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***Why Halifax Attracts Musicians:
Perspectives from participants in the Halifax music scene***

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As part of a national study on the social dynamics of economic innovation¹ researchers in the School of Planning at Dalhousie University in Halifax (Nova Scotia) have profiled several sectors of the Halifax economy which employ talented and creative workers. During the initial stages of the investigation several respondents involved in economic, cultural, and social development in the city pointed to the importance of the music sector in making Halifax a vibrant and engaging city. Consequently, the team decided to investigate the music sector to understand what makes those workers come to and stay in Halifax.

This paper reports on the results of 19 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2007 (n=7) and 2008 (n=12). Interviews in 2007 focussed on factors related to the attraction and retention of talented and creative workers in Halifax. In 2008, the questions asked about the dynamics of the sector and knowledge flows within it. In both sets of interviews, respondents in the music sector talked about the music scene in other parts of Canada and beyond. Researchers noticed that respondents contextualized the Halifax scene in terms of the wider music national and international scene in ways that did not happen commonly in some other sectors profiled (e.g., health research, built environment consulting). Because analysis suggested that the relative evaluation of different music scenes plays an important role in where musicians decide to live and work, understanding the factors that make Halifax attractive may have implications beyond the music sector. This paper articulates the views of Halifax respondents on what makes Halifax a magnet for musical talent, and what musicians see as giving the city an advantage over other places with much larger music scenes.

Interviews lasted from 30 to 107 minutes with a mean of 63.7 minutes. Investigators recorded and transcribed the interviews for analysis. In total the sample included seven musicians, four promoters², three managers, two administrators, two producers, one critic: some respondents who played multiple roles (e.g., musicians / promoters) were classified by their major paid roles. Four respondents were female and 15 male. Most had migrated to Halifax from other parts of Canada, and many had experienced music scenes in other places.

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² “Promoters” include those organizing festivals with musical showcases, and those booking talent for musical venues.

Analysis of the data collected indicates some commonalities in how respondents saw the music scene in Halifax and beyond. They described the choices that they and others in the scene have made in terms of a combination of push and pull factors related to the nature of the social environment within the music industry, the nature of the economy within the industry, the creative context of various music scenes, the characteristics of Halifax as a place and community, and individual career ambitions and trajectories.

Text Box 1: MTV as the nexus of power

1-15 manager

Most of the suppliers and agents are elsewhere – they're in **Montreal**, they're in **Toronto**, they're in **Vancouver**, or in New York, Boston or Los Angeles... or London ... Generally speaking – **Montreal**, **Toronto**, or **Vancouver** are the places that people move to.

Respondents identified three cities as the major centres of the music scene in Canada (Text Box 1). They made the largest number of references to Toronto, with Montreal, and then Vancouver also receiving acknowledgement. In general, Toronto earned more negative comments, while Montreal and Vancouver enjoyed a better reputation: for instance, respondents suggested that despite its centrality to the music scene, Toronto lacked a sense of identity or that people there were pushy (Text Box 2). The paper begins by describing in some detail what respondents said about these cities before presenting comments about other cities and towns in Canada and beyond. The final parts of the paper explain how respondents talked about the Halifax music scene.

Text Box 2: The buzz on the major cities

1-29 musician

Yeah, name a new band from **Toronto**. I can name about 20 but no one really cares – “Oh they're a **Toronto** band.” No one cares about that. But if you're from **Montreal**, **Vancouver**, or Halifax it's a little more interesting. I've noticed that often people are looking for a way to categorize us in the press and things like that, because they're not always sure of what to say. Sometimes saying “a Halifax band” is enough. Whereas if someone said “a **Toronto** band” that doesn't seem to do it. But “a band from Halifax”, there's something interesting about that.

2-15 festival promoter

People from here don't like **Toronto**. The best example I heard was -- and pardon me for getting physical -- a friend of mine said, “You know what I don't like about **Toronto**? It's like this [pushes J's shoulder]. That's **Toronto**.” People from here, they don't like that. And **Montreal**, it's like, “Oh something bad happened, let's have some more wine”, you know? That's very much more compatible with the worldview here.

Toronto: Love to hate that city

Respondents voiced many more opinions, both positive and negative, about Toronto than about other places they discussed. Most of the respondents acknowledged that the Canadian music industry clusters in Toronto, with agents, managers, producers, and record labels (Text Box 3). Toronto has a large music scene with a plethora of suppliers, artists, audiences, venues, and opportunities. This is the place that many musicians, producers, and managers have gone to make it in the industry (Text Box 4). Because the head offices of companies, the media, advertisers, and donors reside there, Toronto is the

centre of power. With millions of people within a few hours of the city, it is a central location for touring. With a strong economy until relatively recently Toronto offered flexible part-time jobs for musicians trying to make ends meet. Respondents described it as an important centre of culture and diversity.

Text Box 3: Toronto has the music industry players

1-20 administrator

There aren't as many places to play as there are in places like Toronto and Montreal. There is the infrastructure: a total lack of industry infrastructure [in Halifax]. There are three or four artist managers, there are no booking agents. There are four publicists. There are literally maybe 25 people working in the music industry in Nova Scotia, and there are hundreds of musicians. It's unattractive that way.... There are probably 60 people in Toronto who do that. Thirty of them are probably fake, but still, there is a list of 60.

1-26 promoter

I know when I was in Toronto I didn't know anything about the Halifax music scene – you know Sloan, that's about it. The major music industry is in Toronto. Toronto is where all the numbers are being pushed and the artists are being noticed. I think we're getting recognized now from Toronto: people want to come here. But you can jaunt between the provinces if you're in southern Ontario: all the cities are 45 minutes apart.

Negative comments about Toronto appeared commonly in the transcripts. Respondents described the city as competitive and even cut-throat. As Text Box 4 indicates, many suggested that although young bands go to Toronto to try to make it, that Toronto is no longer the destination it once was for musicians. The internet changed the industry in ways that favoured communities like Halifax: musicians became more mobile and able to choose where they want to live.

Text Box 4: Toronto attracts young bands

1-27 producer

You'll find [in Halifax] that probably three-quarters of the audience are other musicians and songwriters who support each other. There are times in Toronto on Queen Street where you will find the same thing; it's a higher velocity because you have the integrals of major music players there, so it's a little bit more of a pressure cooker. ... Toronto has a huge independent scene right now – it always has been an independent scene. If you look at Canadian names that have sort made it – you can count them on the fingers of both hands. Certainly there are a thousand young bands in Toronto. Twenty years ago, you would have had to get out of Halifax – you would need to get to Toronto and try to get noticed. Strangely enough, now a lot of Toronto groups and individuals come to Halifax.

