

# MAKE A LITTLE NOISE

Performance Venues on the Peninsula of Halifax

○ Gus' Pub

○ Pavillion

○ North Street Church

○ Stayner's

Marquee

○ Seahorse

○ Rebecca Cohn

Jeffry Claude Haggett  
BCD Honours Thesis  
Dalhousie University | School of Planning

# Make a Little Noise | Performance Venues on the Halifax Peninsula

Plan 4500  
Advisor | Frank Palermo  
Supervisors | Patricia Manuel + Eric Rapaport

April 6, 2008  
Jeffry Haggett | B00477043

## Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1.0 Executive Summary</b>                      | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>2.0 Introduction and Background</b>            | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>3.0 Goals, Objectives + Method Description</b> | <b>11</b> |
| <b>4.0 Literature Review</b>                      | <b>13</b> |
| <b>5.0 Findings</b>                               | <b>20</b> |
| <b>6.0 Discussion</b>                             | <b>32</b> |
| <b>7.0 Appendix</b>                               | <b>45</b> |
| <b>8.0 References</b>                             | <b>58</b> |

---

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Maps and Tables   |       |
| Venues and adjacent uses                                      | 27    |
| Key Venue Inventory   | 29    |
| Key Venue Context   | 31    |
| Photographs of key venues most mentioned by ISRN interviewees | 50-57 |

*Cover created using Adobe Creative Suite, photograph by Chris Smith, funkfactor.com*



## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of Dr. Jill Grant and her research for the Innovation Systems Research Network. I offer a sincere thank you to her and also Frank Palermo, my advisor during the development of this thesis. He assisted me at every stage and was always ready with advice to challenge and improve the work. I would also like to thank Dr. Patricia Manuel and Dr. Eric Rapaport for their time and leadership of the honours thesis class. A mammoth thank you to Carol Madden, without her this paper would never have come together and the School of Planning might fall apart.

Throughout the research for this paper I met with many talented musicians and producers who have assisted in creating the Halifax independent music scene. Their willingness to be interviewed and contribute to the School of Planning's research was generous. Each of them helped me to understand more about music, Halifax and the vital role artists play in forming community.

I have to thank my fellow students, whose energy and focus have proven infectious. Special thanks go to Olivia Tanner, Andrew King, Aaron Murnaghan and Chad Manley for all the debates, nachos and 4 a.m. phone calls.

Finally, to my extended family who have never stopped encouraging me. Your generosity helped me change my life mid-stream. I will always be honoured by the faith you have shown in me. Thanks to Dad, Ev, Al, Pam, Niall, Seamus, Catherine, Carolyn, Michele, Stephen, Don, Keith and Christy.





## 1.0 Executive Summary

Halifax has become recognized as having a prominent popular music scene. The numbers of musicians finding national and international success is disproportionately large for a city of 370,000 people. Several characteristics have contributed to this development. This study investigates the role that various performance venues play in the incubation of talent and in fostering new musicians and bands. The focus is on performance venues as a component of developing musical talent and their contribution to community. The discussion examines the city's types and distribution of venues, social networks, economics and potential in municipal development.

Analysis of venues spatial relationship to other uses and nighttime activities suggest an established entertainment cluster in Halifax's central city and a possible emerging cluster in the north end.

Investigation of how venues are used and managed indicates a venue typology that encourages the incubation of musical talent and cultural expression in the community. Another contributing factor to incubation is how venues encourage social networks; these allow musicians of all genres to meet each other and get exposure to the city's music promoters and producers.

The paper concludes with suggestions on how municipal policy can enhance the viability of venues and the role they play in cultivating cultural expression, economic growth and maintaining a community experience that attracts new creative workers, university students and tourists to the city.



## 2.0 Introduction + Background

Why does Halifax have so many amazing bands and musicians? Sloan, Joel Plaskett, Matt Mays, Jill Barber, Wintersleep and Buck 65 are just a sample of the artists who have become successful, have won awards and have praised Halifax for its role in their careers. Each one found his or her first audiences in the various performance venues located throughout the city. As Tara Brabazon explains in her book, *Liverpool of the South Seas*, “The great centres of innovation in popular music during the last 50 years have been on the periphery.” (Brabazon, p1) Halifax has evolved into an incubator for popular music for many reasons. During the summer of 2008, during a research interview for a project concerning “creative cities” in Canada, a Halifax music producer expressed the opinion that the total annual attendance at musical events makes it the most popular cultural activity in the community, surpassing theatre, the visual arts and even sports. (ISRN, 9m)

This paper argues that the variety of performance venues and the wide support for live performance in Halifax are critically important to the development of talent. Since May 2007, I have worked as a research assistant for Dr. Jill Grant, the regional researcher for the Innovation Systems Research Network (ISRN). The ISRN is in the final stages of the Halifax data collection, a five-year national study called *The Social Dynamics of Economic Performance*. The study is investigating the role that creativity and innovation play in the economic development of Canadian city regions. With other researchers in 2007 and 2008 I conducted over 55 interviews with talented and creative

individuals. I have Dr Grant's permission to analyze data from 19 interviews with performers and managers in the music industry for the purpose of this study.

The research of the ISRN was partly inspired by the work of Richard Florida. His books and studies of the 'creative class' have also inspired research at the local municipal and regional scales (Barrieu). Many of these studies attempt to establish what attracts talented and creative people to one city over another. The interviews conducted for the ISRN indicate that the independent music scene of Halifax has brought positive attention to the community. The popular music scene reflects Halifax's creativity and cultural vitality, but has not been recognized at the municipal level. Additionally, it is not supported in the actions, policies or funding of the provincial government. This study of venues will attempt to highlight the importance of the music scene in attracting people to Halifax.

For his independent study for his master's degree, Jesse Morton recently completed an analysis of the collected interviews. He highlighted certain factors, such as:

- The characteristics that have allowed the Halifax music industry to thrive despite its lack of size and density.
- The ways in which economic and cultural planning could contribute to or support the Halifax music scene.
- The planning and development policy changes that will encourage musicians and industry workers to relocate to Halifax and contribute to the future growth of the city. (Morton)

Like Morton's project, this study of venues in Halifax includes analysis of the ISRN interviews. In the summer of 2008, major stakeholders in the local music scene were asked about the city's performance venues; their feedback and opinions have been analyzed and inform my research.

If you open up itunes on your computer, as I did in March 2009, and enter Halifax in the search engine you will be offered various links leading to over 50 contemporary artists linked to the city. If you entered Calgary a city three times the size of Halifax you will be offered a more conservative collection; enter Winnipeg and the 1970's albums of Bachman Turner Overdrive and Neil Young are featured.

The number of Halifax Regional Municipality's (HRM) popular music artists who have found success on the national and international music scenes is high for a city region with a population of 370,000. Even though Toronto and Montreal are considered the main centres for the Canadian music business, Halifax performs above its "weight class". A local music producer explains, "We've got a ridiculous number of talented people out here [Halifax]. We produce an inordinate number of really good artists from this part of the world and we're known for it at this point". One factor that allows this distinction is access to a variety of performance venues. They give artists a chance to test and perfect their acts in front of live audiences. At the same time, they are helping creative and business connections flourish.

This research documents the role that performance venues play in contributing to the creation and maintenance of Halifax's popular music culture and business. Interviews conducted with musicians and promoters in 2007 and 2008 highlighted the significant role of good venues in

catalyzing the music industry. The local independent music scene is centred around the music venues located on the Halifax peninsula and this study highlights the dynamics that these venues encourage.

The community of Halifax has become dependent on the local music scene as both a cultural resource and a contributor to the local economy. In 2002, the cultural industries of Atlantic Canada employed 26,500 individuals and generated \$2.1 billion. (Barrieau 2004) As the regional capital, Halifax has a major portion of this activity. As one performer explains, “The relationship between Halifax and the Atlantic Region is complex; the total area’s population use the city as the creative centre for expression (ISRN 9m).”

### *Halifax’s Performance Venues*

In March 2008 the Coast Magazine, Halifax’s independent weekly reported that half of the city’s live music venues had closed (Aikens). Over the following year others joined the list. Most concerning was the announcement of the Marquee Club closing in March 2009 (CBC). This premier venue accommodated 650 people and hosted events that prepared emerging talent for the national stage; its size also justified the economics of bringing headline performers from other regions.

