texts that assume such cultural resonance, but an authentic carrier that reflects the history to associate with the long-lasting collective memory. Australian rock music is usually written and performed within and for local communities with real Aussie blokes, working-class battlers and hooligans whose lyrics are locally specific and about daily issues that Australians could relate to being the frontmen in pubs and bars(Bennett 495). It is an accessible and empathetic art form for the public which has soon become a part of the cultural landscape of Australian since the earliest days of rock and roll. There is no denying that knowing the chorus of 'Never Tear Us Apart' by INXS is basically the unofficial Australian citizenship test. Certainly, Melbourne is a notable example to illustrate that rock music is universally acknowledged in Australian memory as a potent medium in shaping the nation's destination image. A prosperous tourist and leisure industries around Australian rock and roll music histories has long been created in Melbourne such as AC/DC lane in central Melbourne, an established destination for rock enthusiasts (Frost 182). AC/DC is undoubtedly Australia's most successful rock band with approximately 130 million album sales as the fifth best-selling music group in the world that made Australian popular culture earn a name on the global stage of popular culture (). AC/DC Lane has performed as a mecca for rock fans to have their photos taken posing next to the sign of the laneway. In addition, it is a prestigious live music venue for a plethora of open-air performances related to the band and rock music in general (Donovan 5). Oz rock is constructive to enrich the nation's contemporary cultural heritage and create a symbolic bond between rock and national identity in Australian people's collective generational memory. Meanwhile, Oz rock is a music style that cannot be ignored in the discourse about Australian popular culture as it helps Australian popular culture to increase international reputation.

Rock music is disruptive to Australian music culture and cultural memory since it has highlighted the involvement of live music venues in music culture and consequently live music venue has been regarded as a space of critical significance related with musical experience. According to Frost (176) Australian musical heritage is promoted through physical sites unofficial live music venues which are the accession of rock music to everyday life. The The collective memories prompted by the certain spaces related with music play an essential role in shaping Australian music culture with significant influence from geographic conditions. It is pervasive that the local pubs are the central rituals in the formation of community culture to music field (Homan 601). Pub rock will constantly take a place in Australian music culture until the day that beer stops coming out of a tap. For example the Brisbane rock music venue has offered a noticeably stable community of performers and audiences as the source for a series of city-based Oz Rock scenes because of the intimacy and shared sense of belonging exclusively. In particular, 610, a initial band rehearsal pub in Fortitude Valley used to functioned a formalized unofficial music venue, holding rock shows every night where was chaotic, crowded and full of alcohol consumption. Pub rock conjures the geographical collective memories of music at night in 1970s and 1980s when people were drinking and dancing with friends, following the exiting rock music to dispense the stress of everyday humdrum with frantic abandon. Innumerable local artists were performing in a variety of different live music venues across the country. It is thus that pub represented a site where musical style was engaged in drinking function that constructed the characteristic beer-drinking and rock-listening Australian national identity. Moreover, pubs has maintained an extended role of rock music to the music culture by creating a success for itself as commemorative sites for the nation's music audiences as pub is the spirit to constitutes the idea of 'rock' in Australian cultural memory.

To conclude, this essay has investigated Oz rock to understand how rock music in Australian has significance to the entire Australian music culture and Australian cultural heritage, as well as Australian cultural memory. In the general sense, Australian popular music is a robust medium to present Australian image on the global stage. While rock music is indisputably the most representative music genre to demonstrate the quintessential Australian popular culture as it has incomparable influences around the world. Oz rock has contributed to boosting the international reputation of Australian music culture. Simultaneously, it is incomprehensive to understand the Australian cultural memory without the insight of the complex and rich connections between rock music and collective memory. Through the post-war music history, rock and roll has unprecedentedly game-changing importance to cultural memory in the aspects of dismantling the social hierarchies such as gender roles and race differences with the artists' endeavour and the nationalising effect of rock music. Rock and roll also has contributed to enacting Australian cultural heritage conforming to deeply ingrained cultural memory. Last but not least, pub rock is a vital part within the Oz rock to forge Australian music culture into real popular culture that related to everyone and everyday life. Hence, Oz rock is significant to the creation of cultural heritages, to the promotion of Australian culture and to the construction of collective memory.

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