2-15 festival promoter

What's interesting right now in my opinion, Tourist Trap would be an exception, is that a fair number of smaller, younger bands move to Toronto because they need to go to Toronto to break out. But really what's happening is they just weren't good enough to make any headway in Halifax. So they move to Toronto: it's like their last gasp. So that does happen. But yeah, more people on the professional side, when you're moving out of being artists and into management and stuff, it's just hard to make a living here.

Among the disadvantages that respondents described for Toronto were its overwhelming size, its hectic pace, its crowding, its traffic, and its high housing costs (Text Box 5). Many in the sector indicated they felt more comfortable in a smaller city where they could make a difference.

Text Box 5: Toronto is too big and expensive

1-15 manager

Toronto – done it, been there -- I love the city but what can you do in that town to make a difference? I

can't as a single individual do anything.
1-24 manager [One musician] moved from Fredericton because he needed to move somewhere where there was more of a music industry. But he doesn't want to move to Toronto. He wants to be part of a scene but he doesn't want to be part of a scene that is that big.
2-01 musician I still feel like a small town kid at heart, so when I'm in a place like Toronto, I'm just like, "This is fine, I got stuff to do here, but, this is too big for me to want to stick around for too long". ... I don't know if Toronto, I just don't know how people afford to buy a house in a place like Toronto, it seems insane. I mean I feel so fortunate to have scraped it together here. ...But I don't know, I think it would seem like your mortgage would be paralyzing in a place like Toronto.
2-07 musician I did actually move back to Toronto for nine months for a period and felt that my quality of life was lessened somewhat because I think that I just missed that community, that tight knit community feel and supportive nature of the Halifax music scene versus the Toronto music scene. And I just felt that it was bigger and busier and harder to be a self-employed artist living in Toronto. Because there's just something that felt different about not getting up and getting on the subway and going to work in the morning when I lived in Toronto, which is what everybody else seemed to be doing. Whereas in Halifax it's more a conducive pace to just kind of doing my...doing what I do and not feeling like I'm getting left behind or something.

Several respondents indicated that at one time musicians had to go to Toronto to succeed in the industry. The advent of music downloading changed the music business dramatically to permit production almost anywhere. This undermined the dominance of Toronto in the minds of many players (Text Box 6). The city's role as a taste-maker was displaced. Respondents sometimes described a kind of arrogance or assumption of superiority emanating from the city. Some suggested that the Toronto scene lacked an identity or creative edge.

Text Box 6: Toronto monopolized power in the industry

1-11 promoter You don't need someone from Toronto telling you that it's really good in order to hear it any more
1-19 administrator [on HRM hiring cultural consultants] Do they think "Well we need to hire someone from Toronto to come in and tell us what the right thing to spend our money on." Can't they just decide themselves? Can't they just look around and see what's good and what's not?
1-29 musician We're all in touch with our people in Toronto. The main reason that you would be there is to get in with the industry. I mean other bands are great too. But we can travel to Toronto – and we do all the time. I think it's almost 50/50 – there's as much good as there is bad in moving to Toronto. You would be one of thousands of bands that are trying to be awesome, or you could stay here and embrace your roots and that's a lot cooler. And I think the perception is it's a lot cooler than being another Toronto band.
1-30 musician In the next little while it will be great to see all that hard work and thought pay off with a little more support with places like Exclaim and those kind of Toronto-centric publications. It seems like in Toronto if you grow up to a certain point you get covered in Exclaim, but on the east coast you have to go well beyond that to get the same kind of coverage.

Montreal: *Awesome cultural centre*

While Toronto took the brunt of criticism, respondents saw Montreal as a cutting edge, creative city (Text Box 7). After Halifax, Montreal enjoyed the most positive comments from respondents. Some described it as more like Halifax than other cities in terms of its music community, the cost of housing, and its creative character.

Text Box 7: Montreal is creative

1-15 manager

Montreal is the cool hot place to go at the moment. I know lots of people from Halifax who moved or who are moving or are spending time in Montreal... People want to go where there's a collective and where there's a spark or there's life or there's other people to interact with. Because it's a much bigger city – all of those centres are much, much bigger than this one – and because you're in Montreal you can jump in your car and in five hours time you're in Toronto. Or conversely, if you're in Toronto, you can do that. What's the percentage of the population that exists between basically Montreal and Toronto and the surrounding areas? It's got to be 70% of the population of the whole country right there. So why wouldn't you be there? It's cheaper to do business, the audiences are bigger, there's a much better chance – well you have a better chance of establishing a fan base given that's where the fans are. The flip side of that is that you don't necessarily stand a better chance of getting noticed. It's easier to get noticed here by the media and the people who are paying attention because there are fewer people involved.

1-26 promoter

Creatively, I'd say Montreal is cutting edge because of bands like Arcade Fire, who are world renowned. ...So Montreal's definitely got a lot of attention from the pop culture, the music industry. Coming from LA, New York, even London – people are like, what's going on in Montreal?

Located at one end of the Toronto-Montreal corridor, the city is well-placed for bands that need to tour. The city has lots of venues for people to play in. One musician told us, “Montreal is more cosmopolitan than Vancouver.” It is a diverse, multicultural city with affordable rents and lots of universities. It has a comfortable pace that resonates with those living in Halifax. Several respondents could imagine themselves moving there if they had to relocate, but they acknowledged some challenges to integrating into the French culture of the city (Text Box 8).

Text Box 8: Montreal has a unique culture

2-01 musician

I like Montreal. That would be, as a really sizeable city, if I had to move to someplace bigger than Halifax, I'd probably end up there. ...Every city's totally different in style. If you look at the music that's popular or that's being made in Montreal, it's all super dramatic: like The Dears or Arcade Fire. It's all big sweeping, grand music. It's really cool, right, but that's their thing. You wouldn't go there and say, “Yah, I just want this to be a little pub rock band”, you know what I mean? They'd be like, “Huh? Where's the strings?”

2-18 musician

Well, I think...because there's more money for the arts in Québec than in any other province. And Montréal's a very diverse...it's a very exciting city, I think. And, you know, I think that the only thing that would bother me about living in Montréal would be the Anglo... I'd have to change my name to [something French sounding] or something like that. You know, that's a little bit disheartening. Because, in fact, I have a concert in Montréal in a week and a half and....Last time I had a concert in Montréal, the French reviewers wouldn't come.

Despite the many attractions of Montreal, respondents acknowledged some concerns about the city. Two mentioned political problems. Some noted that live music was not expected everywhere in the city, or that musicians have to pay to play in some venues. One suggested that the city enjoyed good hype but may not live up to its billing (Text Box 9).

