

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions: What Do You Believe In?

It's not taken as seriously as other industries in many, many ways. It's like we're left to fend for ourselves, you know... The creatives are so vulnerable because it's such a passion... It's not protected. Being paid isn't the same as being protected.

—Songwriter, F, Reggae/Soul, London [9]

6.1 Discipline and Dreaming

The questions that gave rise to our research and many of the ideas in this book really began back before the start of the new millennium. By 1999 – just as Prince had initiated – the party, if not the world, was going to have to end. For many of the inhabitants in the music industries there was a tangible sense of foreboding, yet for others there was a growing excitement and much talk of revolution. Just as some had predicted, within a few short years recorded music was freed from the limitations of physical production and distribution, and joined the rush to fill the black hole of the internet. The digital gold rush was in full swing, the cowboys were armed and coming to town, and the property police everywhere were caught unprepared. As with any gold rush the prospectors needed provisions, food, water, clothing, and of course entertainment, and so they tried to attract women and other traders to provide for their needs. Women at first seemed reluctant to join, ill-equipped in the ways of these new technologies, just as with the frontier wars of old men. Many music makers had high hopes for this new world. But then the price of music started to plummet as music of every kind escaped into the atmosphere.

For the music makers a new war was on in cyberspace with echoes of the old radio wars; a fight to carve out and create new borders and new regulations.

How to cite this book chapter:

Gross, S. A. and Musgrave, G. 2020. *Can Music Make You Sick? Measuring the Price of Musical Ambition*. Pp. 115–141. London: University of Westminster Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16997/book43.f>. License: CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0

That fight is still very much alive, but it is still possible to observe clear power lines as the infrastructures of musical pathways remain and regain some of their lost territories. The digitalisation of the musical object has had profound consequences, both good and bad, that are felt and experienced unequally. For those of us working in the professional field of music production and in education with students aspiring to be professional musicians, the implications of these changes are particularly acute. We had begun to notice what we felt to be rising incidences of mental health problems both amongst our colleagues in the music industries and our students, and wondered what role our relationship to music might be playing in this (Gross and Musgrave, 2016, 2017).

The two research questions which drove our study were:

1. How widespread are mental health conditions (focusing on anxiety and depression specifically) amongst music workers?
2. How do musicians feel about the work they do and the impact it has on their emotional wellbeing?

Our findings concerning the relationship between the working conditions of musicians and their mental health are, broadly, threefold, each rooted in the foregrounding of the economic value of music viewed as a potential career by creative entrepreneurs.

Firstly, financial precarity, with all of the anxiety this lack of stability creates, contributes towards an existential crisis amongst musicians who are often unable to meaningfully define the work they do either to themselves or to others. They struggle to appreciate what success means to them, and in this anxiety-producing environment of oversupply and abundance struggled to envisage any kind of stable future they might rely on. We call this: ‘The Status of Work’.

Secondly, musicians seek validation for their highly personalised and embodied output online within a hyper-competitive and hyper-mediated feedback economy which leaves them susceptible to feelings of emotional vulnerability and depression when they compare their achievements to those of their peers. Within this environment, the music industries themselves produce mythologies of their own that emphasise meritocracy, luck and unpredictability rather than identifying the clear patterns of network power and privilege that characterise the global infrastructures of the music and media industries. In this context, these often reluctant entrepreneurial musical subjects internalise failures and thus struggle to make sense of how ideas of agency, control and validation play out in their creative lives. This produces the pathological scenario whereby their new status as apparently empowered and in control collides with the apparent irrationality of their industry experience. We call this: ‘The Status of Value’.

Thirdly, musical workers find their work interferes with all their social relationships. The reduction of music to its economic value impacts all social

relations with a reductionism that serves to amplify existing inequalities. The intersection of financial precarity, entrepreneurial individualism and the struggle to define working boundaries alongside the ‘one big hit’ logic leads to musicians struggling to know when to stop working, trapping them in a reflexive loop of production and debt that affects all social relations and impacts their sense of self in ways that they describe as distressing. The blurring of boundaries that accompanies the privatisation of all social aspects of their lives, where it becomes difficult to differentiate colleagues and friends as the dynamics of competition invades and distorts their relationships, leads to situations where abuse becomes more difficult, it would seem, to acknowledge, let alone name. Musicians’ tension around trust and competition impacts their ability to enjoy friends and co-worker’s success, amplifying feelings of insecurity and destabilising the ‘normal’ expectations of enjoyment and comfort that they felt they ought to have in friendships (although equally, they also spoke of their enjoyment of playing together with other musicians and how that brought them deep sense of fulfilment and pleasure). Gender issues in the music space seem particularly stressful for women as they reported experiencing inequality of access, treatment and sexual abuse. We call this: ‘The Status of Relationships’. If we are to consider musical workers as a model for the gig economy of the future (Noone, 2017), we have to consider this in light of the transformation of digital capitalism. That there could be a further sustainable increase in the numbers of creative, knowledge workers engaged in meaningful work is evidently questionable.

