CHAPTER 2

SHOWING, TELLING AND SELLING OUT

Caelli Jo Brooker

Matt Sage

DOI: 10.21747/9789898969606/inda3

Abstract

Freely distributed street press is a publication format closely associated with the recognition and expression of a diverse, independent urban music culture. This chapter examines the often conflicted and liminal position occupied by street press between entirely DIY amateur publications and other, more commercial music and cultural publishing. Using a autoethnographic case study to explore the motivations, contributions, perspectives and contradictions embodied in the production of an independent Australian street press, it explores elements of the experience of DIY publishing. It also examines the role of street press in transcending genre and visually connecting different urban cultures, acknowledging the difficulties posed by this breadth of focus in attracting diverse local audiences, and in meeting production needs through advertising. Considering the aesthetics of street press and of the printed publication as a site of assemblage where the visual expressions of multiple subcultural music cultures converge, it provides an overview of street press as a unique site of information, creation, consumption, and expression for urban cultures and communities.

Keywords: DIY amateur publications; autoethnographic; aesthetics; street press.

2.1. Showing, Telling and Selling (Out): liminal and convergent zones of independente urban street press publications

Street press is a term that broadly refers to freely distributed tabloid publications devoted to contemporary music and arts, and is a publication format closely associated with the recognition and expression of diverse, independent urban cultures. Certainly, music culture is not the only focus for street press, but in Australia, independent metropolitan music publications are the most familiar form of street press.

Positioned apart from mainstream press, the street press is a specific publication format of significantly independent media with its own visual and editorial character, which is partly nationally, but primarily locally distinguished. These titles have a focus in contributing to the culture of contemporary music in their specific location, and provide unique sites of information, creation, consumption, and expression for their local urban cultures and communities.

The relationship that street press has to these urban cultures and subcultures is generally an inclusive one. As one of many independent forms of publication through which multiple urban localised subcultures are expressed and connected, the nature of street press also presents unique characteristics and challenges as a way of considering, creating, publishing and distributing an independent DIY publication.

This chapter examines the motivations, contributions, multiple perspectives and contradictions embodied in the production of independent music street press. It does not attempt to summarise the history of alternative publications in Australia, nor does it aim to encompass the far-reaching issues surrounding digitization,

music journalism, authenticity, and subculture. Instead, it incorporates the theoretical frameworks of assemblage, convergence, and liminality, using a case study to link the personal to the cultural, and reflect on an historical instance of street press operation which, in many ways exemplifies the challenges of the genre, and situates it within a larger discourse of independent alternative publishing.

2.1.1 The Phenomena of Australia Street Press

Music street press are not a uniquely antipodean phenomenon, but historically, Australia and New Zealand are prolific creators and consumers of street press publications; each nation possessing a rich and diverse back catalogue of this unique type of title. For over 35 years there have been independent street press publications available chronicling local events and informing and sustaining urban communities across the country. As indicated, Australian street press, street papers, or street media as they are sometimes termed, primarily centre on music, culture and specific cultural groups, and are free, independent publications positioned between zines, magazines and free newspapers in terms of the content they contain, the means through which they are created and distributed, and their intended audiences.

2.1.2 Afrofuturism

Similar to the theme present in Kendrick Lamar's lyrics at the beginning of the chapter, afrofuturism is focused on the 'intersections of imagination, technology, the future and liberation' (Womack, 2013: 9). Afrofuturism makes clear that in this new, imagined space that its participants have authority to create a re-vision of the past while also providing cultural critique of the present and future. The zine, similar to Afrofuturism, moves along the continuum of time, thinking and speaking in multiple dimensions. The zine is multi-dimensional - a literal and chronological three-dimensional take on the experiences of Black people. Afrofuturism as a framework values a number of important characteristics including: the power of creativity and imagination to reinvigorate culture and transcend social limitations (Womack, 2013: 24) and thinking about a sustainable future is a necessary and important attribute of a society where people of color and their ideas are not distilled but rather concentrated and centralized (Womack, 2013: 41). In an afrofuturistic society, there is an expectation of transformative change. This expectation means that all mediums can be used towards those efforts, including art and language. In this study, an afrofuturistic framework is useful to understand how people of color can create realities through language that are a form of activism in themselves.

2.1.3 Emergence

Since the late seventies, there have been freely available, independent printed publications fitting the street press moniker in Australia and New Zealand. Early manifestations of street press in Australia were publications emerging from University campuses, such as Time Off, which is generally accepted as the first Australian street press (Sennett & Groth, 2010). Time Off grew in the mid-1970s from the student population of the University of Queensland, Brisbane, emerging first as a campus publication, but transforming into the, now familiar, street press format by 1980.

Multiple street press soon emerged in urban centres, and titles such as Rip It Up, BRAG, Drum Media, 3D World, dB Magazine, Reverb, The Music, InPress, X-Press, Beat, Rave, and On The Street appeared as the format grew in popularity. Some capitals carried two or three major street press titles, and a street press could be found in every Australian state in the 1990s. By then, the music street press format was established, with articles, interviews, gig guides and reviews becoming part of the expected content for street press. Several publications differentiated themselves through a more specific genre focus, such as 3D World and Rave, concentrating on dance culture, but importantly, each street press reflected in their pages something of the idiosyncrasies, tastes, concerns and scenes existent in their respective cities.