Text Box 9: The myth may not be the reality

1-29 musician

Montreal is getting a lot of hype that it's cutting edge but also a lot of really good melodic bands like Stars or Arcade Fire, and the Handsome Furs –these boutique bands which are kind of interesting to people. It's my impression that Montreal has the attention. Now I don't believe that is based on reality though – it's a perception, I think. A lot of the bands, like Arcade Fire, how much time do you think they spend in Montreal? What does that mean? They don't spend any time there. They're always touring and Wynn is originally from Texas; he's not really from there. So it's a perception thing.

Vancouver: *So far away*

Although some respondents had visited Vancouver most of them had little direct knowledge of the city. Vancouver received the fewest comments of the big three cities. Positive comments included the role and identity of the music scene in the city (Text Box 10), its draw for musicians in the west, and the beauty, diversity, and weather of the city. Several respondents talked about Sarah McLachlan and Jill Barber – who started their careers in Halifax – having relocated to Vancouver.

Text Box 10: Vancouver has an identity

1-29 musician

And Vancouver has a bit of an identity in that mid record sort of scene – like the New Pornographers. Then the sort of vibe is the hard rock thing with Nickelback and those guys. So that's Vancouver. Even Bryan Adams is based out of there; he has a studio.

Respondents who knew the city best proved most dismissive of it (Text Box 11). One who grew up there said, “You couldn't make me live there”. Another noted that with the idyllic lifestyle of the city musicians may have too many distractions to be creative. The high cost of living and the long distance from Halifax made those who hadn't been there sceptical.

Text Box 11: The pace of Vancouver is different

1-18 festival promoter

I like Halifax – the pace – I realized pretty quick that the lifestyle that I am able to have here – this is part of my decision to stay and not go back to Vancouver as well; when I was in Vancouver I had just stopped [a business activity] the film industry was just starting to take off. I had a bunch of opportunities there and I thought I could probably be a pretty decent-sized fish in what was going to be a really big pond. The sense I got in Halifax was that I could be a comfortable fish in a tight-small pond: that's what I have become, so I'm happy with that.

1-29 musician

I've been to Vancouver and I don't think there are that many great bands from Vancouver. I almost know why. We would spend a couple months out there and everyone is biking around. People are like “Oh man, let's go down to the juice bar.” Whatever. “Oh, the Dalai Lama is giving a talk today.” Everyone is so active it's almost sickening [laughing]. Here we would grab a beer, grab a guitar, and think about what you're going to write. I picture writing lyrics in my house in January: there's nothing else to do! They don't get that much snow out there, but then they're skiing. I just think that there's something to that. We benefit from our isolation.

2-25 musician

But in Vancouver I get the sense that it is a frontier mentality. People there are creating their own world in their own image. Others not connected to that really don't matter. So musicians who perform at the same

venue as each other don't know each other and have no interest in each other. People playing in the same genre, it's really likely that they won't cross paths, unless they are actually interested in performing as a group. There is not the culture or community where "We're all in this together". It is more competitive. "I don't want to know what you're doing". It is a little better than it used to be, but that's the overarching feeling I get in other cities.

Other Canadian Places

Respondents talked about many other parts of Canada. Calgary drew a lot of comments. Some thought it had money and people, but "no soul". As a larger city it has more agents and managers than Halifax. Young bands there can work towards opening for bigger bands. Its corporate headquarters are seen as not sympathetic to donating to Atlantic Canada, and its commitment to the arts weak.

Those interviewed described Ottawa as having more agents and managers than Halifax, and some early independent promotion companies. Respondents spoke critically about the federal government cuts to culture announced there in the summer of 2008. Some musicians had experienced Victoria: they saw a city more conservative and less friendly than Halifax, with limited interest in music. Some saw it as similar to Halifax but more expensive, and with wetter winters.

Respondents were not sympathetic to Winnipeg. They thought that the city may draw musicians before they go to Vancouver or Toronto. One described it as "not my cup of tea", while another said he would experience "land sickness" away from the ocean. Edmonton fared no better. One respondent noted that it had been named as a cultural capital in 2007, but could not understand why. It has more agents and managers than Halifax but one respondent said his relatives found it hard to connect socially with people there. On a positive note, the city donated \$100,000 to its symphony, by contrast with the frugal Halifax local government.

Regina received a nod as having more soul than Calgary or Edmonton. The western city that struck interest was Saskatoon. While one respondent said he wouldn't want to live in Saskatoon, another considered it a good alternative to Halifax. He saw it as having a good sense of humour; he thought he might find a good coffee shop, a bookstore, a pub, and that he could meet cool people there.

Cities and towns in Atlantic Canada received many comments. Smaller cities like Fredericton and Saint John have small audiences, so musicians can't tour there regularly. Respondents variously described Sackville NB as having a great music scene or a snobby music scene. Moncton received a lot of attention: its Acadian music community was described as tight, and its government seen as supportive of music. A festival promoter said that if organizers moved the festival there the city would give \$100,000 and guarantee funding. But the city has only five venues: it is too small for a music scene. The public there supports theatres, but the city has few restaurants or urban amenities. Bands from Halifax do not tour there regularly because the town only appreciates stoner or heavy metal bands. The next destination for bands is 12 hours away in Quebec City.

One respondent suggested that Halifax’s mayor seems obsessed with competing with Moncton for big concerts.

Respondents talked about small but vital music scenes in Sydney (NS), St John’s (NL) and Charlottetown (PE). Sydney was too distant for bands to tour there regularly, but Cape Breton was described as a place of strong musical traditions. One respondent noted that an up-and-coming band there needed a loan to travel to Europe but couldn’t get it from government agencies or banks. Respondents described St John’s as a creative city where people socialized in each other’s homes. One said it was a lovely place to visit “but the weather sucks”. People described Newfoundland as a place of Irish heritage and excellent authors. While one respondent saw Charlottetown as “dead”, another noted that some amazing bands came out of there.

Many smaller communities in Atlantic Canada were described as places people came from (Text Box 12), or towns with attractive community theatres. People saw mid-sized cities in Ontario (e.g., Guelph, London, Windsor, Hamilton) as satellites of Toronto or part of the corridor linking southern Ontario and Quebec. One respondent described Sudbury as “pretty down and out”. Two respondents had some experience with Kingston which they saw as a university town with a strong artistic community.