It is crucial to emphasise that this process is complex, politically and socially instituted, and riddled with contradictions and tensions. The three statuses we have outlined are not mutually exclusive; they intersect, overlap and collide in messy ways. The picture our research paints is perhaps, for some, a controversial one. As we pointed out at the beginning of the book, the idea that something which we all acknowledge can be, and is, so socially, spiritually, personally and economically important and fulfilling might ultimately come to harm those who create it is uncomfortable to admit. It is even more uncomfortable to admit for an industry so driven and propelled by a sense of positivity and faith. The musical subject is a specific, self-identifying, reflective being who may deliberately ignore or reject rationality in favour of something more exciting, more imaginative, more ‘out there’: a process which they must commit to if they are to discover their true selves. This reflective process, this consciousness, may have multiple triggers and variants and does not need, within this logic, to make intellectual sense; musicians need to *feel* right, to make music, to be heard. They say they need to be instinctive, and they need to be believed. Believing becomes part of the central exercise, the nexus from which hard work, luck and networks can benefit but without which you are nothing.

The myth-making mechanism of the music industries is entirely predicated on future positivity and self-belief, and in this sense the music industries are

an exemplary case study for a 'smile economy'; an economy based on a presentation of self as a smiling, happy-to-be-of-service being. A smile economy demands that one's real feelings are suppressed while one is working, and if one's work is 24/7, then one has to keep smiling. But there is also a sense that for musical workers and artists across the expressive arts, service work conditions for them can demand that they provide a range of affective transactions, for example a sad song about loss can be exactly what is needed when one is feeling very sad. In this utilitarian way music and musicians can create a range of work that is able to convey and produce emotional support. In this sense, musicians might be described as emotional workers par excellence as the affective qualities of their work are a central part of its use, exchange and ritual value. Within this paradigm, musical workers need to be able to manifest self-belief, even if that is not enough, in itself, to make a musical career happen. It is invoked as a necessary ingredient: if you do not believe in yourself, the myth goes, 'it' will never happen. The language of the music industry is one of dreams; dreams, self-belief and hard work. The discursive construction of the professional musician in the digital age is impacted and shaped by an assembly of relationships that are also shaped by education, gender, race, class and geography.

It is important to also acknowledge that the relationship between musical work and mental health and emotional wellbeing explored in this book is not one of simple causality. One cannot put every incidence of mental ill health among musicians down to their working conditions and indeed not all the musicians we spoke to understood their emotional states in this way. Neither do we discount the possibility that this type of work has an attraction for individuals with existing emotional challenges or even trauma who are drawn to the expressive nature of the art form to help them heal, and that this perhaps explains their heightened awareness to emotional instability. Indeed, some of our interviewees felt this to be the case, with one suggesting that 'maybe when we were growing up or in our teenage years, when we were anxious about stuff or we did feel there were difficult things, you came from a broken home, or there was unhappiness, or challenges in your life, that's what made you want to express yourself though music and that's how you got into it' (Producer/Songwriter, M, Pop, London [19]). Likewise, it may be the case that musicians are workers who are particularly practised in expressing their own feelings and emotions – after all, this is what the work necessitates – and that other precarious workers might have similar feelings of anxiety or depression but are just less encouraged to express it for a variety of reasons. This was reflected by one of our interviewees who told us: 'For me, when I'm writing, it can be a very introspective thing to do and so maybe you're very finely tuned in with the fluctuation in your own mental health' (Musician, F, Folk, Cardiff [21]). Within the supply chain of musicians the degree of reflexivity is varied. That being said, the idea of feeling and of performing is shared, as is the key idea of

sensitivity, in that musicians must be sensitive to moods. After all, it is this sensitivity which makes one a good communicator, and the idea of being a good communicator is the categorical imperative of the knowledge economy. In the context of creative work, sensitivity and feeling are foregrounded as key skills you need. If one is going to be a builder and carry bricks, one requires physical strength and will develop physical strength as one does the work. For music, it is sensitivity: an openness and ability to tune in.

We do not propose to know all the answers. What we do know, however, is what musicians have told us and what we have unpacked in this book: musicians are suffering, in high numbers, and the conditions of their work, they say, are at least partly responsible for how they feel. These findings then are how we addressed the first objective of this book; to provide an empirical understanding of how contemporary musical artists and professional musicians experience aspiring to build a musical career, and how these musicians feel about their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

6.2 'Twas Ever Thus: What's New?

How much of what we have uncovered here is, in fact, really new? What has changed? Haven't musicians always struggled? Hasn't it always been tough to try and make it as a musician? In one sense yes, but the experience of music making is qualitatively different today in a number of key ways which have exaggerated the stresses and strains of creative production. Digital media has fundamentally transformed all media and the way we live and move in the world, but its most profound impact is on both how we communicate and how communication and technology companies are implicated in the careers of musicians. The advent and growth of computer-based technology from the 1970s combined with the launch and vast expansion of the internet and ever-faster communication technologies have radically changed the way we communicate. Music as a commodity and as a form of communication has likewise changed. Alongside this, our relationship to music and the ways we use music, including the practices of music, are changing as new business models in UGC (User Generated Content) develop and new relationships with technology emerge.

In this world, time and space are being reconfigured, leading us to ask questions about what the terms 'personal' and 'private' mean. Attali (1977, 2014) was the first to predict some of these changes. Although he did not predict the advent of social media per se, he did predict the expansion of music production predicated on computer and electronic technological advances. Yet, there is something about the characteristics of social media that maps seemingly 'naturally' onto the practices of musicians, and music futurists herald the internet as the site of music's liberation from the restrictions and limitations of older

music companies; the dinosaurs were dead, or so they declared. However, what they appeared not to be aware of, or indeed even cautious of, was the ever-growing power of the new technology companies. As Meikle (2016: 7) points out: ‘Social media offer us platforms for communication, but we should always be conscious that they make use of not just the information that we choose to communicate, but also of that which we communicate without realising.’