Street press publishing formats gradually professionalised and digitised in the later nineties. As Sean Sennett and Simon Groth identify in 'Off the Record: 25 Years of Music Street Press, the experiential subtext to the arc of development of street press in Australia is also the arc of the internet, as it rose from a whisper to become a curiosity, a vital adjunct, and then an omnipotent digital platform for music, journalism, culture, media and publication. Although street press titles were early adopters of the internet in the publishing industry, with web presences appearing in the early 1990s, print was very much still the understood domain of the street press until the mid 2000s. Despite the moves online of many papers, new printed street press were still appearing even in 2011 Warp in Tasmania, for example ('Warp Magazine', n.d.).

2.1.4 Content and Audience

As the most familiar form of street press in Australia and New Zealand, music centered street press incorporates alternative, independent and popular music, culture, entertainment and arts coverage within an ostensibly music-focused publication. Despite being the primary and most familiar focus for many Australian street press, Music is not the only one. For example, contemporary arts-centered press, and street magazine tiles with an LGBTIQ focus are also distributed free across major Australian centers, and include titles such as RealTime and LOTL (Lesbians of the Loose). The audiences for street press, based on appeals to advertising, are

described by many titles as ‘youth’ and represent core demographics between 14 and 39, but with some street press running over 25 years, they also claim ‘strong long-time following from those aged 35 and up’, highlighting the on-going importance of street press for informing gig-going urban audiences, even in much older age brackets. ('Advertise in BMA', n.d.; 'Warp Magazine', n.d.)

2.1.5 Format

There is no single standard format for music street press in Australia, but variations on the tabloid newspaper are most evident. Broadsheet, and more unusual, non-regulation paper sizes have also historically existed as street press formats. Smaller street press, or those starting out often opt for low-cost newsprint stock, incorporating colour only on the outer pages, before moving towards more colour pages per production, staple binding once page numbers require it, or eventually a glossy cover and interior stock. As changing printing costs transform the relative availability of alternate finishes and formats, and in perhaps wishing to appear more magazine-like, some more mature and niche publications have gravitated to a smaller, more magazine-scale printing, from the larger, more traditional and familiar tabloid size. Brisbane/Adelaide’s Scenestr, for example, is A4 gloss throughout (Street Press Adelaide, 2015).

2.1.6 Distribution

Until the recent move of many street press to strictly online platforms, in terms of distribution, street press in Australia and New Zealand were primarily disseminated through music retailers, cafés, youth and community centres, venues like pubs and clubs, second hand book and music stores. Stacks of each publication would be dropped off for public collection at sites often understood by audiences, but sometimes clearly advertised in the pages of the street press. Larger street press customarily also advertise their circulation figures on their covers or within their publishing credits Whether published with weekly, fortnightly or monthly frequency, importantly, street press are almost exclusively made freely available to readers with no cover charge. As street press move online, the circulation figures are becoming statistics reflecting ‘unique views’ instead.

2.1.7 Resistance through Rejection

Throughout this study, there were a number of zines that were coded and thematically linked together under “resistance”. In some way, either the text, the visual images, or both were recognized as being part of an internal or external struggle. This struggle is part of the discourse that people of color have to be constantly engaged in. One zine that highlights resistance in a powerful way is Light Skinned Tears[17] by Lena F-G-M. Almost resembling a memoir of sorts, Lena uses her zine as a space to discuss what it means to be bi-racial or mixed-race woman. She infuses memory, theory on race and gender, and boldly states how she chooses to confront and reject white supremacy through her rejection of assumptions made about mixed race identities.

2.1.8 Comparisons and Character

Like zines/fanzines, street press are typically independent publications, but in contrast, generally follow a more professional trajectory aesthetically and in terms of content. Zines/fanzines might also be characterised by an often-sustained intent on a more singular and personal focus. Less personal in tone, more public and outward looking, street press usually serves a broader community audience, and contain more mainstream information and content, in order to appeal to a larger, more diverse audience base and also to attract vital advertising and sponsorship as a means of covering printing costs, rather than a cover price. Whereas zines may have nominal purchase price, street press are almost exclusively free to pick up and are distributed via collection, rather than any mail order or online distribution networks. Street press are more strictly designed and structured in composition, and for clarity and legibility, are often less experimental in appearance than many zines.

In comparison with magazines, street press tends towards lower production and printing values, perhaps more amateur journalism and photography, often working with some element of volunteer labour and are independently published. They have defined, but possibly scaled-down business structures, reflecting the sometimes underpaid or often unpaid nature and overlap of roles and skill sets. The editorial focus of street press is more on location-based content and immediate entertainment information than magazines, whereas music magazines often possess a journalistic, genre-specific, critical and commercial focus.

Despite their often similar newsprint appearance, street press is not to be confused with community newspapers, which are also distributed freely, often directly to households, and reliant on geographic location and localised issues for content and relevance. These community papers are more conventional and newspaper-

[17] https://issuu.com/flyoverdistro/docs/lst_web_version

like in format and broadly media-based with a more general and news-based local focus in terms of content.