This urban planning study is important because little research has been undertaken to examine what role venues play in a city’s music scene and their contribution to the community and economy. Focus is on the performance venues on the peninsula of Halifax and their contribution to the popular music culture. The Halifax Regional Municipality’s cultural policy states that the city should

“strive to be a cultural capital of Canada”(Halifax, p16). Given that performance venues support the creative production of the music industry, it is vital to understand how the performance venue infrastructure on the peninsula of Halifax supports the creative production of its popular music business and culture.

### **3.0 Goals, Objectives and Method Description**

Given that performance venues support the creative production of the music industry, I took the following steps to discover and document the key live performance venues and identify the various aspects they play in both Halifax’s music community and to the city at large.

The first phase of the project was an analysis of literature about cultural industries, venues and cities with similar popular music context to Halifax. This process has been ongoing since July 2008. Themes explored included creative cities, the role of a music scene to a city, cultural infrastructure and amenities, built environment and social networks. Sources of information include books by academic researchers about cultural industries and popular culture. Additional information was acquired from online peer-reviewed articles located through ‘Prowler’ at Dalhousie University Library. Search keywords, alone or in combination included: “cultural industries”, “music industry”, “Perth, Australia”, “Athens, Georgia”, “Nova Scotia”, “culture” and “Halifax music”.

The second step involved the analysis of 19 interviews assisted in identifying the perceptions and concerns of Halifax’s music community. The respondents lived in Halifax and include nationally signed musicians, emerging musicians, agents, producers, festival managers and music journalists. The focus was placed on their perceptions regarding the existing popular music venues on the city’s



peninsula and locations they considered crucial to the success of the Halifax scene. I assisted in completing these interviews through the ISRN research. As part of my agreement with the ISRN, I completed this project within their guidelines, following the relevant ethical and budgetary considerations.

I then developed an inventory of key popular music venues recognized by the 19 ISRN respondents. The work involved charting locations, clustering, size, transportation connections and proximity to an audience. I also charted additional performance venues located on the peninsula of Halifax and looked for any existing entertainment clusters.

In order to understand the proximity of existing venues to other cultural activities I overlaid performance venue locations with transit routes, residential areas, university locations, and other entertainment venues (e.g. restaurants). I interpreted the overlays using Elizabeth Currid's findings on artistic clusters and network as expressed in her book, *The Warhol Economy*.

The next step involved classification of Halifax venues according to distinguishing characteristics reflecting such features as support functions, physical characteristics and management structure.

I calculated the number of performances occurring at each key venue and expressed it as a percentage for all venues. Each act was characterized as a coming from the HRM, the Atlantic region or from outside the Atlantic region (national and international). I used the *Coast Magazine* listings and band websites to calculate the data.

I graphically illustrated performance venue characteristics, showing location, allowable occupancy, pictures of exteriors, hours of operation, performances over three months and distinguish between private or public operation.

Finally, I identified public priorities and actions in place to support music venues in Halifax. I reviewed the HRM Cultural Plan (HRM) for directions and support of venues and also the HRM Municipal Strategy for development guidelines regarding venues, nightlife and entertainment clustering. My review and analysis led to suggestions for strengthening municipal support for music performance venues in the region.

## **4.0 Literature Review**

### **Why should we care about Halifax's popular music venues?**

The world's largest music store is now Apple's iTunes. The ubiquitous iPods that store purchased music can be seen around the globe. With increasing frequency the music of Halifax's Wintersleep, Sloan, Buck 65, Jill Barber, Matt Mays and others is downloaded on these devices. Each of these performers has roots in the city's music scene and each of them mastered their musical talent in local venues.

Venues matter. They have been instrumental in making Halifax's popular music scene the artistic regional capital for the Atlantic Provinces. The city also has a cluster of venues (on Argyle, Brunswick Streets) and the neighbourhoods (along Gottingen, Agricola Streets). These clusters are also important in how they support the social networks needed to forge relationships and connections necessary for musical talent to find an audience.

## Creative Cities and Cultural Industries

Cultural industries and the role they play in a city's culture and economy has become a focus of urban research in the past ten years. Richard Florida's seminal study of these topics was born from his research into cities and their economic growth. He concluded that economically successful cities had high concentrations of creative people. This "creative class" is defined by occupations that are innovative. Professionals with creative capital would include scientific researchers, engineers, architects, educators, artists, and performers, including musicians. In his book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Florida argues that these talented individuals are the stimulus for economic success. Positive development happens in regions with these talented people that also have high levels of technology and tolerance (Florida).

Elizabeth Currid of the University of Southern California agrees with Florida and states that culture in particular operates as an attractor of diverse people and firms that are drawn to a city with energy and creativity. Cities can help attract workers and businesses by offering vibrant creative communities and the amenities they provide (Currid, 46-49).

Florida's research indicates that creative people prefer to live in communities with a strong sense of place, which is unique compared to other cities. Florida explains that these "authentic places" offer characteristics by which we can define ourselves (Riddle, 52). Halifax can be considered "authentic" and the music scene a key attribute, but the city is also seen as a conservative and change resistant. Florida warns that a city run by a conservative closed network makes it hard for the creative economy to take root (Florida). Halifax's leaders need to be open to new ideas or threaten the success that the city has experienced in developing its independent musical talent.

## Halifax as regional capital

Jack Jedwab reviews Richard Florida's creative city principles and how they can be applied to a Canadian context. He argues that in most cases Florida's theories are less applicable to most northern cities, particularly smaller centres in Canada. The exceptions are the country's larger cities such as Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal (Jedwab).

Nicole Barrieau's study, *The Culture Sector in Atlantic Canada: Its Economic Impact and the Export Potential*, asserts that the music scene and cultural industries of Halifax should be seen within a larger regional frame of reference (Barrieau). The musicians who use the venues of Halifax are from many smaller towns throughout the four provinces. Halifax in this context is the centre of a regional population approaching two-million. It's that reality that supports the notion that Florida's theories can start to be applied.

Andy Pratt argues for a more localized and regional approach for cultural policy. In response to a previous study showing stronger than anticipated growth in smaller cultural areas, he recognizes a need for possible refinement of the UK cultural policy. (Pratt). He looked at the cultural industries in the southeast of England and argues the opposite of Barrieau's position of cultural policy working best at a larger regional scale. Pratt finds that in the case of the UK, regions would benefit if policy was created at a more local level, or on a finer scale.

Whether Barrieau's or Pratt's theories are more relevant to Halifax's context is less important than recognizing the contribution that the city's music scene and venues offer the music and general communities.

## **Halifax as an isolated capital**

Physical location provides constraints that, within the music industry, can define unique influences for artistic collaborations, touring patterns, and audience accessibility. Halifax is physically isolated from other Atlantic centres and larger cities including the national music centres of Ottawa, Toronto, and Montréal. In Australia, Perth is known as “the most isolated capital city”. Perth’s smaller size and isolation is credited for providing an environment where a more holistic understanding of the music scene is possible by artists and fans, and where creative ideas can be explored without disruption from mass markets and global “sameness”, resulting in a unique and discernable product (Brabazon).

## **Role of the music scene**

Currid explains that we sometimes view the role of culture as insignificant in an urban or regional economy. She fears that the loose arrangement of venues and clubs that assist in the foundation of a city’s cultural identity could be at risk because of unsupportive city policy (Currid,159). This role can be encouraged by fostering creative scenes that are centred on a collection of music venues, restaurants and neighbourhoods that are all within walking distance (Currid, 163).

Barrieau’s study is repeatedly referenced by music and cultural stakeholders in Halifax. It establishes the importance of the economic and employment capital the cultural sector contributes to the entire Atlantic Region. Currid makes the point more strongly and suggests that cultural industries, such as music, are a larger economic factor than is traditionally understood. Any city interested in sustaining development needs to understand that a lively music scene can drive economic growth.

Tara Brabazon, editor of *Liverpool of the South Seas*, collected essays on the independent music scene in Perth, Australia. Like Liverpool, Perth incubates musical talent, is a port city, with a working class history; the same can be said of Halifax. She concludes the book with her own essay “Endings: Not of London Anymore”. In support of Richard Florida, she emphasizes the role of creativity as an “engine of economic growth” (Brabazon). Kathryn Locke, a contributing author, makes it clear in her essay “After Dark: Perth’s nighttime economy” that this “growth” is not limited to the industry itself, but gives a city a competitive edge in this globalized and competitive world where social, environmental and cultural character are important (Locke).