In this setting the exchange value of recorded music fell dramatically, causing havoc, and although there is much talk of recorded music’s economic value being re-established, much of the ‘good news’ only affects a very few given the vast expansion of music makers. As criticism of digital media business models grew, attention was drawn to the contradictions and paradoxes inherent in the democratisation of media in this setting. Digital media gives opportunities for large scale ‘representation’ in the form of ‘activity’, but that is not the same as disciplined, organised action that is needed in order to bring about real economic and social change in the distribution of music’s value, so that, for example, songwriters and musical performers share in income in a more equitable way – campaigns such as #BrokenRecord driven by Tom Gray represent current attempts at change in this area – or to improve the diversity and inclusivity of music production. This would be part of what social and political change within the music sector might look like. As Sterne (2012) warned, all this participatory media may serve to mask inaction when he wondered ‘is activity the new passivity?’ Under communicative capitalism music exerts a power over its producers; the more dependent the musical relationship, the more subjected each one becomes, until without music they cease to exist to themselves. This is the entangled, contradictory and paradoxical ontology of musical subjectivity, living in cyber chaos wherein being heard amongst the noise becomes the ultimate objective. To connect, to have a connection with a fellow human, becomes ever more fetishised rather than being a staple of all human communication in which our sameness, our shared experiences, can be recognised. Musicians are propelled by this abundance and attention to difference. The mere idea of connection becomes the ultimate goal rather than the most normal and basic of human conditions.

6.2.1 Experiencing Abundance, Making Data

Models of emotional and affective labour have increased and spread into many areas of post-Fordist working models, and these map onto the emotional work music performs in the secular world now that music has been set free from its religious routes. Abundance has changed everything. The loss of symbolic meaning is acute under these conditions as the overemphasis of economic value deflates the use value of all art. Music as media has increased from music as a form of communication, to become part of digital media as a data business model. The activity of music making and communicating is now situated within

much more powerful technology dominated industries – the music ecosphere – and as Negus (2019) suggests, what it means to be a musician has changed as the key outputs come to be not music, but content and data. Music is no longer the focus of the economic exchange, rather the activities of music production, distribution and promotion are all embedded within the wider electronic and communications industries that profit from the sale of equipment including software, musical equipment of all kinds, data, advertising revenues, and the financing and expansion of digital technology. Music as media has been reconstituted within a digital process; today, a ‘stream’ is not only the music it contains, but a networked set of data i.e. information about what is being streamed, the content of the stream, data about who is streaming, data concerning the format or streaming option or platform, etc. Each thing creates data that is accumulated and transferred. This is also true of digital software and recording technologies as well as the massive growth in the platforms available to service the extraordinary growth of DIY musical products for those with musical ambition. Musicians are contributing to this enormous technology industry; an industry that doesn’t care about their wellbeing, or even necessarily about their music. This is the economics of musical ambition, and this is the world the musicians we interviewed are living, breathing and working in, whereby selling your music means selling yourself, and therefore creating and marketing your emotions. Musical ambition is the marketing and selling of self-expression and identity, and this, for some, is extremely profitable.

There is an entire economy dedicated to, and making money from, people’s desire to be musicians and their interaction with the technology which is now seen as central to their desire to have a musical career. These tools, many of which are free, which are produced to help musicians to ‘be heard’ are big business for the people making them. Their freeness, however, conceals the dominant models of profit-making and the power of the major music companies. Recent figures produced show that the artists’ direct global share of the recorded music market was 4.1% in 2019 (Mulligan, 2020b). The digital music industries are also full of new apps and software to enable better, faster, more effective royalty distribution, for example. But these tech companies are selling software and apps. These companies are not interested in music per se; they just need more musicians, making more music, and wanting to build a career doing so. Musicians then have to produce and we have to share, and there is an entire industry built around encouraging and training them to share, what type of content to share, when to share, how to share, how to work the algorithms to get noticed, and on and on it goes. This is framed not as selling oneself, but developing relationships – a form of relational labour (Jenkins, 2019). But always, one must keep producing. This is the greed of musical production in the 21st century. There has been an increase in the number of people pursuing the idea of musical ambition. This is entirely different to there being an increase in the number of people simply making music as a social or personal

practice. It is the *ambition* that matters, whilst the privilege of the successful is that they can give you less. They can withdraw from social media (Savage, 2017). They can release an album from nowhere with no marketing (Molanphy, 2013). The musicians we spoke to for this book do not have this privilege.

Few events illustrate the scale of musical ambition better than the annual BBC Introducing LIVE; a day of panels and talks where a number of mostly musicians, but also aspiring managers, publicists, journalists and others all come to hear advice from the ‘best and the brightest’ on ‘how to make it in music’. We were invited to speak on a panel in 2018 about mental health and the music industry, and indeed George had attended as an artist back in 2011. The event is an utter behemoth on a dizzying scale, littered with messages telling musicians that they are in control, that they can monetise their YouTube videos or live off the income from their streams. ‘There has never been a better time to be a musician’ the techno-positivist logic goes (Chertkow and Feehan, 2009), but of course there are thousands of other musicians there trying to be a musician too. The overwhelming sense is that this diverse array of young people are dreaming big and there to explore that dream, and, truthfully, the ultimate beneficiaries of this are the listeners of music who have more choice than ever before. But we could not help but feel a sense of sadness. Sad that young people are there to find answers but knowing that they won’t really hear the reality at all. Sad that they are there all being told to network but that the only room that really mattered – The Green Room – is the only door that has security and is closed to the them. How can you compete when you are inconsequential and the marketplace looks completely saturated? Amongst the speakers and undoubted musical talent, the entrepreneurial ambition and varied creativity, we had a feeling, having undertaken the research for this book and being in the process of writing it, that these young people were like lambs to the slaughter. The BBC is fulfilling its educational remit and selling tickets on a large scale but it is difficult to know what the attendees really get out of it, but of course everybody says it is great.