Text Box 12: Musicians head to Halifax

1-29 musician
I can be romantic about it or I can be brass tacks about it. If I’m brass tacks about it: okay, how many of those people are from Halifax? Then you start to see a trend. None of us are from Halifax. I mean I’m now from Halifax because I love it here and it embraced us. But short of Joel [Plaskett], he’s from Clayton Park. Matt’s [Mays] from Dartmouth but that’s close enough. Lenny [Gallant] is from PEI. I think the Rankins are from Cape Breton. Then you think “Okay, well let me keep going.” Jill [Barber] is from Port Credit, Ontario, and Jenn [Grant] is from PEI. I’m from Moncton; two of my band mates are from PEI and the other is from Quebec. Who else? Nancy [Urich] from Dog Day is from Cape Breton. The Wintersleep guys are all from Stellarton and Yarmouth. We all end up here because it’s the place to bring your wares. It’s your best shot. The reason that so many good bands per capita come from Halifax is that that song writing and artistically speaking – we have a really high level of knowledgeable song writing because it’s in our blood here. When you are more isolated you’re a little less distracted and you’re more focused on your art. I think we benefit from that. I think it’s a Maritime thing or an Atlantic Canadian thing that we bring to Halifax as a unit. We all bring that. There is that isolation that you have if you’re growing up in Parrsboro: there’s nothing to do. It’s cold in the winter and playing music is a great outlet to express yourself and to put your energy into.

2-15 festival promoter
And then federally the biggest problem is that Nova Scotia in film, music and craft is light years ahead of the rest of the region, and the Feds through IBDA and all their other regional programs, International Business Development Agreement, they want all four provinces to go on all trade missions. We’ve actually had music trade missions, like the one to Austin, fall apart because you know, bands from New Brunswick and PEI didn’t get in and their industry associations actually pulled out, and the funding collapsed because all four provinces weren’t involved. The fact of the matter is that regionally almost everything that matters is happening in Nova Scotia, and almost everything that’s happening in Nova Scotia is happening in Halifax. So, you know, the provincial government is trying to make sure that economic development is happening throughout the region, throughout the province, and the Feds are trying to make sure that stuff’s happening in PEI and Miramichi and the west of Newfoundland or whatever. And who gives a crap about that? It’s got to be the market decides. We can put all the money we want into that, but at the end of the day, the decisions have to be market-driven. There isn’t enough money in Canada to make a band famous that sucks, no matter how much you want to have a good band from Pubnico or Hunter River PEI or something.

The provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and especially Quebec were described as strong supporters of music with grants programs for artists. Respondents noted that 40 years of good funding in Quebec had built a huge cultural industry sector there. Ontario and Quebec were described as areas with lots of venues that made them good for touring, and with strong economies that made them attractive to musicians needing part time jobs. Ontario furnishes many of the students who come to Halifax for university sporting ringtones and passwords from Sloan songs. While the geography of Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario loomed large, respondents generally saw the west as too far away to attract many comments.

The World Outside

Respondents often referred to foreign cities or countries in discussing the music scene. Cities like New York, Los Angeles, and London came up most frequently, but other musical centres like Nashville, Austin, and Seattle also earned mentions. New York received the greatest number of comments. Although described as within easy flying distance of Halifax, New York also seemed a long way for bands wanting to tour. Several respondents talked about Matt Mays and his band going there (or to Jersey or Brooklyn), and moving back and forth from Halifax. Some of the managers have connections with suppliers there; promoters brought in buyers from New York to see talent in Halifax. New York was described as having artist coops that provided affordable housing for musicians, but its musical scene proved too big for bands to get to know each other. One respondent suggested that Halifax is in some ways like Greenwich Village in the 1950s and 60s, and another said that people in Halifax are as cool as folks in NY.

Some people interviewed described Los Angeles as a powerful city in the music industry. Despite its distance from Halifax, managers and promoters had suppliers there and had brought in buyers to see talent in Halifax. Several respondents talked about Sire Records (Madonna's label) signing singer Meaghan Smith after the province took a "songwriters' circle" there.

London enjoyed a popular reputation among respondents who had visited. One respondent noted that London was closer than Vancouver to Halifax. The music culture was strong, diverse, and with a high level of showmanship. Respondents saw London as a good training ground for the industry.

Boston, just 12 hours away, was described as in the Halifax "catchment area" for touring, although the price of gas caused concern for travel. Those in the industry had suppliers in Boston. One respondent noted that some Americans may think eastern Canada is "in Boston", as their sense of geography is poor. One person hoped that Halifax could become the new Boston or Seattle in the music scene. The concept of "the new Seattle" also came up in reference to the experience of the Halifax band Sloan in the 1990s. The participation of the band Dog Day in the Sub Pop festival in Seattle constituted an example of recent Halifax success stories.

Two respondents talked about the music scene and the South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival in Austin TX: one described a planned trade mission from the Atlantic region that fell apart because bands from New Brunswick and PEI did not get accepted by the festival. Two other US cities associated with the music scene came up: a music administrator thought that Nova Scotia should have a presence at conferences and festivals in Nashville; a musician found Louisville KY an interesting and creative city. Respondents mentioned California in connection with discussions of LA. One respondent suggested that Ohio was an isolated place that might be good for developing music. Many respondents indicated that the US has a large market that many bands hope to reach, and that acts from there like to come on tour to Halifax. Some respondents said that they found the US quite bleak, and that the events of 9/11 2001 changed their perspectives on touring in the US.

One person mentioned Houston, along with Beijing, as a city whose corporate headquarters do not prove sympathetic to requests for donations to festivals and music ensembles in Halifax. One respondent suggested that given contemporary technology, “I could do this job from Paris”. Another described Venice as “my fantasy place to move to”. Europe had an attraction for many respondents. It is easy to reach from Halifax, and many artists have turned to touring in that market. Artists from Europe like to come to Halifax, and may combine a tour with a vacation. One respondent said that in Germany artists can reach 700 million viewers in a fairly short drive. The band Dog Day, signed by the German label Tomlab, was said to be “bigger in Germany than in Toronto”.

Respondents mentioned several other European countries. One praised Ireland for offering tax shelters for artists that have made it a cultural capital. Another described Irish music “huge”. The country produced great writers. Scotland was seen as a land of poets and a strong Celtic music scene. One respondent noted the quality of showmanship in England; another talked about Dog Day touring throughout the UK. One respondent had worked in Holland where the government proved supportive of the arts, but the range of creative expression appreciated was somewhat limited. Another thought that Iceland might be an isolated place good for developing music.

Halifax: *Creative Mecca*

Two respondents described Halifax as a creative or cultural Mecca in the music scene in Canada. The city, respondents said, attracted musicians from around the Atlantic region and beyond. As the regional centre on the Atlantic, Halifax is the largest city with the greatest number of opportunities for musicians. The digital age offers musicians a real option for staying in the region (Text Box 13).