In distinguishing music street press from music magazines zines/fanzines, and community newspapers their liminal position is invoked, one that lies between entirely DIY amateur publications and other, more commercial music and cultural titles, or mainstream community publishing. Street press are independent in their opinions as reflected in their reviews, despite being indebted to the record labels for advertising and content, but there is a mutual understanding that their perspectives and opinions of that material is independent and authentic, providing an alternative to consumer music media (Brennan, 2005, p. 198).

The conflicting pressures on street press explored later, and the demands of multiple audiences reinforce a sense of in-between-ness. These multiple audiences influence the simultaneously convergent position of street press as an independent publication form and as a site where multiple subcultural scenes, perspectives and musical genres and can be presented, overlap and intersect.

From a visual research perspective, the presentation of these cultural stances, as well as contextualising information about the particular qualities of cultural time and place is materialised through the processes of generating and observing the visual character of music street press pages.

2.2 Showing: the convergent aesthetics of street press

In suggesting why publications take the form that they do, many factors influence the shape and style of a publication. Available print formats and production conventions; accessible budget, editorial framework; submitted content; design skills and interpretation; stylistic forces and trends; era and location of production, all contribute to establishing and shaping the aesthetics of street press.

Aesthetically, while they share some of the zine's freedom of independent design, (or un-design), (Triggs, 2006, p. 70), street press generally require some of the readily comprehensible and familiar structure of more commercial newspapers and magazines. Given, the page-reliant book form of the physical street press, a somewhat linear, guided approach to information consumption and experience is taken. Content is offered and curated in relative sequence, although readers can search more knowingly and navigate to a specific section, or moment in the space of the publication (Carrion, 1975). Though not linear in the strict sense of a narrative, the street press generally follows certain conventions of progression through its pages. So the cover might be followed in a loose order by editorial messages, credits, letters, competitions, feature articles, secondary articles, a pull-out gig guide, discrete sections, profiles, reviews, classifieds, comics, and a back cover, interspersed with advertising. These conventions follow existing structural patterns of other observed publications and a perceived order of significance and appropriateness.

Other conventions more associated with commercial design and publishing, such as branding, mastheads and in-house advertising are prominent within the pages of street press as independent print objects. The appearance of paid advertising, discussed in more detail later, also adds to the visual mix of the publication's overall aesthetic. In this way, the street press becomes a site of visual convergence where multiple conflicting, complementary and overlapping aesthetics and design approaches necessarily combine.

This combination of potentially competing visuals and content can be framed as an assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and a conceptual means through which imaging and texts from multiple sources can be brought together to create a temporary configuration within the context of the publication.

Specifically, the collective visual patterns of street press are diverse and random, as layers of photographic images, both candid and calculated, as well as illustration, comics, advertising, branding, typography and layout, combine in assemblages of the visual that point to manifold subcultural touchstones. The assembled aesthetics of the street press reflect multiple youth, indie and music networks, as well as editorial interpretations and commercial visualisations placed by advertisers targeting these communities of consumers, forming a profoundly convergent publication space.

From an authorial perspective, each issue of a street press also assembles the work of many writers, designers, photographers, illustrators and contributors within this convergent space, pulled together through editorial and design methods akin to a kind of curatorial process. It would be mistaken to think that there is not some degree of authorial intention in shaping and addressing perceived audiences through these curatorial choices - presenting, re-presenting and editing content primarily for local relevance (Brennan, 2007, p. 438). However, Ingold (2013, p.21) reminds us from an anthropological perspective that: rather than setting out with a goal of 'imposing his designs on a world that is ready and waiting to receive them', instead, makers productively and creatively intervene in social and cultural processes that are already underway and in place. This can be said of the street press aesthetic, which is designed and compiled more in visual service than stylistic imposition, and is primarily a reflection of the local music cultures that create and consume it. As the creators of street press are generally participants in local scenes, the DIY principles evident, especially in the early stages of street press, can be seen as an active interpretation and representation of how the participants see a location of scene and what they want it to become and reflect (Harvey, 2000).

The Deleuzo-Guattarian construct suggests that despite existing and potential conflict, this assemblage is encompassing, describing it as a 'constellation of singularities' that can nurture diversity, difference and disagreement (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 406). The diversity possible in an assemblage produced by gathering these singularities lends a visual incoherence to street press. The elasticity of the street press form permits a weaving in and out of styles and the courting of a range of visual elements that help to define it as diversely relevant, but detract from any sense of overall stylistic coherence as a print publication. The street press audience however, anticipates and embraces the contradicting visual content resulting from

the convergence of genres and expects to see the aesthetics of visually contrasting styles appearing in the pages.

Cultural theory in the context of urban, alternate and music cultures have long identified subculture's strong association with stylistic devices and trends, particularly among youth cultures (Hebdige, 1979; Laing, 1985; Bennett, 1999; Hodkinson, 2002), and other recent work has examined subcultural adoption and consumption of music and surrounding styles, in consolidating subcultural identity (Weinstein, 2000). The editorial approach and visual production of street press must engage in responsive relationships with representatives of those subcultures who step forward to contribute or comment. It needs to offer visual and participatory cues that assist in affirming a subculture's collective experience and making visible shared tastes and stylistic values evident in that community.