Markusen refers to Florida’s work with skepticism and argues that his ideas do not reflect all artists or creative workers in society (Markusen). She asserts that the spatial distribution, networks, and special economic flexibility of artists can affect a region in a positive economic way. The values that artists, musicians and cultural players cultivate (such as freedom of expression) contribute to a regions diversity and urban energy.

### **Venues: Amenities + Infrastructure**

The economics of a city are connected to its creative and cultural production (Florida). When a city, like Halifax, is recognized for a dynamic music scene it gets the attention of people from other cities. Music culture attracts businesses and young talent that want to live in a place that is lively and has a high quality of life. Their presence and economic stimulus helps create new jobs that benefit the greater community (Florida).

Currid and Barrieau both state that the financial capital that a region's cultural industries and music scene contribute is at greatest risk when the cultural infrastructure is unstable. They further point to the economic benefits that music production creates, such as tourism, advertising, public relations, hotels and restaurants. Brabazon highlights the industry specific job opportunities that a music scene produces. These include music journalism, promotion, management, mixing and policy development. Locke lists "creative products" as performance, literature, design and music, as well as promotion and distribution spin-offs in advertising, tourism, galleries museums and nightclubs (Locke).

Currid sees the clustering of music venues and the related industries as important. The concentration of musical venues and their proximity to other cultural activities in a particular geographic area stimulates creativity (Currid, 90-93). A musical venue is a different kind of institution; as Currid explains, "It allows for the economic exchange of creative producers at a high level. They offer the infrastructure where deals are made, talent is spotted and networking is conducted." (Currid, 173)

### **Social Network**

Currid explores Mark Granovetter's social network theory and its relationship to cultural activity in the context of cultural industries. She states that the social networks venues encourage are the central mechanism by which cultural products, such as music, are generated, evaluated and eventually commoditized (Currid, 4).

Associations created through social networks help establish credibility by being associated with credible people (Currid, 145). There can also be an association between a city and its cultural production. When a band is introduced as being from Halifax, it represents a level of assurance in other markets (Currid, 156).

Understanding how Halifax can remain a centre for musical production thus deserves investigation of the informal “hanging out” that the city’s music venues allow.

### **Literature Summary**

If Halifax is to maintain its unique music scene it needs various types of venues. City officials and planners need to recognize the role they play. The physical building and location are important, but so is the activity inside. Each musical venue is full of sound, energy and voices, connecting people and fostering creativity to keep the city vital.

Little to no literature could be found that focused directly on Halifax’s independent popular music industry. This study on the venues on the peninsula of Halifax is the first contribution.



## 5.0 Findings

### Interview Analysis | Consider Expert Opinion

The nineteen interviews conducted in 2007 and 2008 were analyzed with specific attention to venues and performance spaces in Halifax. Knowledge offered during this process by musicians, performers and industry professionals revealed patterns of concern and interest regarding the local music scene. The main themes that emerged from these discussions were concerns about performance venue capacity and the need for a large venue in Halifax, the loss of the Marquee Club (a favourite venue among performers and audiences), the loss of the Khyber Club and its support for experimental acts, the role of venues in network building and the variety of opportunities to play music in Halifax.

Based on the opinions and references of the music professionals, the most desirable popular music venues to play Halifax are:

- North Street Church
- Music Room
- Rebecca Cohen (one of the nicest venues)
- Gus's Pub
- Marquee (now closed)
- Seahorse
- Khyber (closed)
- Metro Centre (largest venue only)

Two of these venues, ones that drew many positive comments are now closed; they are the Khyber and the Marquee Club.

## Need for a Larger Venue In Halifax

The need for a larger venue in Halifax is a popular discussion topic amongst members of the local music industry. Most interviewees said there is a definite need, though all had different ideas for the capacity of the theoretical venue. Estimates ranged from 1600 to 5000 seats. A quality live music venue with a larger capacity than what is currently offered could, according to some, make it worthwhile for national and international acts to include Halifax in their tour. A professional booking agent explained “when a band is coming through, that’s what they look at, is capacity and its basically how many people can you fit in this room? What’s our potential gross of the door? And agents, that’s all they look at.” (ISRN 7m) A regional promoter also said Halifax was limited by the size of its current venues: “If someone has to spend two nights playing at the Cohn, instead of one night, it's very limited for the people on tour” (ISRN 6m).

A new theatre was often the suggested form of the larger capacity venue. Rebecca Cohn and Neptune are both quality theatre venues on the peninsula, but both are mentioned as being inaccessible due to cost. Neptune has “priced themselves out of the market” (ISRN 8m) and a regional music festival organizer said “The studio and theater Neptune is really nice. We haven’t used it in four years, but that’s because it is expensive.” Another interviewee believes capacity is not everything. “More important are what are the economics of that two thousand-seater. Is it going to be an affordable room?” (ISRN 10m)

## **Loss of the Marquee**

The Marquee, a live music venue which closed in January 2009, was consistently identified as a key venue in Halifax. Eleven interviewees singled out the Marquee as superior space with the best sound, a large capacity and broadest audience and performer appeal. Considered by many to be the best venue, the Marquee was one of the few clubs consistently booking major shows (ISRN 7m). A local industry professional stated, “If that place closes you can say goodbye to half of the entertainment that comes through town.” The respondent went on to say forty jobs were immediately at risk if the Marquee closed, lamenting that jobs in the entertainment industry can be lost with little consideration while other industries receive government money to protect jobs.

*“Everybody likes to play at the Marquee; it’s a real rock and roll bar.”*

*Arts Festival Manager (ISRN 11m)*

## **Losing Khyber Club and Support for the local scene.**

Identified as an art bar and live music venue for new and experimental music, the Khyber Club operated within the Khyber Centre for the Arts on Barrington Street until February 2006. A music producer described the Khyber Club as a “really important testing ground” before the Club lost funding and was closed by the HRM (ISRN 2m). Three interviewees identified this loss as a direct example of a lack of support from local government.

This sentiment was echoed throughout the interviews, with many musicians and industry professionals believing the local music industry is unsupported, underfunded and without a unified

government strategy. A local Industry professional blamed “a combination of rent and taxes and regulations” for the demise of key venues like the Khyber and the Marquee (ISRN 16m). “The lack of a municipal strategy means that we don’t have venues and facilities that we should have.”

*“The Khyber Centre...I used to have my studio in there and,...it was essentially an arts space. There are all these conflicts with the city trying to shut the centre down. And it always seemed to be that there’s so little understanding on each side...or, especially on the side of the city. They didn’t have a clue about what they were trying to do. They were just trying to look at the space strictly from a monetary standpoint. “This is how much this space is worth to rent.” They weren’t looking on the cultural impact it was having on...musicians in the building or how that would impact other buildings.”*

*Arts Manager (ISRN 10m)*

### **Importance of Networking and role of venues**

The Halifax music scene is set apart from other cities in Canada for the level of collaboration and support between members of the industry, a characteristic eleven interviewees identified as unique to Halifax. Results of this environment were identified as an appeal for musicians to relocate to Halifax, increased opportunities to play and meet other musicians, strengthened creative process, and a network to allow ideas to pass fluidly throughout the community.

A provincial government representative likened the level of collaboration and encouragement within the local music scene to having a physical community (ISRN 10m). Other interviewees agreed, suggesting the smaller population and concentration of artists allows contacts to be made by chance meetings, word of mouth and at local venues.

The Gottingen Street area was identified as having a particularly strong network of smaller venues that nurtures a creative and experimental collaboration. Gus's Pub on Agricola Street was repeatedly mentioned and praised for the volume of shows they facilitate and the opportunities the venue provides for unfiltered expression -- especially for the local musicians. The north end was recognized as an established arts-oriented neighbourhood, often having artists intentionally relocating to the area to integrate with the supportive music network.