Text Box 13: Regional hub

1-27 music promoter
Halifax is sort of like **Toronto**. **Toronto** to the rest of Canada is like the “big smoke” right? Supposedly that’s where you had to be in order to get ahead in this business. Again I’ll go back to digital technology and the internet – you don’t necessarily have to live in **Toronto** in order to do that, you can do that

anywhere. But in terms of Halifax, it is the centre. It's the gravitational point for the Atlantic Provinces.

The most important strength of the Halifax music scene for respondents was the socially supportive and welcoming community of musicians (Text Box 14). Many respondents contrasted the collaboration and social permeability of the Halifax scene with the competition they had experienced in scenes in other cities. Halifax was described as having a good sized scene that provided a melting pot for emerging artists and opportunities to collaborate across genres and with more established artists. Musicians found the community easy to integrate into, and tolerant of diversity. They appreciated the creative energy of the city, and suggested that the geographic isolation of the city and the independent spirit of the people helped musicians develop a unique style and positive attitudes. Many respondents offered testimonials to specific examples of collaboration and social support in the music community.

Text Box 14: Supportive music scene

1-24 manager

I really think it's about supporting each other. An example would be last year Joel Plaskett broke records and won like six ECMAs³. Joel is just a lovely guy, so by the third one he was getting a little embarrassed. By the fifth one he came out and sang. He made up lyrics to one of his songs, "Sorry, I know you must be bored to death". But everyone else in that room was thrilled for him. Everyone else felt that he really deserved it. I could cry thinking about it. So, it is the way people support and encourage and cheer on each other. There is not a lot of competition. Everybody recognizes down here that what they are doing is unique. And that, I think, is why musicians are attracted to this place: because they are valued here and they value each other. They get support from—you know there are managers like Louis Thomas or Andre Bourgeois that they can call and get through to. There are other artists at their level or at a higher level who will take the time to speak with them. That's why it thrives down here is that there is a lot of cooperation going on; a lot of cross-pollination. You find lots of different styles of music.

1-29 musician

We collaborate with people in the music scene in terms of sharing ideas or we grab a drink and talk. Especially when you're starting out there are a lot of conversations like that. Chad and I from Wintersleep – back in the day - we used to get together and discuss things like a strategy for the ECMAs because we didn't have management back then – and how we might hit up certain people and share information. We are all friends because we all play together. We share instruments: we lend stuff and we get things lent to us. So there's a really nice openness there. If you need something people will help you out -- in that way and also in terms of music. Well, that's an obvious answer: I collaborate with my band mates. Also, if you need someone to sing – Halifax is really renowned for that – if you need someone to sing something it's easy to call Jenn [Grant] or Jill [Barber] and say "Can you come? We need a female voice." Or say that we need a choir of people for this one song. Well we can call and get hold of people in a day or two because we're all close – it's not hard.

M: Could you just expand a little bit more on how collaboration helps you as a musician?

You can get things done awfully cheap here. People lend their skills in the studio for free sometimes. If I'm going to go record on Jill's record – which I have – I didn't get paid to play the piano, I just played it – then I expect the same in return so it's kind of communist.

2-07 musician

Generally speaking it's an incredibly supportive and nurturing community, unlike some cities where there may be more of a competitive thing happening. Here it is incredibly nurturing, I think.

2-15 festival promoter

Well, there's a lot of creativity here. The music's the best it's ever been right now, and people are very collaborative in their approach to creating art. So there's this great story...printed in *Halifax Magazine*, where someone interviewed David Myles and he's talking about how he moved to Halifax from wherever he came from, Ontario or PEI or something. He was recording at the Sonic Temple, and the engineer kept

³ East Coast Music Awards

saying, “I need someone to come in and do some slide guitar on this”. He was like, “Oh that sounds cool”. The next day a guy shows up: it’s Joel Plaskett! Joel plays slide guitar, for no money, just because the engineer said “Joel, I have this song and it really needs some pedal steel”, or whatever, you know? And he was like, “Well, alright then, if the song needs that, it needs it”. Then all of a sudden, this whole parade: Jill Barber’s coming in, Matt Mays is coming in, and all these great players are coming in. They’re all doing it for nothing. We’re doing it because the art is what matters.
So I think Halifax, and I think the product that’s coming out of here right now, is gorgeous and wonderful. There’s more good music coming out of here than at any time. And I think it’s in a lot of different genres. I think it’s of very high quality. ...And then, not to sound like a broken record, but what’s good here is how cheap everything is.

Respondents suggested that larger music scenes permit little interaction across genres, but the Halifax scene provides many opportunities for musicians to cross genres (Text Box 15). Halifax has lively scenes of varying sizes in indie rock, singer/songwriter, Celtic, folk, hip hop, jazz, blues, alternative, and gospel. It has several festivals with music showcases through the year, including the Atlantic Jazz Festival, Halifax Pop Explosion, Atlantic International Film Festival, Halifax International Buskers Festival, and In the Dead of Winter Festival.

Text Box 15: Genres coexist

1-20 administrator

It seems also that there is just a very creative group of people who are interested in making more than one type of music, and having different roles in those setups. Someone who might be the lead singer in their group might also just really want to play guitar in a group that plays different kinds of music. You often find that some of the rock bands and pop bands are appearing as back-up singers on any given night, because they love that music too, and their main thing doesn’t give them that. The keyboard player for a rock band might actually at home write these touching love songs on a completely different instrument and want to get out there and do something with that. Before you know it they have two things going. And then there is a third because one of those two things has led to another kind of collaboration, and there are hundreds of examples of these kinds of things. ...All you have to do is take 12 CDs and read the credits and you won’t believe you are looking at the same 30 names over and over and over again. But they are playing different instruments, they are singing different things. It is different kinds of music. It’s bizarre, but it’s wonderful. It’s what makes this industry unique and saleable from my perspective. It becomes fascinating as a sales feature, part of our brand. We work it from all angles, that this is a community. We’re selling a community. It didn’t use to be like this. It’s very nice. It was really dog-eat-dog when I worked in the music business. But the internet changed the world. Information is so easy to get to. All of that stuff you used to guard, your business before, it is all here. Why not just tell people?

1-29 musician

I think you get an all star team of the best writers of that geographical range – to combine the two ideas. That’s pretty impressive. Now the industry side really lacks so you don’t hear of Tyler Messick. You don’t hear of Dog Day across the country as much but they’re world class. But that doesn’t mean that they’re ever going to be successful. That’s really cool. You discuss and talk and ask your friend about their songs. “How did you get that sound? That’s really cool!” You have access to really great artists. And at the end of the day which side would I rather fall on, or what would anyone want to fall on? I’d rather fall on the side of the artists and be less successful than be Nickelback – to be honest.