Shaw observes that what might be seen as relevant in binding diverse alternative groups together is a "rejection of mass-produced, commercialised culture" (Shaw, 2013, p. 335). This commonality influences the broader independent music-loving audience for street press, which encompasses these smaller musical scenes or specific subcultures. Unlike more mainstream and commercial enterprises, the success of many street press publications, however long their moment in production may be, is to locally serve these smaller scenes and the multiple demands of intersecting and divergent genres and local cultures.

Through design and layout, street press connect visuals to other visuals, creating assemblages of the graphic and textual, and forging associations within the framework of the page that have geographic local resonance and relevance, stretching across cultural divisions reflecting local, as well as national and global visual currencies understood by audiences. So, in contrast to fanzines celebrating and directed at the singular and specific, street press relies on a coherent sense of locality, a convergent stylistic sense of genre, scene or subculture, and a gathering of the visual singularities. Disparate musical, entertainment, and visual concerns are held together by location, grouped within the layout of the street press for potential multiple relevancies and recognitions.

In one sense, the street press assemblage can be seen to be recognising and documenting elements of local alternative history as it is unfolding, and the visual moments evident in street press assemblages are temporal ones in phenomenological terms. The collected pages are visual data reflecting multiple cultural realities happening; they capture, evidence and interpret the participants and situations as they existed in a specific moment in time. Smaller assemblages contribute to larger assemblages as visual and typographic touchstones and points of stylistic visual recognition appear with meaning embodied and understood by multiple music genres, scenes and subcultures. The visual signs and symbols offered by street press pages may also reference historical subcultural significances, but the selected and combined visual cues are identified as relevant at the street press' time of publication.

Importantly, as part of this temporal aesthetic, the editors and designers of street press have an interpretive role in determining how these multiple visual expressions are brought together and presented as the street press assemblage. While there is not room for detailed discourse here, it is important to acknowledge the role of personal

interpretation within this visual expression. This interpretive role is performed not only in the understood sense of what the reader brings to the text or image (Barthes, 1977), but what is contributed through editorial decision-making and what is brought to the publication through the ontological design process in encountering, interpreting, designing and expressing the subcultural visuals that may lie outside their own cultural experience (Willis, 2006, p. 83). These expressions form part of the layered image of local significance that street press requires and reflects as a publication form.

This local significance is enacted by street press a participant in imaging, influencing and responding to the processes that continually shape, express and represent a given local scene. In forming an interpreted part of a larger, immanent, urban assemblage, (Farias & Bender, 2010) the nature of the individual street press publication is vitally connected to a specific urban location.

2.3 Telling: a Novocastrian Street Press Case Study

In linking the personal to the cultural through practice and direct experience in creating a street press, this case study represents a local image of street press through autoethnographic reflection. It briefly profiles the context, genesis, production and demise of a local regional street press as directly modelling an example of experiences of DIY independent publishing. It suggests that the case of one specific publication might typify many of the motivations, processes, challenges and outcomes influencing street press whilst exemplifying its nature and connecting these insights to broader understandings regarding the role and position of street press as an alternative publication form.

2.3.1 Overview

Uturn was an independent street press that ran for three years between 2002 and 2004 in Newcastle NSW, Australia. Its motivations and approached were similar to many street press initiatives and it became part of a group of regional street press that flowered between 1995 and 2012. As an independent local music publication, Uturn was quite typical in encountering similar problems and challenges as those experienced by other street press incarnations locally and nationally and exemplifies many of the struggles of street presses in maintaining local reverence and independence, whilst servicing diverse local original music communities and also attracting advertising revenue in order to stay in circulation.

2.3.2 Context

Newcastle, NSW, is a regional coastal city and the seventh largest in Australia. Formerly a convict colony and major steel producer, Newcastle is controversially home to the world's largest coal port. More recently, the city has been re-branded as a cultural and creative city through urban regeneration projects.

More importantly, Newcastle has been seen as a musical hub since at least the late 60s, with a strong regional popular music scene that has birthed several international bands. This popular and mainstream musical culture in Newcastle is documented and discussed at length by McIntyre and Sheather (2013). Significantly, developing alongside, and partly in opposition to this mainstream approach, was a less visible, independent music culture made up of multiple underground scenes, and specific subcultural groups, particularly represented by punk/hardcore and dance/electronica. Despite genre differences, an intense support for original music united these diverse groups, and provided urban context for the evolution of street press in Newcastle.

2.3.3 Beginnings

A street paper was present in Newcastle for much of the 1990s. After the demise of Mark Hughes' seminal and (then) locally well-known Concrete Press in 1999, many musicians and original music supporters were calling for a replacement street press publication. Many conversations and meetings were held throughout 2001 to discuss who was going to bring the next incarnation to life (Watson & Barnier, 2001). Notably, several people involved in Concrete Press were keen to participate in creating the new street press, drawing and expanding upon their experiences with the earlier publication.

In fact, this theme of transitioning and continuity is evidenced repeatedly in street press history - a situation whereby editorial and production teams part company, but the mantle is taken over, often under a new name, by existing or connected members of the previous team, creating a street press family tree of networks that is one of tremendous overlap and connection.