*“Halifax is much more socially permeable. In Halifax it is very easy to move from one circle to the other. It is very easy to meet people you need to meet. That really is Halifax’s strength... This is different than what I’m finding in any other Canadian city.”*

*Musician, Performer (ISRM 19m)*

### **Opportunities to play | make money in Halifax**

The number and quality of venues will attract or repel musicians, both locally grown and touring. They provide musicians the opportunity to develop their art, form a fan base and perform. More than one musician acknowledged the open attitude of business owners in Halifax for allowing musicians to play: “Everybody is pretty free on letting you come in and play. It doesn’t matter if you own a coffee shop, a clothing store, a bar, or a restaurant. There are places to play up here”. Many interviewees believe Halifax does not have enough official venues. A local booking agent and musician explained that “to sell Nova Scotia to the rest of the world as being the leading force in the music industry...you’ve got to make sure that your venues are adequate to be called that” (ISRN 1m).

Halifax was frequently described as a pub-dominated city. And though local pubs play live music, the audience has ‘split attention’ between the music and beer. Few venues are dedicated to music listening and few cater to all-age crowds. The Pavillion is one of the few all ages live music venues; described as ‘unsupported’ it offers little assurance of an opportunity for the under-age population to play and listen to new music.

Musicians in Halifax encounter the “glass ceiling situation” after developing their careers to a certain point. Industry representatives say musicians must leave the region for more advantageous cities, like Toronto and New York, where there are more venues offering places to play music. In reference to a local artist who left the city, an industry professional said “...And this is the second time he has moved. The opportunity advantage was that he could take local shows; he could get a nightly or weekly gig in one place, and build up an audience...” (ISRN 10m).

Other musicians identify specific venues in Halifax that represent the end of the potential rise in this area. For some musicians “the best you can do is play at a packed Gus’s Pub”, others say it is the Seahorse Tavern, the Marquee or the Turret Room in the Khyber building. The top venue changes with genres, but the obstacle is the same for each artist: “There is nowhere to go”. A local performer said, “Halifax has a profound lack of venues for creative activity. I don’t think it would take that much to improve it, yet there is no political will” (ISRN 7m).

*“To sell Nova Scotia to the rest of the world as being the leading force in the music industry – and if you want to do that, you’ve got to make sure that your venues are adequate to be called that.”*

*Musician (ISRN 14m)*

## Popular Music Venues of Halifax

The following map shows the spatial distribution of venues recognized as key to the popular music scene in Halifax. Each location is represented by a column proportional to the number of popular music acts occurring over three months (January – March 2009) at that venue.

Surprisingly, the majority of performances occur at four venues. Number one, “with a bullet” is Gus’ Pub, second is Seahorse and third is the Marquee, though in its final weeks of operation. Stayner’s Warf was in the top four; despite respondent’s perceptions of its role in popular music, it supports local and national jazz musicians.





**Popular Music Venues of Halifax | 2009**  
*As indicated by repeated mentions in ISRN interviews.*

Column height reflects the number of acts performing at the venue during a three month period [January, February + March]

Based on *Windows Live Maps* | images captured on March 4, 2009  
 Image manipulated in Google SketchUp, No scale applicable  
 Jeffrey Haggett

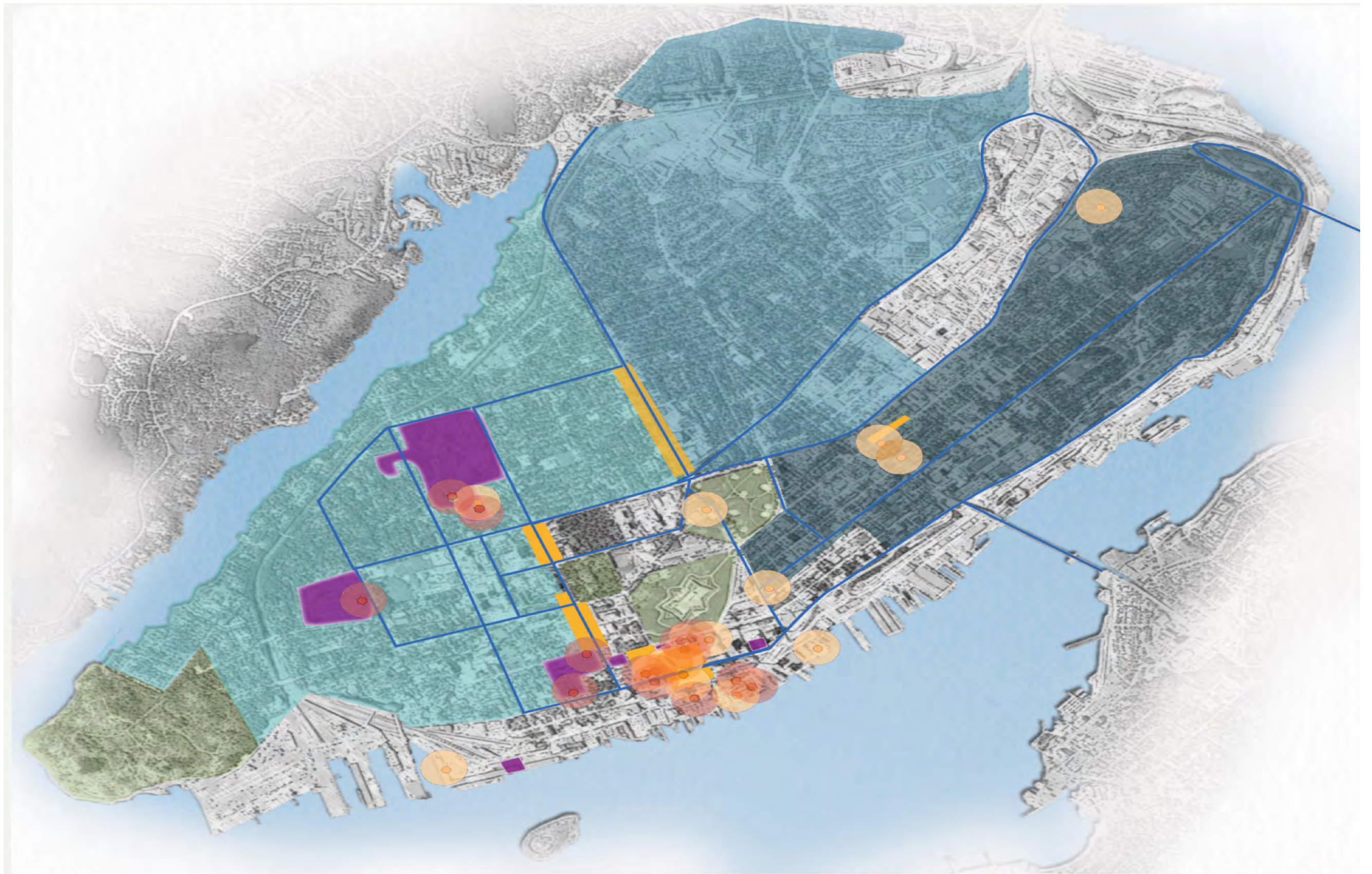


## Proximity of Popular Music Venues to Uses on the Halifax Peninsula

This second map is an inventory of key popular music venues recognized by the 19 ISRN respondents and additional performance venues located on the peninsula of Halifax. Other nighttime uses (such as bars and restaurants) are overlaid with, transportation connections, residential areas and university locations. I also charted and looked for any existing entertainment clusters.

A possible north end cluster is reflected in the feedback from over 50 ISRN interviews given by a variety of creative workers. The vast majority of these individuals perceived the north end as the up and coming creative community. Using Elizabeth Currid's findings on artistic clusters and networks as expressed in her book, *The Warhol Economy*, data suggests that the central area surrounding Barrington Street supports an established entertainment cluster. The mapping also shows that the interviewee's perceptions are accurate. Along Agricola and Gottingen new retail businesses and eating establishments are settling near Gus' Pub and the North Street Church. It is possible lower real estate costs and a larger density of flexible adaptable spaces, which are available more in the Gottingen area than anywhere else on the Halifax peninsula, are encouraging this development.





- |           |                             |                   |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| North End | Park                        | Other Music Venue |
| West End  | Bus Line                    | Key Music Venue   |
| South End | Restaurants + Entertainment | University        |

**Proximity of Popular Music Venues to Uses on the Halifax Peninsula**

0.5 1.0 km

Based on *Windows Live Maps* | images captured on March 4, 2009  
Jeffrey Haggett



## **Popular Music Performance Venues** | To define the role of performance venues

The following graphic compares key venues. The graphic illustrates performance venue characteristics, showing how the venue looks on the street, location, allowable occupancy, pictures of exteriors, hours of operation, total number of performances over three months and distinguishes between private or public operation.