Big dreams necessitate deep wallets, and so as the food stalls and musical instruments and merchandise were consumed with similar veracity to the ‘industry secrets’ shared by the panels, we were struck by the staggering scale of the industry built around the dreams of these talented young people. There was an area to upload your music to BBC Introducing radio shows directly next-door to an A&R ‘feedback’ centre. It was hard to look at – X Factor for the underground. The sheer volume of artists, and by extension, level of competition, is disorientating in its ferocity. Trying to be a musician reminded us of when you try and scream in your dreams – all you want to do is make noise, but no one hears you. Where sound comes out, but you are on mute. What would saturation point look like? How would we know that there was just too much music? The music industries have always been linked to technologies of expansion, and rooted in a culture of techno-positivism, even techno-fetishisation. But we cannot pretend the world has not changed. It has.

6.3 ‘Let’s Talk About It’: What Would Living Better Look Like?

A central question our work produces of course is; what is to be done about this? The complexity of the issues raised by our research really speak to questions about the future of cultural production across the whole field from education to the future of work. As Attali (1977, 2014) revealed, there is a lot to learn from examining the shape of music production and consumption. His predictions that the digital age would lead to very few people actually earning any money from musical activity appears on the one hand to be true, but also it seems that music as commodity and content has driven a growth in new and varied industries such as wellbeing, yoga, healthy juices, and pharmacology. As Fisher (2006) writes: ‘Poor mental health is of course a massive source of revenue for multinational drugs companies. You pay for a cure from the very system that made you sick in the first place.’ In many ways, it is this perverse cycle which might be occurring in the music industries, exemplified in the artists’ suggestion that making music is therapeutic, but making a career from it is traumatic. That is, artists use music to ease the mental burden which their musical career itself produces. As Smail (1996) points out, the commonest reaction to adverse events and experience is unhappiness or, if the events or experiences are severe or prolonged enough, despair. What is interesting here is that for the musicians we interviewed, there appears to be a connection between making music and the context of the music industries that somehow keeps the musician, even in the despair, hooked into music making. The embodied consequences of emotional experience are so entangled in the world of music production, that those engaged in musical practices seem unable to separate harmful practices from their daily experience.

At the same time however, as we suggested in the introductory chapter, mental health has become a hot topic in the music industries. There are now a large number of both individuals and organisations meaningfully committed to helping. Institutionally, as well as Help Musicians UK, we see other organisations doing excellent work such as Music Support, Music and You, Getahead and others. We have also seen the Music Managers Forum publish their *Guide to Mental Health*, and individuals working in the field such as Tamsin Embleton of the Music Industry Therapist Collective, Tamara Gal-On and former Babyshambles musician-turned-psychotherapist Adam Ficek among many others all doing wonderful work. Likewise, major record companies are taking the issues seriously and are developing HR practices to tackle mental health issues both for staff and their artists.

Each individual who is helped by any of the people or companies named above, be it therapeutically or pharmacologically – or whatever works for them – is meaningful and matters. After all, music is important, and as such the findings and theories we have offered here are important. Perhaps the litmus test of how happy our musicians are might be how happy we are, or vice versa. If the dreamers are sick, this is bleak. In this section we will interrogate what ‘living

better' might look like through three perspectives. The first will look briefly at therapy and listening; part two will suggest that we need to move beyond individual solutions to examine some lessons from public policy; and part three will turn to best practices and the potential of legal remedies using the concept of a duty of care.

6.3.1 Therapy and Listening

One of the problems when discussing mental health is that there is now so much information out there and so many different types of practitioners in the mental health and wellbeing space that many people do not know the difference between them. There are the professionally trained medical doctors who become psychiatrists; psychologists who focus on treating emotional and mental suffering with psychotherapy and others offering behavioural interventions who may or may not have a background in psychology; and then a wide range of therapists operating in the field, many of whom may have training in very specific treatment for example Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) but do not need to have studied psychology at all. The growth in counselling, psychotherapy and alternative therapeutic practices is significant because so much of it is still not subject to any statutory regulation. There are, however, some professional bodies such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) or the UK Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP) whose registered practitioners must complete training and abide by the association's ethical codes.

Is it possible to live better as a musician? What would this even look like? What is clear is that solutions must be multiple and necessarily political, solutions that do not just tackle surface wounds but go to the root causes. Responses that valorise resilience or 'developing a thick skin' individualise what is a social issue. Using cloth instead of plastic bags, for example, is helpful but will not solve the ecological catastrophe facing us: that needs to be politically driven. The same is true of music, music making and labour relations. In addition, we propose that we need to invest more in the music that already exists and unlock the cultural value in the mountain of music we all have access too. To continue the ecological metaphor for a moment, we love the idea of recycling, but in the music industries and their fetishisation of newness, we lose the ability to explore the diverse and interesting cultures we already have and have had. It is a radical idea for sure, and for some will be seen as another of the many taboo ideas in this book, but how much more new music do we actually need?