While respondents in some genres, such as jazz, saw the Halifax music scene as somewhat limited in opportunities, those in the indie rock and singer/song-writer genres said that Halifax is known nationally and internationally for the quality of the music and the opportunities the city offers for artists to develop their talent (Text Box 16).

Respondents pointed to the legacy of acts that originated in Halifax, including April Wine, Sarah McLachlan, and Sloan. Many people mentioned contemporary artists rising

to national and international prominence from the city, including Joel Plaskett, Wintersleep, Matt Mays, Dog Day, In-Flight Safety, Jill Barber, Meaghan Smith, David Myles, and Jenn Grant. With acts getting signed to major labels and receiving Juno nominations or awards, respondents see evidence that Halifax is attracting attention from many quarters, and that Halifax musicians are getting noticed internationally. With each success, the city’s attractiveness to aspiring musicians increases.

Text Box 16: Halifax has the country’s attention

<p>1-15 manager Certainly speaking of this local music industry, it wouldn’t exist without a great deal of collaboration between businesses that otherwise – in fact, in a great number of other places – would probably be seen as a competitor. This is one of the most cooperative music scenes that I’ve certainly ever seen and I’ve been around most of them. You have to cooperate, it’s too small – everything is too small. Out here I don’t really see anyone trying to claw themselves ahead at the expense of others. ... Strangely enough, in spite of everything, this part of the country is almost bordering on one of those places that you would want to go to – perversely because of the cooperation between artists. This town is hugely supportive. It’s no surprise that Jill Barber, who is from Kingston for god’s sakes, launched her career here. You can get a lot of attention out of this market. There are a lot of really good industry people here. The CBC is probably more into the music side of things in this city than they are in any other city that I can think of. They help and they foster those artists.</p>
<p>1-30 musician I think we’ve got a good reputation where a lot of the kind of Indie cool kids in Toronto have Sloan songs for their passwords on their email accounts and---I think there is just this reverence for them, though they actually weren’t from Halifax but we get credit for them [inaudible]. I think it really gave the city a mystique. Since then there’s been Wintersleep and Dog Day and all these great bands that keep popping out of nowhere. And as hard fought as it is back here...all these bands are taking all these hard knocks and growing and developing without Toronto or Montreal or these taste maker cities really seeing it. Then Dog Day will show up in Toronto and no one’s heard them before and they open up for some band and blow everyone away. It looks like everything that walks out of Halifax is brilliant to a lot of the rest of the country.</p>

While respondents recognized that some musicians will continue to leave Halifax to advance their careers, they also suggested that many who leave the region retain strong roots in the city. Many offered examples of musicians “coming home to be nurtured” (Text Box 17). Something in the east coast context was seen as fundamental to the creativity of artists. The decision of Joel Plaskett to remain in the city was an inspirational example to others that musicians can be successful without abandoning their roots and without selling out to the industry.

Text Box 17: Halifax draws people home

<p>1-26 musician I think most of them relocate to shoot their music videos and do their records and tour to support their fans. I know a lot of the artists from here haven’t left. They’re all still living here, Matt’s still around, Joel’s still around, Wintersleep, The Rankins, Rita MacNeil. Ann Murray, I think still lives where she’s from. People don’t tend to just forget about the east coast. I think that’s the coolest thing about it. Artists go away because they have to go away and they’re going for money because they have to pay their bills. And I think most of them almost always end up coming home when they can.</p>
<p>1-27 producer It’s just because I think the scene here is – I mean they come for different reasons but they stay. Jill [Barber]’s boyfriend lives in Vancouver so she’s not here much, but this is home to her. I talked to her a couple of months ago and she said, “I may be moving to Vancouver.” And I said, “That would make sense to me.” “But”, she says, “this place has been so good to me.” She almost feels that it’s a snub for her to</p>

leave. I said, “No, that has nothing to do with it. This place was good for you, but you were good for this place also.” Again, she became a role model. There are a number of these people who give hope to the other people who are continually toiling in the coffee shops and small bars, trying to apply their craft.

Respondents described many attributes of the city that make it a good place for music. Halifax has a tradition of live music that some ascribe to its history as a military and university town, and its recent experience as a tourism destination. One respondent characterized it as a “pubby town” while another called it a “party town”. The city has many live music venues: those discussed most commonly were the Marquee, Gus’ Pub, the Rebecca Cohn, the Khyber, and the Seahorse. Many respondents worried about the continuing loss of venues, and described a need for a larger soft-seat venue or for all-ages venues. Respondents described a city with music everywhere, including buskers on the streets. They said that the community and audiences appreciated and respected music (Text Box 18). Halifax was renowned for its hospitality, and live music played an important role in that.

Text Box 18: Halifax appreciates music

1-19 administrator

Out of any province in Canada, this province –one of the backbones of its culture is its music. I really believe that and I hear that all the time. On street corners, down on the waterfront, everywhere – music is just so prevalent. What I understand about people growing up, in Cape Breton especially, there are musical instruments in the hands of young people that used to belong to their grandparents, in a way that you wouldn’t necessarily see anywhere else in Canada.

1-24 manager

The fact is that people respect music and culture in this city, in a way that doesn’t happen in a lot of cities. It is certainly not happening in Ottawa this week [with funding cuts announced]. They just closed two international funding programs down. But here we have a Premier and Ministers that support what we are trying to do. We respect culture and music on the east coast, not just in Halifax, in a way that doesn’t happen everywhere else. It’s a way of life here, I guess.

Respondents described Halifax as a young and educated town with a strong commitment to arts and culture. One respondent indicated that he felt the difference when he visited other cities like Vancouver: the audiences didn’t behave the same way. Halifax audiences have the reputation of being open and receptive to alternative art, music, and dance. Many respondents described the pivotal role that the art college – NSCAD University – played in creating an artistic and creative ambience and audiences in the city (Text Box 19).

Respondents praised institutions such as CBC Radio Halifax and CBC Radio 3 for helping to develop and publicize up-and-coming artists and educating the public about the local music scene. Several people noted the strong arts and culture scene in Halifax, and commented on the availability of the symphony, theatre, museums, and art gallery. The East Coast Music Awards were seen as high profile events in the Canadian music scene; respondents noted that the west coast was years behind in developing a similar awards program.