I calculated the number of performances occurring at each key venue and expressed it as a percentage for all venues. Each act was characterized as a coming from the HRM, the Atlantic region or from outside the Atlantic region (national and international). I used the Coast Magazine listings and band websites to calculate the data. The chart is organized showing venues with the highest number of acts (Gus') to the least (Cunard Centre).

# Music Performance Venues

VENUE

LOCATION

## Gus' Pub



2605 Agricola Street  
Hours: 11am - 2am  
Ownership: Private



## Seahorse



1665 Argyle Street  
Hours: 9pm - 3am  
Ownership: Private



## Marquee Club



2037 Gottingen Street  
Hours: Closed  
Ownership: Private



SHOWS | ACTS  
[% of shows for all venues]

| Shows                  | Acts             | Shows           | Acts                   | Shows          | Acts           |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>26%</b> [57]        | <b>38%</b> [145] | <b>17%</b> [37] | <b>16%</b> [60]        | <b>7%</b> [16] | <b>6%</b> [44] |
| Origin                 | %                | Actual          | Origin                 | %              | Actual         |
| HRM                    | 92               | 120             | HRM                    | 58             | 28             |
| Atlantic Canada        | 4                | 5               | Atlantic Canada        | 23             | 11             |
| Canada + International | 5                | 6               | Canada + International | 19             | 9              |
|                        |                  |                 |                        |                |                |
|                        |                  |                 |                        |                |                |
|                        |                  |                 |                        |                |                |
|                        |                  |                 |                        |                |                |

Jan[Feb] March 09

CAPACITY



225



360



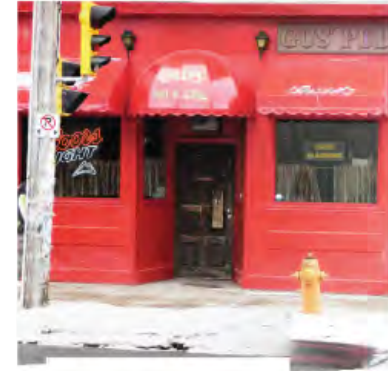
650



# Popular Music Performance Venues

LOCATION VENUE

## Gus' Pub



2605 Agricola Street  
Hours: 11am - 2am  
Ownership: Private



## Seahorse



1665 Argyle Street  
Hours: 9pm - 3am  
Ownership: Private



## Marquee Club



2037 Gottingen Street  
Hours: Closed  
Ownership: Private



## Stayners Wharf



5075 George Street  
Hours: 11 am - Midnight  
Ownership: Private



## Music Room



6181 Lady Hammond Road  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership: Public (Not for Profit)



## Carleton



1685 Argyle Street  
Hours: 11:30am - 2am  
Ownership: Private



## Rebecca Cohn



6101 University Avenue  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership | Public



## Casino Nova Scotia



1983 Upper Water Street  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership | Private



## Pavillion



Central Common, 5816 Cogswell Street  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership: Public



## North St. Church



5657 North Street  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership: Public



## Tribeca



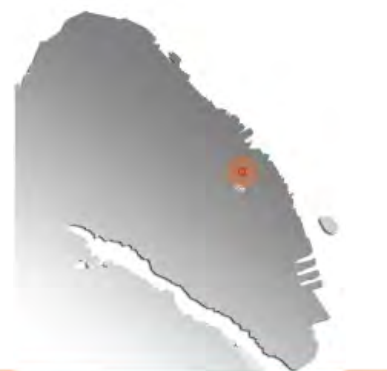
1588 Granville Street  
Hours: M-F 11:30 AM to 2:00 AM  
Weekends 5:30 PM - 2:00 AM  
Ownership: Private



## Metro Centre



5284 Duke Street  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership | Public



## Cunard Centre



Pier 23, 961 Marginal Road  
Hours: Varies with booking  
Ownership | Public



SHOWS | ACTS

| Origin                 | Shows |        | Acts |        | Origin                 | Shows |        | Acts |        | Origin                 | Shows |        | Acts                   |        | Origin          | Shows                  |        | Acts |                        | Origin          | Shows |                        | Acts            |        | Origin                 | Shows           |        | Acts                   |                 | Origin | Shows                  |                 | Acts |                        | Origin          | Shows |                        | Acts            |        |                        |                 |     |                        |                 |     |                        |                 |    |                        |                 |    |                        |                 |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |     |    |     |
|------------------------|-------|--------|------|--------|------------------------|-------|--------|------|--------|------------------------|-------|--------|------------------------|--------|-----------------|------------------------|--------|------|------------------------|-----------------|-------|------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|------|------------------------|-----------------|-------|------------------------|-----------------|--------|------------------------|-----------------|-----|------------------------|-----------------|-----|------------------------|-----------------|----|------------------------|-----------------|----|------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
|                        | %     | Actual | %    | Actual |                        | %     | Actual | %    | Actual |                        | %     | Actual | %                      | Actual |                 | %                      | Actual | %    | Actual                 |                 | %     | Actual                 | %               | Actual |                        | %               | Actual | %                      | Actual          |        | %                      | Actual          | %    | Actual                 |                 | %     | Actual                 | %               | Actual |                        |                 |     |                        |                 |     |                        |                 |    |                        |                 |    |                        |                 |     |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |     |    |     |
| HRM                    | 26%   | [57]   | 38%  | [145]  | HRM                    | 17%   | [37]   | 16%  | [60]   | HRM                    | 7%    | [16]   | 6%                     | [44]   | HRM             | 26%                    | [57]   | 17%  | [66]                   | HRM             | 6%    | [14]                   | 4%              | [16]   | HRM                    | 5%              | [10]   | 3%                     | [12]            | HRM    | 3%                     | [6]             | 2%   | [7]                    | HRM             | 3%    | [7]                    | 2%              | [7]    | HRM                    | 2%              | [4] | 4%                     | [16]            | HRM | 2%                     | [4]             | 1% | [4]                    | HRM             | 1% | [3]                    | 2%              | [6] | HRM | 1% | [2] | 1% | [2] | HRM | 0% | [0] | 0% | [0] |
| Atlantic Canada        | 4     | 5      | 23   | 11     | Atlantic Canada        | 14    | 6      | 6    | 4      | Atlantic Canada        | 17    | 1      | 17                     | 2      | Atlantic Canada | 14                     | 1      | 25   | 1                      | Atlantic Canada | 6     | 1                      | Atlantic Canada | -      | -                      | Atlantic Canada | 17     | 1                      | Atlantic Canada | -      | -                      | Atlantic Canada | 100  | 2                      | Atlantic Canada | -     | -                      | Atlantic Canada | 100    | 2                      | Atlantic Canada | -   | -                      | Atlantic Canada | -   | -                      | Atlantic Canada | -  | -                      | Atlantic Canada | -  | -                      | Atlantic Canada | -   | -   |    |     |    |     |     |    |     |    |     |
| Canada + International | 5     | 6      | 19   | 9      | Canada + International | 23    | 10     | 2    | 1      | Canada + International | 33    | 2      | Canada + International | 42     | 5               | Canada + International | 14     | 1    | Canada + International | 50              | 5     | Canada + International | 13              | 2      | Canada + International | -               | -      | Canada + International | -               | -      | Canada + International | -               | -    | Canada + International | -               | -     | Canada + International | -               | -      | Canada + International | -               | -   | Canada + International | -               | -   | Canada + International | -               | -  | Canada + International | -               | -  | Canada + International | -               | -   |     |    |     |    |     |     |    |     |    |     |

CAPACITY



225



360



650



125



110



100



1035



500



200



240



250



10 000



4000



## 6.0 Performance venues | Discussion



Monotonix on Agricola Street Photo | Chris Smith, funkfactor.com

### Independent Music in Halifax

For five days in October a popular music festival, Halifax Pop Explosion, brings 125 bands into Halifax playing at 15 different venues. Most of the establishments examined in this study are involved in this annual celebration of local, national and international independent music.