A clear starting point is to listen to the words of the musicians we spoke to. For many, small solutions were helpful, such as the importance of paying invoices on time. But a comment we heard several times was about having someone to listen to them who understood their issues. One musician brought up the idea of a dedicated counselling service: 'Childline started out something like this and people thought, oh nobody wants that – who's going to use it? And

look where it is now. It has become fundamental and key. And I'm not saying that [something like] Childline could be established for musicians and DJs, but actually maybe it could because you do need to have somebody that understands, to talk to, about where your head is' (DJ, F, Dance, Manchester [8]). The musicians' desire to be heard and listened to goes not just for their music but for their words and ideas too, and they want to speak to people that can understand them – who would understand the specific conditions of musical labour. Smail (1996) suggests that research has indicated that the most successful therapeutic environments are ones in which the patient believes that they have a good relationship with their therapist and that they share some understanding i.e. where they feel there is empathy between them. In direct response to the publication of our earlier research, we have seen the establishment in 2017 of Music Minds Matter, a 24-hour helpline run by Help Musicians UK in order to respond to comments such as these. We hope that it has, even if in just a small way, been helpful for musicians who are suffering, but alongside services like these, we also need political solutions. It is these we will turn to next.

6.3.2 Public Policy and Learning Lessons?

Many of the challenges our findings have thrown up are labour market issues rooted in the very specific nature of this type of work. Certainly, people reading this book from diverse professional backgrounds may find resonances with their own professional lives – as we have said, all careers have stressors. At the same time, all career stressors are unique to their particular industrial context, and the stressors facing musicians are profound. The loss of union power was visible in our study given that not a single one of the musicians we spoke to made reference to the Musicians' Union (MU) in their interviews as being either part of the solution, or even a meaningful part of their experience of being a musician. Two told us they were members (it is possible there were more who didn't mention the fact in the context of the interview). One of our interviewees did not even know the Musicians' Union existed: 'The people that often have the control, the power – not always but often – you don't feel that they understand the musicians' plight, and maybe if there was something that could be done to kind of change that... I don't know, or unions? You know? There should be a musicians' union' (Singer/songwriter, F, Pop, London [2]). Another musician told us: 'I know that the Musicians' Union exists and I joined about a year ago because I thought "I probably should join actually" but I think there isn't really a way of ensuring that non-classical musicians get paid fairly for the gigs and the work that we do' (Musician, F, Folk, Cardiff [21]). Anecdotally, when a representative from the MU came to speak to our postgraduate students, we asked a room of around fifty students to raise their hand if they were involved in any way in making music. Everyone raised

their hands. We then asked them to keep their hands up if they were members of the MU. All but a handful put their hands down.

It is interesting to consider how music workers in other territories have organised and agitated for government support, arguably the most successful of which is the unionisation of French cultural workers, including musicians and others working in the music industries. Many are part of a unionised benefit scheme known as the *intermittents du spectacle* (IDS) system that was set up in 1936 in order to promote French culture and to protect these specific cultural workers – including technicians and artists – from the worst ravages of precarious work. In 2003, these workers went on strike because the government wanted to reform the conditions of the benefit scheme on economic grounds i.e. the scheme had become too expensive because it now had too many members, partly of course due the success of their internal promotion of French culture. This moment was of particular interest to Lazzarato as he saw it as a unique opportunity to examine the changing nature of working conditions through the lens of a workforce that he viewed as being an exemplar of post-Fordist transformations. As he notes; ‘One of the key objectives of the *reformers* has always been to establish much clearer, objective and certifiable criteria according to which artistic professionals can be identified and by means of which their numbers can be strictly controlled’ (Lazzarato, 2017: xxxviii). Another aspect of the French case is that, to an extent, it offers a model of how to manage employment that is defined by instability on the one hand and oversupply on the other, as it also defines what can or cannot be classified as ‘work’, and who does or does not qualify as a worker. The division of labour here is both defined by payment for work done and significantly includes preparation, rehearsals and thinking time. The IDS scheme clearly recognises cultural work as specific and important to the state, even as it was trying to reform the scheme.

Although the IDS is fascinating from a public policy perspective, as Buchsbaum (2015) notes, it is, in many respects rather exceptional and therefore hard to see how it might inform public policy debate in the UK. That said, the scheme is fascinating for two reasons. Firstly, the economics of the scheme place front and centre debates about the real cost and value of a domestic cultural industry. What is the value to a society of protecting its artistic workforce in this way? This fiscal question brings into sharp focus the tension between the economic value of music and its ritual or cultural value, and this is where the politics of cultural reproduction comes into play. Buchsbaum (2015: 158–162) for example notes that as of 2002, intermittent workers represented only 3% of all workers eligible for unemployment benefit in France, but that the scheme was in deficit by EUR 833 million. The French government’s argument that these workers were costing more per head than the average unemployed was true. Another interesting element of the IDS scheme is that it attempts to limit the number of cultural workers including musicians because to be eligible for the scheme one has to fulfil certain criteria based on the amount, quality and value of the artistic or technological work already done within the entertainment sector. In this sense, the scheme engages with McRobbie’s (1999) question

about how many cultural workers can there be. Despite all this, attempts to reform the scheme in 2003 were met with fierce opposition. This speaks to a wider debate about how society values its creative production which is understood to be more than just its economic contribution, and debates about the need to ‘save the arts’ in the wake of the huge challenges brought about by Covid-19 have only amplified and sharpened these considerations.