2.3.4 Participants and Production Model

Despite the advantages posed by an initially proposed not-for-profit structure for the street press initiative, the administrative challenges of using this model seemed prohibitive. As musicians, artists, punters, and amateur journalists, we had no experience of running a not-for-profit board. Wanting to keep it very DIY, we didn't feel it was appropriate to call in more experienced council or arts community support and consultation to auspice or help with the project, nor was there the

budget to cover such assistance. Eventually, the group pressed ahead with a volunteer community model of production in mind for a new local street press.

It became clear that as an enterprise requiring some financial stability, at least a minimal small-business model would need to be adopted - if only to provide advertisers with a tax invoice. It was also evident that there would be no fees for content (at least initially) or payment possible for even core staff. This realisation left a group of participants who were willing to be responsible and also felt practically able to produce a print publication in terms of possessing appropriate skill sets and abilities. Our large democratic creative volunteer community of music fans became a much smaller, and necessarily more business-aware collective.

Friends, family and musical and extended creative networks were regularly called upon to assist the core collective. There were very dedicated key contributors without whom the publication could not have been produced. Indeed The Uturn approach to production was one that echoed that of many street press, even now ('Gig Review Ops', n.d.). Volunteer labour and content drawn from multiple, readily available (borrowed or generated) sources collected together in the covers of the publication. Reviews of new releases were volunteered in kind for free copies of CDs, and free tickets were offered for live performance photography and gig reviews. Aspiring amateur journalists, communications students, or even just musicians or punters with enough of an interest and a willingness to write, submitted articles for the small glory of seeing their words and perspectives in print.

2.3.5 Publication

In many ways, the makers of Uturn were also the audience for Uturn. This is a pattern reflected in many independent publications as those within the culture seek to work with and provide a resource to serve and participate in their culture.

Reflecting the establishing goals of the publication, a very important emphasis was placed on local original music and profiling local acts each week. The general audience for Uturn was indie, alternative youth, as well as slightly older, gig-going participants in the broader local music scene. Within the pages of Uturn, separate headings and approaches reflected the musical and cultural interests of specific subcultural groups connected to Punk, Metal/Heavy and Dance/Electronica. Other sections for information reflected the interests of the volunteers and the editorial visions, and divisions. Beyond the feature articles, interviews and local band profiles, there were distinct sections for reviews (CDs, live gigs, film, vintage videos, theatre and art) Youth, Arts, Extreme Sports (Surf/Skate/Bike culture), classifieds, letters, comics and opinion pieces.

A mainstay of street press is the gig guide. The Uturn gig guide was one of the main drivers for the decision to publish fortnightly. The initial plan was for a monthly publication, however research indicated that some venues supporting local artists had not necessarily confirmed their calendar a month in advance. So to ensure that any relevant artist had the opportunity to be covered in the publication (and

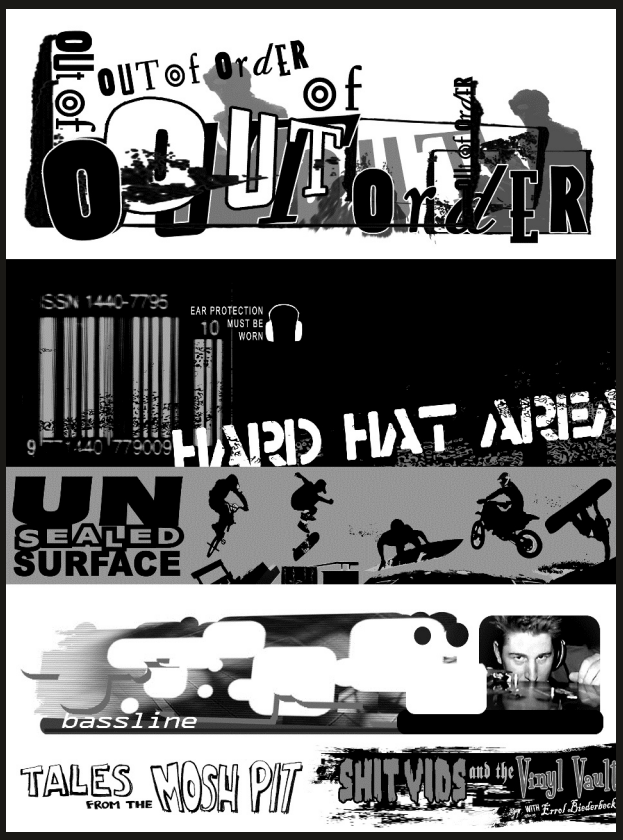

Figure 2.1 Uturn street press section headers, visually reflecting multiple subcultural audiences.
Source: Hart and Sage (Eds.) (2002).

to ensure that any relevant venue has the opportunity to promote and advertise upcoming gigs), the frequency of publication was increased.

Given the time and energy dedicated to launching the first issue in 2002, (Hart & Sage, 2002), it was soon evident that maintaining a fortnightly publication schedule would absorb the lives of the core Uturn team, as there were multiple responsibilities for each team member. Significantly, an enormous amount of time and effort was spent gaining advertising support and garnering confidence in the cultural importance and economic viability and stability of the street press. Although there were a number of key local businesses that advertised each issue, their artwork and copy varied significantly, and therefore a significant proportion of production time was also spent revising supplied artwork and sending proofs for advertiser signoff.