On the second day of the 2008 Pop Explosion I went to see Monotonix, a band from Israel. The bar was full to capacity and as I looked around I saw many of the people I had interviewed for this study. I met some students from Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and noticed the crowd was full of university students. The band didn't start setting up till 12:30 am. They set-up their own equipment and interacted with the audience as they did so. They took longer than normal which

helped build the energy in the room and helped sell more beer. Just after 1:00 a.m., they started to play.

They broke with the convention of having the band play on the stage. Instead, one member was up on the podium and the others were down on the floor among the crowd, including the drummer. The audience was looking at one another in anticipation. It felt like we were all going to witness a great show; you could just feel it.

As they began, the amplification was up on full volume, the pronounced beats had everyone moving. The band began throwing water on themselves and into the audience. Soon the water was replaced with a drum kit. Yes, they were throwing sections of the drum out over the crowd. If you weren't on full alert, you'd get hit on the head. This random throwing had my adrenaline pumping and it appeared everybody was into it. This back and forth went on for most of their performance. During the final song they took it to another level.

As the final song began the drummer picked up his kit and started to move through the crowd. Instead of throwing it, he moved right to the front entrance. The audience began to look at each other. He didn't come back in. I guess we were supposed to follow him and that is what we did. Soon the capacity crowd of over 200 people was dancing on Agricola Street to the music, having a great time and announcing to the city a great party was going on.

This musical event at Gus' Pub was more than entertainment. It shows the energy of Halifax's music scene, but also reflects the various aspects of a venue in the city. Firstly, they access an audience for performers at various stages of development. Secondly, a venue does not exist in a

vacuum. A venue benefits from being located in proximity to other venues, universities and other nighttime activities, such as restaurants. Thirdly, a venue is a hub for social networks that assist in a musician's access to others involved in the scene. The "bumping into each other" is vital to the incubation of talent that Halifax is noted for. Fourthly, venues encourage various economic contributions to the city. It also points to the question of how municipal and provincial policy may or may not support venues like Gus' or the Halifax Pop Explosion to be viable.

## **The Role of Venues**

It is not that hard to imagine that every night somewhere in Halifax, a gathering of friends is making music. But the independent music scene is not as random as a kitchen party. Its organization is the result of participants working at managing staged events. Music does not start as a commodity like a score, or as being recorded and packaged in various marketing streams (Finnegan, 143). These commercial aspects are sometimes the outcome, but the playing and showcasing of music in a venue is where music begins.

As a planner, the interest is in understanding the cultural expression that a stage affords a community. A venue is a unique place that enables creative development in many forms. Understanding this role is necessary to determine what policy a municipality can consider to protect and encourage venues and their benefits.



## **Configuration of Venues**

The identified key venues studied in the Halifax peninsula region help support a strong popular music scene that allows the incubation of talent. Sloan, Matt Mays, Jill Barber, Buck 65, Skratch Bastid, Joel Plaskett and many others have performed in the city's various venues. Their incubation was cultivated by having a range of venues to allow experimentation and easy access to a stage, while maintaining events that are held for those with a more developed sound. The configuration of venues encourages musicians serious about developing their craft. The observations of the ISRN respondents -- the physical characteristics of clubs and their use, indicate a progression and the particular roles that venues play in a musician's development.

Halifax's popular music venues contribute to the nighttime activity and culture of the city. This is important because of how these are supported and how they support other evening activities. Findings indicate that there are emerging entertainment clusters along Argyle, Barrington and Brunswick Street. Many of the venues highlighted by respondents as key to the local popular music scene are in proximity to other clubs as well as eating establishments and cultural institutions. Within a five minute walk of the Seahorse are 20 clubs, 52 restaurants, Halifax's main transit thoroughfares, the Sexton Campus of Dalhousie University, the central shopping district of Spring Garden Road, and evening oriented cultural institutions, including the Neptune Theatre. The interaction of all these activities supports a venue like the Seahorse.

Venues are presently clustered along the area of Argyle, Barrington and Brunswick in the downtown core. This area is surrounded by residential areas, and complimentary entertainment options which Currid argues further supports local venues.

Many respondents in the ISRN interviews highlighted the residential and commercial development along Gottingen and Agricola Streets. It was almost unanimous that this is the “up and coming” creative district in Halifax. In the last three years many trendy boutiques and stores have opened on the blocks adjacent to Gus’ Pub. Future development projects also indicate that this is an emerging new entertainment and creative cluster.

*“North End is happening, like Gottingen and Agricola now, is where a lot of people are,... seems to be kind of the hot, like a real hotbed. There’s always been stuff happening downtown, but the actual kind of like, the practice spaces were on Gottingen Street.”*

*Musician, Booking Agent (ISRN 1m)*

### **Three types of Venues**

The success of local bands is not an arbitrary process. As mentioned, there are both organized and casual structures in place to encourage the process. Academic writings, mapping of the area and the respondents’ comments indicate that Halifax’s music scene requires three principal types of venues to maximize development of the artist’s creativity and skills. Basic categorization would be an “enter the scene” venue, an “intermediate” venue, and a “graduate” venue.

Gus’ Pub would best represent the “enter the scene” type. This venue has a capacity of 225 people and allows easy access to their stage. Playing here allows for the possibility of entering the

social network of the larger music scene. Bands with little experience can get a gig here and begin to gain experience in front of an audience. It is not unusual for Gus' to have four bands playing each night. Most of the bands that play here are from Halifax. Entrance is also easy for an audience member with either none, or very low door covers. The space is not really well outfitted and the sound system is considered compromised. Still, this is a well-regarded place to get a start.

A good example of an “intermediate” venue would be the Seahorse. Unlike the “enter the scene” venue, the Seahorse has a manager who curates the bands that get to perform. The quality of venue is well regarded and the sound system was recently updated. Bands are still mainly from Halifax, but there is more Atlantic and national representation. Playing a gig here means that the featured band has some skill and can put on a good show. Generally the door cover charges are higher than at a place like Gus'. It is not unusual for there to be only two bands playing, an opening act and a headliner. This structure promotes another level of status among the music scene's social network and can encourage further development of a musician or band's skill.

The “graduate” venue is larger with a capacity of 650-800. A place like the recently closed Marquee Club best represents this type of venue. Getting to play here takes effort. The cost of opening the doors means your band needs to draw a crowd willing to buy a ticket at \$20 or more. The venue's capacity and reputation helps emerging and established national acts to tour to Halifax. This type of venue is the only space where all the various social networks involved in the music industry will consistently gather. This creates the opportunity for local musicians to meet agents, producers and national contacts.

## The Social Life of Venues

A prominent Halifax jazz artist told a story during the ISRN interviews describing how willing he and others are to work together regardless of musical genres.

*“I really feel that I am moving in this grey area between more fine art related projects and things that are clearly musical. Within music I am constantly moving between classical, jazz, pop, folk and electro-acoustic” (ISRN 19m)*

Numerous respondents told similar stories regarding collaboration. This indicates that when a musician is starting out and shows some talent, someone is there to assist in their development. Additionally as the musician develops, the various cultural communities share connections and skills. This brings together diverse interests, which helps a musician experiment and excel.

Each venue must be seen in its context and the social interactions it sustains (Finnegan, 143). The informal social meetings and connections like hanging out at the same clubs, eating establishments and neighbourhoods all contribute to making a vibrant scene. As Currid explains, “The social is not the by-product – it is the decisive mechanism by which cultural products and cultural producers are generated, evaluated and sent to market” (Currid 4). Respondents also noted that in Halifax there is crossover and fluidity between the various cultural sectors.

The number of venues in Halifax should not be considered arbitrary. Each scene, cultural or economic, requires a critical mass to be created and to be maintained. This results in the support

group being large enough to allow for “bumping into each other” and having different experiences to pass to and influence one another. In Halifax, the size of other cultural sectors (film, traditional music, jazz, visual arts, dance) means that the critical mass supports increased cross community interactions. Loss of venues within the music scene may threaten this delicate ecology.

### **The Economics of Venues**

Venues allow nighttime activity and entertainment options for the whole community of Halifax. This would include the local university student population, and urban dwellers (Brabazon, 211). A strong music industry helps create employment opportunities in music journalism, promotion, management, recording and policy development. The new music education program now being offered at the Nova Scotia Community College is supporting the music scene.