However, another interesting feature of the scheme is how it challenges us to think about the concept of time. In work by Lazzarato (2013) undertaken between 2004 and 2005, he writes, ‘a musician told us that in his opinion, the struggle faced by occasional workers over unemployment insurance was in fact a struggle for time. To summarise: “Unemployment insurance doesn’t give us any benefits; it gives us time”’. The IDS then is part of a political project to identify and express thinking time – time to reflect and think about creative ideas – and therefore today is seen to give artists time to be creative in a digital environment which has, as per the findings from our interviewees, removed and subsumed time. This is akin to Fisher’s (2014: 13) suggestion that ‘producing the new depends upon certain kinds of withdrawal – from, for instance, sociality’. The drive towards increasing productivity, both amongst musicians and in the wider economy too, assumes that when one is not working one is not productive. Perhaps the lesson from the IDS is that we need to challenge this idea robustly (this idea has a long history – see Frayne, 2015). Psycho-politics and the relentlessness of musicians needing to be their own brand and promote their own projects removes the opportunity to live, and of course anxiety is ramped up in this environment. Today, we imagine that there is no time to lose, but are we really so poor that we can no longer afford to waste time? Time is the most valuable commodity we have, but only those that are rich can have time on their hands. When musicians feel guilty about the loss of time, careers come to be seen in terms of investment and sacrifice.

The relationship between the nation state, the music industry and creators themselves is a famously fraught and contentious one; a complex inter-relationship based on reliance and need which drifts, as Cloonan (1999) outlines, between promotional at times (as per the IDS in France, or the New Deal for Musicians under New Labour in the UK (Cloonan, 2002, 2003)), laissez-faire at others (arguably as under the UK’s pre-Covid Conservative government), and authoritarian in extremis. Quite what this balance *should* be is an ongoing policy puzzle. The reality is of course more complicated insofar as while the IDS is promotional in that it seeks to promote French culture, it is also *controlling* in that it wants to support *French* culture and, importantly, control who is and is not a musician. This is true in the UK too to a certain extent. For example, it is clear from Arts Council awards which artistic endeavors are supported and which are not and who benefits from this support.

The IDS scheme is one of the clearest examples of a public policy initiative that acknowledges both that music making is valuable and that musicians need time. The idea that music is valuable and powerful is one highlighted at the beginning of the book. Music has more than just individual benefits,

but can be seen as having the capacity to galvanise and regenerate communities as well as being a source of both local and national identities, for example in ‘music cities’ (Ballico and Watson, 2020). However, suggesting that musicians need time to ‘do it’ seems harder to square with a public policy perspective. What is clear is that the absolute state of precarity musicians are living under is neither healthy nor sustainable and needs to be addressed. The first step here is to reconsider the existing relationship in the UK between self-employment (which all the musicians we interviewed were, with the exception of some classical musicians in orchestras) and benefit entitlement, which is certainly an ongoing debate (Lockey, 2018). It seems entirely reasonable to us that benefit entitlement be expanded among the self-employed. This speaks to Noone’s (2017) suggestion, drawing on Attali (1977, 2014), that ‘musicians are the canary in the coalmine’ and that by understanding how they are working, there are lessons for others in the wider economy about precarious employment and the need for protection. This is particularly crucial given the current employment environment in the UK – a feature highlighted recently in debates about who should receive ‘furlough’ support, and how much, in the wake of Covid-19 – where the number of self-employed workers increased by 1 million between 2008 and 2015 (ONS, 2016), and where, according to the Office for National Statistics (2018b): ‘the number of self-employed reporting themselves as working on their own, or with a partner but no employees, has increased between 2001 and 2016, while those who report themselves as having employees has fallen over the same period.’ We have also grappled with the concept of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) (Gross, Musgrave and Janciute, 2018), suggesting that those who are currently engaged in a debate around the rationale for such a scheme on ethical, moral, economic or civic engagement grounds (Fuchs, 2008) might also want to consider the artistic, cultural and therefore social benefits of such a scheme (see Downes (2018) for a more detailed overview of UBI). The question of the value society puts on artistic production needs to include how and who is remunerated for artists’ endeavours.

6.3.3 Duty of Care: Responsibility and Control

From the outset of our research there appeared to be a desire to develop or extend the legal ‘duty of care’ within the music industries so that a wider variety of music professionals responsible for artists and employees – from record labels, music managers and those working across the live music industry – might be bound by a higher duty than in the variety of contractual relationships that exist already. Indeed, one of the ‘Three Key Pledges’ of Help Musicians UK at the time of our research was to build: ‘a music industry Mental Health Taskforce with key partners and stakeholders, to be a forum for discussion with the industry to establish a code of best practice and duty of care within the industry.’¹⁰ Many of our interviewees, when talking about potential remedies, would say things such as: ‘Labels and publishers need to nurture and

look after their artists. I think some management companies can also work their artists too hard' (Singer/songwriter, F, Soul/Dance, Bristol [10]). These ideas seemed to imply that the health and wellbeing of musicians was not just their own personal responsibility but should, they felt, be shared by the formal organisations and structures of the music industries – the labels, publishers, management companies etc – and that this should be embedded within working practices. This was underlined by another interviewee who said that as part of their ongoing responsibility to artists, 'managers and record companies in particular should have therapists' [Musician, M, Dance, London [15]). It has been encouraging to see how seriously these issues have been taken across the music industries since the publication of phase one of our Help Musicians UK research in 2016. In all areas of the music industries and across all the major music companies, mental health awareness has been a key driver in developing best practices for wellbeing and mental health care in the working environment, and in-house trained mental health first aiders are now embedded in some music companies.