In achieving production, there was a great deal of chasing of content in order to meet deadlines, and always some amount of content generation required at last stages to fill any gaps or cover any last minute opportunities of events. Each issue required levels of planning, administration, sourcing, designing, advertising, proofing, printing, and distribution, with the knowledge that it was a constant process, to be begun again, even before the current issue had been completed.

2.3.6 Challenges and demise

Uturn was not making money, and this was never the primary intention, but it was just managing to sustain itself and cover its production costs through advertising. Unfortunately, despite the reward of continuing Uturn, this always-uncertain balance could not be maintained indefinitely. Especially for smaller, regional street press, such as those appearing in Newcastle, there is an observed and unfortunate cycle that parallels similar creative volunteer roles such as those within Artist Run Initiatives. This cycle is one of inspiration, endeavour, struggle and often, eventual burnout. Despite the vital role of volunteer work in contributing to the significant gift economy present in many cultural and creative communities, members of the Uturn collective eventually found it difficult to justify maintaining a demanding quasi business on a voluntary unpaid basis for an extended length of time.

It was also identified that in order to proceed, Uturn would need to become more mainstream in focus to attract broader advertisers and more professional in terms of content and production. This was a perceived shift away from the early independent goals of the publication, and one unable to be universally agreed on. It would have changed the tone of the street press and the nature of the dialogue with audiences, writers, designers, advertisers, administrators, bands, venues and services. Without the requisite critical mass in terms of population to remain entirely alternative to the mainstream, several of the Uturn team agreed to part company, not entirely amicably, but with the same initial goals for supporting local music still very much intact.

One of the co-founders of Uturn continued with the publication, pressing, gathering and garnering support from the ongoing local music networks to maintain the publication until 2004. Eventually, when the familiar financial pressures of printing and production were finally unable to be serviced by diminishing advertising revenue it became unviable to maintain the love job that was street press in Newcastle at the time (Gadd, 2004).

2.3.7 Postscript

Just a year later, some of the broader network, including people who had been involved in early Uturn meetings, revived the still-needed street press approach to independent music publishing with Volume street press. Unfortunately the Volume incarnation lasted less than a year, to be replaced by Reverb, arguably the region's most successful and certainly longest-lasting street press incarnation, Reverb has now moved (Newstead, 2012b), and remains – online.

On reflection, Uturn was able to realise the ambition for an independent publication, but unable to adequately balance multiple pressures in resolving tensions between the independent intent, and long-term security and sustainability of the publication. As one of a series of regional street press, Uturn was an important contributor in reflecting a vibrant local independent music scene in Newcastle in the 1990s - 2000s. Collectively these publications help map a musico-cultural moment in time, and image a local interpretation of scene, contributing to urban collective experience and a sense of place in a local urban imagination.

Figure 2.2 A selection of Uturn street press covers.
Source: Hart and Sage (Eds.) (2002).

2.4. Selling (Out): the liminal zones of street press

The pressures on street press exemplified in the case study are not unique. Sited between entirely DIY amateur publications and other, more commercial music and cultural publishing, street press can be seen to occupy a liminal state between dependence and independence. This liminal position is another important practical, creative, ethical and philosophical factor shaping the character of street press. The often conflicted position is one that is constantly negotiated through serving local audiences, the seeking and acceptance of advertising, the curation of content, and the visual and textual presentation of information. Meeting the commercial demands and economic realities of publication, printing, content, personnel and advertising revenue are major factors in the relative success or failure of street press as a printed publication and unavoidably, as a business enterprise.

Balancing the wish to retain alternative credibility and authenticity and the necessary compromise towards business success is evidenced in consciousness of the ever-present potential accusation of 'selling out'. But when does selling in terms of sustaining an independent publication, become selling out in terms of betraying, or being seen to betray the subcultural roots and alternative cultural motivations behind creating the street press in the first instance? In moving towards publication security and sustenance, there is certain main-streaming and increased professionalism that occurs. It can be resisted at the publication's economic peril, or increasingly embraced and indulged in order to achieve more advertising support for the street press. Financial support would mean that contributors and core staff could be paid. As expressed in the case study, to not pay staff can result in attrition and eventual burnout. To succeed in mainstream terms, means core staff, key contributors, and printers get paid, but crossing a threshold whereby, inevitably, the nature of the publication changes.

Experientially, this liminal position and the perceived thresholds between selling and selling out is reinforced and policed by both the audience and advertisers for street press. Dedicating uneven page real estate to one music genre, or more editorial attention to one band, or scene can prompt suggestions of bias and favouritism. The inclusion of an act considered too 'commercial' or popular by sectors of the alternative street press audience is also considered anathema or a 'sell out' move. While advertisers respond with increased advertising interest to coverage of international and high profile national content, audiences can get that type of content from more mainstream press, so prefer local stories and band features. Potential advertisers may also want to see a type of mainstream national and international media coverage and relevance demonstrated beyond that of a local publication, as they interpret it. This highlights another dimension of liminality in balancing an inside (local) and outside (global) focus for the street press.

The commercial challenge for street press as a business, albeit an independent one, is what distinguishes it from many other independent publications. The seeking, acceptance and creation of advertising is an element of street press production that links it closer with the commercial magazine, while the limited production

means and relative independence of content, imagery and journalistic opinion, certainly at smaller scales, draws the street press closer again to the zine.