Halifax has built a reputation as a great music city. A music producer explains, “You talk to musicians from all over the world, everyone’s heard of Halifax. Everyone knows of its existence – if you talk to most of them, they have always wanted to come here or play here.” This reputation has value when considering the “big money” in the music industry is no longer in the CD or the selling of the music, internet downloading has redistributed revenue streams. Record companies and concert promoters now engage in what they call the 360 degree model – earning revenue from every aspect of a musician’s activities: music sales, concert tickets, publishing and merchandise (ISRN 7m). The largest revenues are now found in touring.

To take advantage of this transformation requires a trustworthy network of venues that artists can book in Halifax. As this development in touring continues and if Halifax venue infrastructure

can be sustained, then the city will realize an economic benefit. There will also be further networking between local musicians, producers and agents with bands touring here. The Metrocentre already fulfills this role for mainstream musicians that can sell thousands of tickets, but there is a need for a reliable venue with a capacity of approximately 800 people. An interview with a booking agent explained that there is a strong interest in bands coming to Halifax looking for a venue of this size, it offers emerging talent from other cities the opportunity to play Halifax.

Active, successful venues help support the attraction of both university students and business people who enjoy being aligned with a distinctive community. Artists provide an atmosphere that others want to be close to or visit so the music sector in Halifax has an important economic spin-off in attracting students and tourists.

## **Policy**

In the summer of 2008 I attended a meeting with a friend involved with municipal policy development. We were discussing an urban design project that Halifax was trying to complete. Towards the end of our meeting I thought of my music research and asked her, “What do you think would be one of the five things that somebody in Calgary would immediately think of when considering Halifax?” She paused and then said “Banking.” Her answer reflects one of the barriers that prevent further development of many aspects of our economy, including the music industry. In our popular music scene, Halifax has something to brag about, celebrate and take pride in at a national and international level. I believe that the average young Calgarian is more likely to mention

music in their consideration of Halifax than banking: young Canadians looking for places to attend university have heard about the great music scene in Halifax and factor it into their decisions about where to go.

At the provincial level the cultural guideline expressed in the Nova Scotia Culture Sector Policy, *Culture in the New Millennium; Planning Our Future* does not mention music once. The recently adopted municipal cultural plan mentions music only once under Policy 4.10.

*“HRM will work with Cultural industries to build its reputation as a place of business for the creative sector. Actions:, develop a support program for other cultural industry partners including the music sector.” (HRM, pg 53)*

This new city plan is more encouraging of what is described as traditional cultural forms, such as dance and theatre. The dominant attitude seems to consider popular music as a business rather than culture. This is a risky perspective to hold when this sector is one of the city’s attractors for new talented workers.

Policy currently ignores both the music scene and the venues where musical performance occur. The music scene in Halifax needs supportive policies to assist the support of both the physical clusters and the creative social networks venues encourage. It is important that policy makers and governments begin to recognize the role the local music scene plays in Halifax. It helps attracts workers and students from other regions in Canada who value a vibrant creative culture.

Venues are where all varieties of players involved in the local music industry are brought together. These venues are where the creative and cultural expression is offered to the broader community. If the state of venues is weakened, this could threaten the state of Halifax's music scene. Halifax is currently compiling a report regarding cultural infrastructure. What is concerning is the municipality does not seem to recognize the key venues for popular music as vitally important cultural infrastructure in the region.

Venues are mainly private entertainment properties under municipal jurisdiction. At the same time, however, the municipal government can act to enhance their viability. My research suggests several possible policy directions including:

- recognizing the Argyle Street Area as an entertainment cluster.
- looking at land use bylaws in both the existing Argyle cluster and the emerging Gottingen/Agricola cluster and consider encouraging entertainment uses gather within the cluster.
- reinvesting in the Khyber Club to allow a new “enter the scene” venue located in the Argyle cluster.
- working with the province to support a possible large multi-function venue located at either entertainment cluster.
- exploring transit policy to encourage later bus availability near recognized entertainment clusters and consider increased taxi service, to get people to and from peninsular evening activities



- reconsidering the present municipal strategy regarding the promotion of “aging rockers” events on the Halifax Commons to the promotion of homegrown music -- award winning musicians bringing regional and national focus to the city’s authenticity and creative energy.
- featuring the city’s music sector more prominently in municipal publicity and economic development activities.

## Keeping it here

In Halifax, we regularly discuss what we need to do to create a better city. It is not often that we stop and recognize what we have achieved. One of the remarkable and distinctive accomplishments Halifax can claim is the emergence of a successful independent music scene. Many of the people involved are recognized throughout the world.

Florida suggests that a music scene can be seen as a microcosm of the economic health of a city.



Cover of *Down at the Khyber*

[http://dawn.cbcr3.com/nmc/6/6194/Images/JoelPlaskett\\_DownattheKhyber.jpg](http://dawn.cbcr3.com/nmc/6/6194/Images/JoelPlaskett_DownattheKhyber.jpg)

If we accept this tenet, then Halifax is healthy but at risk from its laissez-faire attitude in regards to many of its cultural and creative sectors.

Many talented musicians leave Halifax because they need to find more business support and additional opportunities to perform. One of the inspirations for the local music community

is Joel Plaskett who is a national success and has bucked this trend by staying in the HRM.

Plaskett often reflects the Halifax experience in his lyrics. This expression and his creativity resonate for many Haligonians. One of his albums, *Down at the Khyber*, is even named after the venue where he honed his song writing skills (Plaskett). Plaskett's rise started with the band Thrush Hermit playing the small clubs of Halifax. As he gained a following he began playing the larger venues which put him in contact with the producers who eventually helped him record and break nationally. During the last week of March, 2009, Joel Plasketts released his critically praised album, *Three*. It launched at number seven on the national music charts, just below U2 and Nickelback (Nielson Soundscan).

We need to understand the factors that help artists like Plaskett come to, and stay in, Halifax. If we do not maintain a critical mass of venues and musicians using them we will risk losing: the incubation potential for artists like him. We are also at risk of losing the cultural expression musicians offer, an attraction factor for creative workers to locate in Halifax, and a symbol of a dynamic creative city that fosters international success.

## **7.0 APPENDIX**

### **ISRN Interviews**

**Schedule of Questions ISRN Interviewees involved in cultural industries were asked**

**Photo Collages of the principal venues studied**

## ISRN Interviews

In conjunction with the ISRN, Creative Cities Research, 14 interviews with members of Halifax's music and cultural industries were completed. Five additional interviews focused on Halifax's independent music scene were completed by Jesse Morton and me. With assistance from Dr. Jill Grant of Dalhousie University's School of Planning, we adapted a schedule that was focused on the popular musicians and people who work directly with them.

As part of my agreement with the ISRN, I am required to complete this project within their guidelines, ensuring that all ethical considerations and budgetary concerns are covered by the ISRN.

List of the nineteen musician and cultural interviews completed during the summers of 2007 & 2008.

### 2008 Theme 1

| Reference | Position/Role         | ISRN Cross Reference |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1m        | Booking Agent         | 26m.K3               |
| 2m        | Radio Producer        | 27m.K3               |
| 3m        | Music Critic          | 28m.K3               |
| 4m        | Musician / Performer  | 29m.K3               |
| 5m        | Musician / Performer  | 30m.K3               |
| 6m        | Music Producer        | 11m.K2               |
| 7m        | Music Producer        | 15m.K2               |
| 8m        | Arts Festival Manager | 18m.K2               |
| 9m        | Arts Manager          | 19m.K2               |
| 10m       | Arts Manager          | 20m.K2               |
| 11m       | Arts Festival Manager | 23m.K2               |
| 12m       | Music Producer        | 24m.K2               |

### 2007 Theme 2

|     |                       |          |
|-----|-----------------------|----------|
| 13m | Musician / Performer  | 01m.2W1  |
| 14m | Musician / Performer  | 04m.2W3  |
| 15m | Musician / Performer  | 07m.2W5  |
| 16m | Arts Festival Manager | 15m.2T4  |
| 17m | Musician / Performer  | 18m.2W7  |
| 18m | Music Producer        | 20m.2W9  |
| 19m | Musician / Performer  | 25m.2W13 |

## Schedule of Questions ISRN Interviewees involved in cultural industries were asked

### Theme 1 Schedule 3 Questions

**Musician/Performer** Third version August 15, 2008

Developed by Jesse Morton and Jeffry Haggett, assisted by Dr. Jill Grant

### Background

4. Are you from Halifax, if not where are you from?
  - a. When did you relocate to Halifax
5. Can you describe your educational background?
  - a. What kind of musical training do you have?
6. What neighbourhood do you currently live in?
  - a. How does this neighbourhood affect your work as a musician?