However, discussions about a 'duty of care' continue to circulate, and to some extent it is clear that this is coming from a growing position that caring more is something we all need to do; caring is the action we need to take when things matter. It is therefore worth examining what a duty of care actually means. In legal terms, the duty of care confers a legal responsibility to act in accordance with an ideal of reasonable care so as to prevent the occurrence of 'foreseeable' personal harm to others, which can include mental as well as physical harm. This is no less true in a recording studio or on stage than it is driving a car. However, what is often suggested in these particular conversations is that some people should have *more* foresight or act *more* carefully than others. In this case, who would the more responsible people be – the artist themselves or those who work with and around them? What is often confusing within these discussions is that artist managers and other music industry professionals, such as lawyers and accountants, already have a specific duty to their client known as the fiduciary duty. The fiduciary duty means that the manager or lawyer, for example, must act in their client's best interests rather than their own, and this is mainly a business arrangement. On the other hand, the law stipulates that a duty of care arises where there is a 'sufficiently proximate' relation between the parties and it is 'fair, just and reasonable' in all the circumstances to impose a duty of care, and that the damage that occurred from the breach of the duty was 'foreseeable' (*Caparo Industries v Dickman* [1990]).¹¹ The proximity in these cases would mean not a geographical closeness but rather a relational closeness that is often, in the music industry already, also defined by contract. Here the tensions emerge between individual responsibility and professional liabilities.

Every recent high profile musician's early death has reignited conversations about what might have been done or could have been done to have prevented this premature loss of life, and who or what is to blame. This was seen, for

example, following both the death of Amy Winehouse in 2011 where the responsibility of the record label was interrogated (Lindvall, 2011), and following the death of Avicii in 2018, where some in the popular media suggested that the industry as a whole did not do enough to protect him (Kale, 2018). Much of this debate has circulated around the idea of a duty of care. However, in these circumstances the conceptualising of responsibility around the legal concept of duty of care may in itself confuse these complex issues further.

Who has a duty of care? The simple answer is that we all could if there is sufficient proximate relationship between ourselves and a defendant. The law clearly states: 'Where it is reasonably foreseeable that lack of care could cause personal injury, death or damage to property, a duty of care will usually be owed' (Cannon and Folkard, 2019: 4). Additionally, the law recognises that in specific relationships – for example between a doctor and patient, or a teacher and pupil – there is a duty of care. However, we can see from case law that the law is more reluctant and certainly less likely to impose a duty of care when somebody may simply have failed to act – what in legal terms is referred to as 'omission to act' – even though by not acting the damage may have been reasonably averted. A common example, in a music setting, is where there may be several people who are aware that the artist's friend may well be supplying their client with illegal substances, yet nobody prevents the friend entering the artist's dressing room before or after a show. By not actively preventing the artist's friend from meeting them, does this constitute a legal breach of the duty of care, and if so, who exactly would be held to have a duty of care? Should the manager's failure to prevent said person from having contact with the artist be seen as an 'omission to act', or the venue owner, or the live agent, or the sound engineer, if they were all in the dressing room at that time? Such an event would be unlikely to be classified as a failure of a duty of care.

In a situation where the damages are 'pure economic loss', for example where the artist having taken the drugs cannot perform at a specific show, the law is even less inclined to impose a duty of care. The logic here is that these circumstances might be covered by other areas of law, and also that were 'pure economic loss' to be considered as part of duty of care this might have widespread policy implications. However, in circumstances where, for example, a doctor failed in their duty of care to the patient – as in the death of Michael Jackson – because, ultimately, the doctor's professional relationship the patient specifically demands a duty of care, the responsibility for the failure of their duty of care will cover everything including failure to act and 'pure economic loss' (Richards and Langthorne, 2015).

6.3.4 The Case of Lil Peep

In September 2016, our then visiting fellow - leading music industry lawyer and CEO of First Access Entertainment (FAE), Sarah Stennett – came to give the

inaugural lecture to our MA Music Business Management students, during which she advocated a new approach to working with artists that put them firmly in control of their careers. She said that artists had to have the whole vision and total artistic control. She went on to tell us about a new artist that she was very excited to be working with. She did not reveal his name, only his age. We later discovered his name was Gustav Elijah Ahr, a nineteen-year-old with a tattoo on his face that read ‘cry baby’. She did not say any more about him or play any of his music, but her excitement and enthusiasm for this ‘true’ artist was evident. We were later to learn that this young artist whose music was a new hybrid style a mix of punk, rap, emo and rock, sometimes referred to as emo-rap, which was emanating from the emerging Soundcloud scene, was Lil Peep. From early in his career it could be seen from the media around him and from other artists in that scene that they had a clear link to the prescription drug Xanax, and the Xanax epidemic in the United States was already well known (Quinones, 2015). Around a year later, and at the age of 21, this emerging global star was dead from an overdose of fentanyl and Xanax.