Text Box 19: Halifax is an artistic city

2-01 musician

I think that for live music, certainly in the world that I’ve revolved in, and I watched the Sloan guys

existing with this sort of balance between the art college and the history of the place. The art college is really an arty and creative place. You've got bands sometimes formed by art college students and if they want to get an audience, there's sort of an art college scene. Then if they want to take it into the pubs, the bands that really fly are these ones that can kind of play to both the arty crowd and the drinking crowd. And so you have bands trying to strike some balance between art and their creative ambition as well as their desire to entertain and make a buck. So you get these bands that both have to rock and be entertaining and pubby, while at the same time trying to continue some tradition of "This is the city I'm from". This is what's interesting and creative about it. You know, you want to write a good song, but you also want it to rock an audience. So at least that's the world that I've kind of walked in, where I'm sort of trying to struggle to both have the respect of my peers, because they are all these great songwriters, but also I want to go out and entertain because that's part of the trade, and that's part of the joy, to get a bunch of people singing along.

2-15 festival promoter

I think what makes it exciting for people here, is that (especially in the early 90s) there was a massive, 90% correlation between people in indie rock bands that were getting signed to American labels and people who had graduated from NSCAD [art college], with visual arts degrees, or whatever. Music was their hobby. It's just a very creative environment. People love being here, and sitting in a café, going to somebody's studio and helping them with something.

Many respondents praised the role of the province in making it possible for artists to remain in the region. Music Nova Scotia hired staff dedicated to helping those in the music sector develop their business and marketing skills, and gain access to government funding. Premier Rodney MacDonald, a maritime fiddler, received much of the credit for making music a priority within the cultural sector in recent years.

The city provided a comfortable place for those in the music sector to make a home (Text Box 20). People talked about the attraction they felt toward the natural beauty of the region with the ocean, lakes, and countryside nearby. Many spoke of the history of the city, its heritage architecture, and the urban amenities it enjoyed. The affordability of housing and studio space and the vitality of the artist community in the north end of the city proved especially important to many respondents. Almost everyone liked the size of Halifax: not too big, not too small. The city has a comfortable pace and laid-back lifestyle. Some saw it as a cool place with cool people. While some described the cold winters as forcing them inside to become creative, others appreciated the beautiful summer and fall weather.

Text Box 20: Halifax is a comfortable city

2-20 producer

I've got a studio here. I have about 1400 square feet here. My costs here are about -- the actual rent is about \$1000 a month. In another city, that would be pretty hard to do. But also you can argue that in a city like Truro, you could get an entire building for that. The client base in terms of actual working musicians who need to do recording, it's a perfect mixture of the size of the community where it's still cheap enough that you can live here affordably. You know, it's a pretty interesting thing because I think it's the size of the city, and all the students.

2-25 musician

Yes, it is easy to move from field to field, in that it is smaller scale. It is -- I say this kind of flippantly -- easy to do a good three-quarters of my networking and business from just walking down the street. I get a good chunk of my gigs that way. "Hey, how're you doing? Want to play with us tonight?" Or "Somebody is looking for someone to do this". I get work walking down the street: that's really positive.

Respondents recognized some significant limitations to trying to make a living in music in Halifax (Text Box 21). As musicians become more successful in the mainstream of the industry they need the infrastructure of managers, agents, publicists, record labels, and publishers available in larger centres. Corporate decision making and media attention tend to be centred in the largest cities, not in Halifax. To sustain and build an audience musicians have to travel outside the region, entailing costs beyond the means of many. Musicians need access to business education and industry professionals to develop the skills to manage their own careers more effectively; that is starting to happen in the region, but respondents want to see more.

Text Box 21: Halifax has limited opportunities

<p>1-29 musician</p> <p>The challenges would be that we're not Toronto, we're not Vancouver, and as such we're not in the middle of the machine which is where you get the most attention and where you do business. Where your manager is meeting with people and they're giving opportunities – whereas if you're up here you have to make a lot of extra effort to stay in the limelight. Not just the limelight - I mean artistically and performance wise but business wise. People don't remember you. People are like "Oh yeah, those guys were really good, but whatever. They're in Halifax and I haven't talked to them in awhile." Running into people in clubs and networking dies off a bit here. We're sort of like "those hermit artists". But if you're good enough and you can do that – the advantages of being in Halifax are that it's obviously cheaper. The rent is cheaper and the cost of living is cheaper than Toronto. The relaxed nature of a smaller city is just better. You don't spend all your time on the street in a car. You don't spend all of your time in the subway. You can be home; you can be thinking and writing. It's just a lot easier to get things done artistically. That's the difference that I find. But business wise it's a big challenge. How many power managers, music industry wise, do you know in Halifax? There's one. There's Louis [Thomas], and you could maybe put Sheri [Jones] and Mike Campbell in that category, but after that that's it. There's no management here, there's no agents here – all the agents are in Toronto, Vancouver, and some other cities but mostly those cities. So the financial challenges are in terms of doing business – you have to work really hard to make good contacts. You have to try a lot harder.</p>
<p>1-26 promoter</p> <p>The markets are there and I think for someone like me, I will eventually have to go back if I want to continue doing what I do – because you can only do so much in one spot that you're at. Unfortunately the reality of Halifax at the moment is, if you get an offer from somewhere else you have to go. But just to get up and leave here for a change – I'm not into changing. I'd love to be able to stay here for the rest – You know, east coast of Canada – be able to fly to wherever I've got to work and work from home – that would be ideal.</p>
<p>1-26 producer</p> <p>Well I think in one sense, I have mentioned that it's a great place to network for musicians and to learn your craft. It's not necessarily a great place to – it's sort of like any spot, after you reach a certain level – even if you live here, you can't play here much because it's really too small to sustain shows over a period of time. In the beginning of an artist's career the songs are flying out. They're trying this – if you go to a show one night and you go to a show of the same person the next night it's all different stuff. Once you start to develop what it is you do, you don't change your repertoire that often. You work on each individual piece to refine it. So the shows that you're doing will stay the same for a year or more. You may see them once a year because again, the community isn't big enough to sustain a career here, so you need to take it outside. I would say that right now it's an extremely healthy melting pot for emerging artists. You'll find many more of them than established artists. There are actually more people who live in this area who you may never see perform because the venues that are here really can't support what they need to keep that machine rolling.</p>

Many respondents commented on the shortage of quality venues especially for larger, more established acts. They wondered why the provincial government would let good venues close while bailing out large manufacturers and call centres that produce fewer

jobs and make smaller economic contributions to the region. Several complained about the preponderance of Celtic music in promoting tourism in the province. Managers and promoters argued that the tax structure in the province undermined the viability of entertainment venues and the ability to produce festivals and shows. Respondents saw the federal government as unwilling to invest in Halifax, and the municipal government as not understanding the role of music in the city. Several people talked about the need for municipal leadership, investment, and support for the music sector. Some described a place of conservative bureaucrats, and an element of lingering racism in the city.