### Halifax + Innovation

7. What are the financial challenges and advantages for musicians in Halifax? (*eg, making a living, cost of studios, job market, ...etc.*)
8. How many times a year do you perform in front of a live audience in Halifax? What are the key venues for you?

9. In what ways does the local music industry contribute to the culture and social vitality of the Halifax region?
10. To what extent do you find the people of Halifax tolerant and open to innovation and experimentation in music?

### **Attraction + Retention**

11. What is Halifax's relationship to the larger national music scene in Canada?
12. Which Canadian city has the best music scene and why?
  - a. Would you consider relocating to this city because of its music scene?
13. Is Halifax's existing music population (people involved in the music industry) decreasing, stable or increasing?
14. What physical aspects and amenities make Halifax an attractive place to live and be a musician?
15. What features of Halifax undermine its attractiveness for those working in the music industry?

### **Venues + Policy**

16. What are the best spaces in Halifax to perform in?
17. What improvements to the performance spaces would benefit people in the Halifax music industry?

18. In what ways do Halifax musicians connect to other Canadian music scenes and markets?

19. How are the provincial and municipal governments supporting the local music industry?

- a. What could the provincial and municipal governments do to (further) support the local music industry?

### **Knowledge Sharing**

20. Who do you collaborate with? (*music, art, culture..etc,*)

21. How does collaboration help you as a musician?

22. What are the positive/negative aspects of living in a city the size of Halifax?

### **Future Directions and Conclusion**

23. In general is Halifax a good place to be a musician?

24. What do you see as the future of the Halifax music scene?

**Photo Collages of the principal venues studied**



**Alehouse**



**Casino Showroom**





### **Dalhousie Arts Centre**

Rebecca Cohn has great acoustics and is one of Halifax’s nicest venues but is said to be too expensive to use. This venue is for rental only, and has few free dates for booking due to the Symphony and University commitments. This leaves some ISRN interviews frustrated that such a good venue is underutilized.



**Gus' Pub** | Described by one interviewee as a “drunken good time,” it is a popular neighbourhood venue with a poor sound system. The bar will host any musician; usually, it’s someone from the “indie scene”. Artists are paid the door fee. Described as a “boutique venue” where bands range from really terrible to really good.



**Marquee** (now closed) | This club is the most referenced venue in all the interviews. Credited with good shows and bringing in a variety of decent talent from across the country it is described as the best rock venue in Halifax. It has one of the best sound systems and is the only large performance space dedicated to popular music.



## Metro Centre

This is Halifax's largest venue seating 10,000. Some ISRN interviewees described it as undesirable and having an expensive box office delivery system. On the positive side, one interviewee said he saw a show seating 3200 people and it sounded great. Unlike the Rebecca Cohn, the Metro Centre actively seeks and books shows and is available for rent.



## Tribeca





**Music Room** | This new award winning venue is located on Lady Hammond Road (approx. 15 minutes from downtown). It is becoming more popular, seats 110 people, is considered an intimate crowd and demands audience attention. This is a place where you listen to music.



**North Street Church** | This is an unconventional, neighbourhood venue surround by residential buildings. The venue can be rented, offers decent acoustics and a raised stage. Popular for CD release parties but hosts a variety of events. Other churches that serve as venues are St. Matthews Church and St. George's Church. All are recognized as having an audience whose attention is not divided between the performer and beer: a rare environment in Halifax.



**Seahorse** is routinely referenced as a quality venue in Halifax with a decent sound system



**The Carlton** has a lineup of people who would love to play there. It is small and can only sell ninety tickets.



Neptune Theatre is really nice, but they've priced themselves out of the market. It has 186 seats. Bands can't book it half the time due to commitments for the resident theatre company.



The **Studio Theatre** is a smaller experimental theatrical space located in the Neptune complex





**The Pavilion** | Halifax's only official all-ages venue



**The Palace Nightclub**

Photographs | Jeffrey Haggett

## 8.0 References

- Aikens, Matthieu. *Stage Shortage*. Coast Magazine, pg 28. March 20, 2008
- Barrieau, N., Savoie, D. J., (2006) *Creative Class and Economic Development: The Case of Atlantic Canada's Urban Centres*. Canadian Institute Research on Regional Development, Université De Moncton
- Barrieau, Nicole. *The Culture Sector in Atlantic Canada: Its Economic Impact and the Export Potential*. Canadian Institute Research on Regional Development, Université De Moncton, 2004
- Brabazon, Tara. (2005) Endings: Not London Anymore. In Tara Brabazin (Eds.), *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and Its Popular Music* (pp.209-14). Crawley, University of Western Australia Press.
- CBC Online | cbc.ca. *Halifax's Marquee Club Set To Close*.  
<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/music/story/2008/11/19/marquee-club.html>Last accessed | January 8, 2009
- Currid, Elizabeth. *The Warhol Economy: how fashion, art and music drive New York City*. Princeton University Press 2007
- Currid, Elizabeth. *The Economics of a Good Party*  
Journal of Economics and Finance, Volume 31, Number 3, Fall 2007
- Durand, Michel, G., *Profile of Culture Activities in Nova Scotia: Culture Counts -- Counting Culture*.  
Culture Statistics Program, December 2003
- Finnegan, Ruth. *The Hidden Musicians, Music Making in an English Town*.  
Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 1989
- Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Basic Books, 2002
- Florida, R Jackson, S. *Sonic City: The Evolving Economic Geography of the Music Industry*.  
Martin Prosperity Institute. 2008



- Halifax Regional Municipality. *Cultural Plan Discussion Paper*. June 2005  
[http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/cac/documents/Introduction\\_.pdf](http://www.halifax.ca/boardscom/cac/documents/Introduction_.pdf)  
last accessed January 8, 2009
- Hindley, Debbie. (2005) Selling a Music Landscape. In Tara Brabazin (Eds.), *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and Its Popular Music* (pp.29-42). Crawley, University of Western Australia Press.
- How Arts and Culture Can Help Build a Better Nova Scotia* Government Publication  
Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council, October 2006
- HRM Cultural Plan. Final Approved Version Revised March 21, 2006
- ISRN Innovative Systems Research Network, Interviews 1 – 19m conducted for the *The Social Dynamics of Economic Performance: Theme 1 & 2*, (name withheld due to ethic guidelines). Conducted 2007 & 2008
- Jedwab, Jack. (2004). *Creative classification or creative class? -- The Challenges of Applying Richard Florida's Formula to Canada's Cities*. In *Our Diverse Cities* (pages 34-40).University of Ottawa Press.
- Locke, Kathryn. (2005) After Dark: Perth's Night-time Economy. In Tara Brabazin (Eds.), *Liverpool of the South Seas: Perth and its popular Music* (pp.63-70). Crawley, University of Western Australia Press
- Markusen, Ann. Urban Development and the Politics of the Creative Class: Evidence from a study of Artists.  
*Environment and Planning*, volume 38 (pages 1921 – 1940). 2006
- Morton, Jesse. *'There Is A Reason Why I Love This Town', Examining Halifax's Music Industry*  
Dalhousie University, Independent Masters Study. 2008
- Nielson Soundscan, Alternative Chart.. March 29, 2009 For the week ending April 2, 2009  
<http://jam.canoe.ca/Music/Charts/ALTERNATIVE.html>  
last accessed April 6, 2009

Nova Scotia Culture Sector Strategy. *Culture in the New Millennium: Planning Our Future*.  
Government Publication. 1999

Plaskett, Joel. *Down at the Kyhber*. Brobdingnagian. 2001

Pratt, Andy C.. Mapping the Cultural Industries Regionalization; the example of South East England. In Power,  
Dominique., Scott, Allen G. (Eds.). *Cultural Industries and the Production of Culture* (pages 20-35). Routledge  
Taylor and Francis Group. New York, 2004