The dependence on advertising income in order to print is also an issue is criticised by some as an aspect of free media that effectively damages the quality of editorial content by serving primarily advertisers, rather than audiences. (Franklin, 1998, p.125). Potentially, the relationship between street press and advertisers is more symbiotic than that proposition suggests. Advertising forms an important part of the visual assemblage that is a street press, but it is also observed that advertising reflects the alternative venues, services and retailers that are in many ways part of a scene and positively involved in servicing the alternative audiences for street press (Stahl, 2004).

Ideally, provided there is enough advertising to cover costs of production, specific advertising can be sought and curated to better reflect and serve a locality and specific community. In many instances, however, street press are beholden to record companies, band managers and gig promoters for major content and advertising. If a larger performer or band is in town promoting a new release, interviews can be pre-provided or arranged, images gathered for a cover, with the mutual agreement of strong feature coverage and the placing of a corresponding requisite advertisement for the tour and album. These dependent relationships have been historically vital to the identity, content and continuity of Australian street press.

Despite their necessarily dependent position, street press are still able to offer a point of resistance in terms of fostering scepticism towards purely serving the commercialisations of mainstream culture. Vocationally and skills-wise, the liminal position of street press offers participants an understanding of local music culture and media from multiple perspectives and a platform for contributors from where a conscious transition can be made in either direction - towards more mainstream media, design, journalism, and management roles or into more niche and independent critique, creation, publication or media forms.

Essentially, street press are philosophically, materially, socially and economically conflicted. Always balancing between real and/or imagined polarities and binaries. Despite their assemblage of subcultural identities, they are torn between the mainstream and alternate cultures, local and global focus, editorial and creative independence and financial security, amateur and professional aesthetics and contributions. This in-between-ness is an important characteristic of the medium as experienced, certainly on a small regional level, although the conflict evident in experiences of street press production sees producers always precariously balanced between selling and selling out.

This liminal position, between celebrating and promoting local musical scenes, and chasing advertising and investment is an important and shaping characteristic of street press, certainly in Australia. Ever contingent on economic and cultural forces beyond and outside their control, street press may not always succeed in finding a place between the independent press and corporate publishing worlds, despite strong intention, internal resilience, skills, knowledge and effort.

Beyond their precarious nature, and continually negotiated existence, perhaps the value of the liminal roles occupied by street press lay in the possibilities of straddling cultural worlds. Operating in certain liminal zones of cultural production and publication allows for the making visible of multiple scenes through a unique publication form that offers an accessible and meaningful local alternative to mainstream musical press.

2.5. Conclusion

Street press pages form part of the rich pattern of alternative publications that have helped shape our collective consciousness and reflect, capture and document visual materialisations of urban music scenes as they occur. Thriving in a time when information and images were rarer and more scarce, the well-documented move away from print mediums has been unkind to the printed format of street press. Street press publications across Australia have been undeniably affected by the deepening ubiquity of the digital and many titles have shifted operations online, citing contracting advertising as a reason for the move (Newstead, 2012b). Some printed street press titles in Australia have survived by merging into larger, national publication and distribution groups, and others have disappeared forever, but importantly, these independent printed publications still operate in some form in most capital cities. Many of the content concerns of street press (now perhaps, more appropriately, music press) remain the same, and some key elements of publications, such as the gig guide, are undeniably better addressed in their immediate and changing nature by a digital presence and format.

There are difficulties presented by street press' liminal role as a publication phenomena, and its occupation of the threshold between independent and commercial media. Serial manifestations of street press, as suggested by the chapter case study, and subsequent patterns of establishment, flourish, difficulty and demise indicate that this is not an easy balance to strike, and is indeed one of the primary challenges and characteristics of the street press. In addition to content and labour imperatives, the financial pressures in maintaining advertising revenue have often decided the fate of street press, and maintaining relevance to alternative music scenes, whilst courting the commercial world in order to print, distribute and survive, is a delicate balance – not always met.

Despite the obvious digital shifts, the significance of sites of dissemination for alternative scenes is not merely historical. Independent cultural publications still operate and emerge in Australian cities in print, altered, and digital forms. These manifestations suggest that this type of publication still plays a contemporary role in speaking to diverse, independent urban music cultures, and acknowledge that street press have long been, and continue to be, a unique alternative publication medium through which to experience local independent culture made visible.

References

Advertise in BMA Magazine. (n.d.). Retreived from http://www.bmamag.com/advertising/.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image-music-text* (S. Heath, Trans.). New York, NY: Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1977).

Bennett, A. (1999). Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste. *Sociology*, 33(3), 599-617.

Bennett, A., & Kahn-Harris, K. (2004). Introduction. In A. Bennett & K. Kahn-Harris, (Eds.). *After subculture: Critical studies in contemporary youth culture* (pp 1–18). London, England: Palgrave.

Brennan, M. (2005). *Writing to reach you: The consumer music press and music journalism in the UK and Australia* (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis). Queensland University of Technology, Australia.

Brennan, M. (2007). This Place Rocks! The Brisbane Street Press, Local Culture, Identity and Economy. *Continuum*, 21(3), 433-444.