Some of those interviewed acknowledged the challenges of playing primarily to drunken audiences, of working as part of the marketing apparatus for selling beer. The relatively small audiences for some musical genres meant that musicians had to take “day jobs” teaching or working elsewhere in the music industry instead of being able to concentrate on their art. A shortage of good paying but flexible jobs was said to make it hard for people to earn a living in Halifax.

Despite the recognition that Halifax did not have all of the attributes of the big music scenes, those interviewed indicated a commitment to the Halifax music scene (Text Box 22). Many have experience in the larger scenes and understand the implications of moving up to the “big time”. Industry professionals in Halifax have big aspirations for what the local music sector can become if given appropriate support.

Text Box 22: Halifax not the big time

1-29 musician

What’s cool about Halifax is that a lot of what we saw on the artistic end of music which in the end is the most important thing. You can be a crappy band but you can’t be managed to be good: you need to have good songs. I think a lot of people around here put an emphasis on song writing, which is great. We lack a little bit of the flash, the pizzazz, and the showmanship that you see in bigger cities because we’re not used to it. There are no stages anymore. Where would you learn to put on a show with sound and lights here? Well, you would have to be good enough to be at the Marquee so you’ve already learned how to play. There’s nowhere to really learn how to put on a show. Like in playing in England - we really just feel we’re really just a bunch of lumberjacks playing our songs – or fishermen playing our songs. You really have that sense in London: there’s more of the show element to music. We don’t have that here at all. I wonder if that’s not because we’re a small town. People learn to adapt to put on a bit more of a show but we’re definitely a little less outgoing here, I find that comes back to bite you in the ass sometimes.

2-15 festival promoter

Well I mean people want to be a part of something. I mean Halifax is like so in the 60s. ... I mean that’s a broad generalization, and it’s probably a bit optimistic, but Jill Barber moved back here from **Toronto** because it was so dog-eat-dog, and she just didn’t feel like the people there cared -- everybody was her competition. And I think people like to be part of this community. They want to move here because they feel like they’re a part of something. What’s missing right now, on the music side, is we haven’t had the unqualified hit yet. Like Matt Mays and Joel Plaskett, they’re doing well in Canada and that’s all fine and good, but we don’t have -- the goal is to have the Sarah McLachlan or whatever who doesn’t move to **Vancouver** – who comes out here and stays here. But I think musicians want to move here and be a part of the community. They feel like there’s something exciting happening here, and they feel like they can benefit from being in this environment with the energy that’s here.
...The goal of the [music] sector strategy is that Halifax and Nova Scotia become the capital of independent music in English Canada, and that we be world-renowned for that. That people will be looking to **Toronto** for major labels and American records distributed in Canada, but that authentic Canadian voices and the industry to support international voices in Canada, and potentially around the world, would be based here.

Halifax: Success Stories

Those interviewed in Halifax identified a suite of factors that they saw as contributing to the unique creative context of the city. One set of factors spoke to the particular characteristics of place: the natural and cultural heritage of the Maritimes, the geographic isolation, the winter weather, the size of the city and its affordability. The other important set of factors reflected the social dynamics of the city. Respondents described the music community as supportive, artistic, and independently minded. They saw the wider social community as educated and appreciative of music. Together these factors contributed to making Halifax a place where musicians want to live and work.

In the interviews respondents pointed repeatedly to certain iconic stories about Halifax musicians that revealed their aspirations and fears for the local music scene. Each artist garnering mention presented a moral lesson (Table 1). While artists like Sarah McLachlan and Sloan drew early attention to Halifax, their departure for larger centres disappointed those now working in the city. Although the independent creative edge associated with Sloan stuck to the city, the band's relocation reinforced the message that bands had to leave Halifax to make it.

Table 1: Moral lessons connected to the artists mentioned

Artist	Moral
Sarah McLachlan	Art college student who formed a band in Halifax in the 1980s, but left for Vancouver; became a star and didn't look back.
Sloan	Art college students who got signed by Nirvana's label in the 1990s; left it over creative differences but established the independent edge of the Halifax music scene; left Halifax for Toronto but returned occasionally
Jill Barber	Came to Halifax from Ontario to hone her craft; became well-known nationally; moved to Vancouver to join her boyfriend, but considers Halifax special; returns often
Matt Mays	Making a success with his band in the US; moving back and forth between New York and Halifax; comes home for nurturing
Dog Day	Art college band signed to a major European label; touring widely in Europe, but based in Halifax
Meaghan Smith	Came to Halifax from Ontario and began to hone her skills as a musician; signed to Madonna's label; based in Halifax (for now)
David Myles	Came to Halifax from within the region; international song-writing award; based in Halifax
Wintersleep	Won a Juno in 2008 as new group of the year; touring widely but based in Halifax
Joel Plaskett	Winner of many ECMAs, Juno nominations, and international song-writing awards; openly committed to staying in Halifax; generous to other musicians

Respondents offered the other artists mentioned commonly as a new generation of musicians with an avowed commitment to Halifax. The new technologies associated with the music industry in the age of the internet made Halifax an attractive location for them to hone their skills and build a fan base. Although respondents acknowledged that Jill Barber and Matt Mays moved in and out of Halifax, they pointed to the nurturing effect that these musicians attributed to the city. The national and international success of Dog Day, Meaghan Smith, David Myles, and Wintersleep confirmed the excellent quality of

Halifax based acts. For many of the respondents interviewed, Joel Plaskett represented the model they hoped to see as the future of the Halifax music scene: a very successful artist who remains true to the local brand (of independence, creativity, and social support) and who commits to building and sustaining a career based in Halifax.

Summary

This paper highlights some of the attitudes that those involved in the music scene in Halifax have about their own city and other cities as places to live and work as musicians. While it may not be surprising to find that these respondents find Halifax attractive, the interviews give a clear understanding of the kind of role that Halifax plays in the Canadian music scene. The city attracts musicians from across the region and across the country to come to hone their performance and song-writing skills. The city has a reputation of being strongly socially supportive and welcoming to musicians. It gives performers the opportunity to experiment with different genres and to expand their repertoires. The large number of performance venues replete with supportive paying audiences means that musicians can earn a modest living as they perfect their craft. Halifax performs an important music incubation function. In return, the vibrant music scene in Halifax attracts students, tourists, and talented young people of all kinds to the city. The music scene gives Halifax a comparative advantage that to date it has barely acknowledged.

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