Carrión, U. (1975). The new art of making books. In Gibbs, M. (Ed.). *Kontext 6/7* (9pp). Exteter, England: Kontexts Publishing.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateau*. (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Farias, I. & Bender, T. (2010). *Urban assemblages: how actor-network theory changes urban studies*. London, England: Routledge.

Franklin, B. (1998). No news isn't good news: the development of local free newspapers. In B. Franklin & D. Murphy (Eds). *Making the local news: local journalism in context* (pp. 125–139). London, England: Routledge.

Gadd, M. (2004, October 14). *Mag tunes out*. Newcastle Herald. Retrieved from: http://newsstore.smh.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac?&docID=NCH0410146O4BE130K9C.

Gig Review Ops, (n.d.). Retreived from http://www.reverbstreetpress.com/online/gig-review-ops/.

Hart, C., & Sage, M. (Eds.) (2002). *Uturn street press*. Issues 1-7. Publisher: Editors.

Harvey, D. (2000). *Spaces of hope. Berkeley*, CA: University of California Press.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: the meaning of style*. London, England: Methuen & Co.

Hodkinson, P. (2002). *Goth. Identity, style and subculture*. London, England: Berg.

Ingold, T. (2013). *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. London, England: Routledge.

Jinman, R. (2003, April 28). *Street-press casualties born again ... under the gun*. Sydney Morning Herald. Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/04/17/1050172702487.html.

Kruse, H. (1993). Subcultural identity in alternative music culture. *Popular Music*, 12(1), 31–43.

Laing, D. (1985). *One-chord wonders: Power and meaning in punk rock*. Milton Keynes, England: Open University Press.

Lesbians on the loose. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.lotl.com/Magazine/

McIntyre, P. & Sheather, G. (2013). The Newcastle music industry: An ethnographic study of a regional creative system in action. *International Journal of Music Business Research* 2(2), 36-60. Retrieved from: http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1044909.

Muggleton, D. (2000). *Inside Subculture: The postmodern meaning of style*. Oxford: Berg.

Newstead, A. (2012, June 26). *Street press publication ceases operations after 21 years*. Tonedeaf. Retrieved from http://www.tonedeaf.com.au/175415/street-press-publication-ceases-operation-21-years.htm.

Newstead, A. (2012, August 9). *Another Music Street Press Shuts Shop Under 'Mounting Debts'*. Tonedeaf. Retrieved from http://www.tonedeaf.com.au/187011/another-music-street-press-shuts-shop-under-mounting-debts.htm.

Real Time. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.realtimearts.net/magazine.

Sennett, S., & Groth, S. (Eds.). (2010). *Off the Record: 25 Years of Music Street Press*. St Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press.

Shaw, K. (2013). Independent creative subcultures and why they matter. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 19(3), 333–352.

Sheather, G. (2013). *Rock, this city: A thematic history of live popular music in licensed venues in Newcastle, Australia, during the oz rock/pub era (1970s and 80s)* (Un-published PhD Thesis). University of Newcastle, Australia. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1038011.

Stahl, G. (2004). It's like Canada reduced: setting the scene in Montreal. In A. Bennett & K. Kahn-Harris (Eds.). *After subculture: critical studies in contemporary youth culture* (pp. 51–64) New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Street Press Adelaide. (2015). Retreived from http://scenestr.com.au/general/scenestr-to-launch-print-edition-in-adelaide.

Street Press Australia set for major facelift. (2013, July 31). Retrieved from http://www.bandt.com.au/uncategorised/Street-Press-Australia-set-for-major-brand-fac-1.

Treweek, C. (2012, June 28). Rumours of our death are grossly exaggerated: publisher's note. The Music. Retrieved from http://themusic.com.au/news/all/2012/06/28/rumours-of-our-death-are-grossly-exaggerated/.

Triggs, T. (2006). Scissors and glue: punk fanzines and the creation of a DIY aesthetic. *Journal of Design History*, (19:1), 69-83.

Warp Magazine. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.warpmagazine.com.au/#magazineand http://www.warpmagazine.com.au/#content.

Watson, C. and Barnier, L. (2001, June 13). *A turn for the better*. Newcastle Herald. Retrieved from http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac?docID=NCH01061334GUT418CEA.

Weinstein, D. (2000). *Heavy metal: the music and its culture* (Revised ed.). New York, NY: Da Capo Press.

Willis, A. (2006). Ontological designing. *Design Philosophy Papers*, 4(2), 69–92.

Caelli Jo Brooker (PhD, BFA (Hons), Adv. Dip. Fine Art, Dip. Graphic Design) is a designer, artist and educator with a professional background in the cultural sector, working as an arts administrator, graphic designer, curator and ARI gallery director. Her research interests include creative pedagogy, collaboration, visuality, communities of practice, practitioner-oriented research, print processes and alternative print publications. Dr Caelli Jo Brooker lectures in Visual Communication Design at the University of Newcastle, Australia. E: Caelli.Brooker@newcastle.edu.au

Matt Sage (MBus, GCertMusTech) is a postgraduate research candidate at the University of Newcastle. His thesis examines extreme vocal techniques and the contemporary voice as an atonal, non-melodic instrument. He is a vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, and was the editor and founding partner of a music street press in Newcastle, Australia in the early 2000s. Matt Sage is a Master of Philosophy candidate at the University of Newcastle, Australia. E: matt.sage@uon.edu.au