In January 2020, lawyers representing First Access Entertainment (FAE) and others issued a demurrer refuting a negligence claim brought against them by Lil Peep’s mother Liza Womack. The central argument made by the defence lawyers was that the nature of the contract and the relationship their clients had with Lil Peep was that of a joint venture i.e. a purely business relationship, and that as such it could not, and did not, give rise to a duty of care. They also asserted that Liza Womack had no factual evidence to support her various claims and if she did then the case would not simply be one of negligence. A significant part of their argument was that if an equal and joint business relationship were to attract the kind of duties one accepts between managers and artists, then it would make it impossible for music and entertainment businesses to operate at all and would have a detrimental impact on the music sector. Is it in the artist’s or anybody else’s interest to increase the range of the duty of care? Or are the lawyers here correct when they say that:

It would create a legal precedent requiring all entertainment companies and talent managers to act essentially as nannies for their artists, policing virtually all aspects of their personal lives, including their exposure to any potentially harmful things – not just drugs, but also cigarettes, alcohol, muscle cars, motorcycles, and even choices of friends. That result would be unrealistic, unworkable, and unreasonable.

— *Womack v First Access Entertainment LLC* (2020: 15)¹²

This case addresses the issue of who owes a duty of care and also the limitations of the concept of the fiduciary duty. The fiduciary duty is owed by the manager, the lawyer and the accountant, but the record label and publisher would owe no fiduciary duties usually because they are not acting as an agent; their terms are solely governed by the terms of the contract. Joint venture arrangements

are more problematic as they could give rise to a partnership relationship, and partners owe each other fiduciary duties unless this duty is expressly removed from the contract, as was argued in this case.

There is always a duty of care in terms of negligent acts, so a negligent manager or any other third party with a sufficiently proximate relationship to the defendant who through their negligence causes actual harm or death, will always have a duty of care. In fact, no contractual relationship can be exempt from a duty of care as statute law forbids such terms. It would be like saying that the law only applies sometimes, and no relationship or contract can circumvent the law. However, in broader discussions of mental health and emotional wellbeing, it is asserted by some that the limitations of the fiduciary duty need to be extended. The implication is that there needs to be more stringent, all-embracing legal liability regarding the mental health and emotional wellbeing of musicians which covers everybody they directly work with. Today, different sectors of the music industries have been professionalising and promoting their member's interests – from UK Music and the Musicians' Union to the Featured Artists Coalition and PRS for Music – through education and the development of codes of practices. The first code of practice published by the Music Managers Forum in 2012 states that a central imperative, indeed the first imperative, is: 'Putting the artist first and recognising the manager's duty of care to the artist' (MMF, 2017: 3). However, if we are now entering 'the age of the artist' (Mulligan, 2020a) and management arrangements for artists are transforming (for example, Lil Peep and FAE being in a joint venture), we might see that in these circumstances although the artist's business terms may well be improving, the fiduciary duty that served to protect their interests may erode as managers and third party investors enter new contracts. This is not necessarily a bad thing: many argue that these transformations are in the best interests of artists as they should lead to them being in a more empowered position. However, there is a tension here between *empowering* the artists as suggested by FAE and *protecting* the artists via extending the manager's duty of care. At the same time, this position is arguably too simplistic given the strength and power of existing infrastructures across the music and technology sectors, and given our findings surrounding the misleading use of the term 'control' in the context of creative careers more broadly.

Thinking about these developments in terms of a duty of care, it is clear that business relationships that are at 'arm's length' – which would include joint ventures – would not have the same duties as a traditional artist's manager. Under joint ventures, as in the case of First Access Entertainment and Lil Peep, the contract explicitly excludes any fiduciary duty or any implied partnership or any agent/principal relationship. These were deliberate exclusions to put the parties on an equal business footing where neither could be seen to be more responsible than the other and to exclude any personal liability. However even these exclusions via contract cannot limit liability for negligence that might lead to actual physical harm or even death. Here, statute law would step in. Substance abuse is an interesting complicating factor in this case. Nobody could

argue that in the case of Lil Peep, as with many artists, that their substance abuse was secret or hidden; it is often very much part of their lifestyles. Likewise, there is no doubt that MDMA – an illegal drug – was one of the central drivers in the global success of dance music over the past thirty years, or that LSD shaped the development of psychedelic rock in the sixties. It would be very hard to conceive of reggae and dub sounds without marijuana. The link between substance abuse and music creation, both in terms of consumption and participation, is hard to untangle, but many drugs are, for the most part, already heavily controlled. Therefore, extending the duty of care to music managers and others in order to try to protect artists from substance abuse would seem both unnecessary and ‘unworkable’. Again, this is an example of where existing laws reveal the complex and problematic relationship between drug use and drug abuse. The law provides for ‘activities’ that can cause harm; that is, these laws already seek to prohibit and ‘protect’ people from the abuse of drugs. The law cannot however stop such ‘activities’ happening. Furthermore, in this case, alcohol is legal, and the drug – Xanax – is often prescribed by a doctor, who has an explicit duty of care.

In order to establish liability you need to tie it to specific relationships and actions that could be much more difficult to prove across long term relationships, partly because of the ever-changing and unpredictable demands of musical work; many of which have been reflected in our findings. Where the law requires evidence in cases of negligence, claimants have to show how specific actions resulted in the damage they are claiming for. For example, when it comes to an individual’s state of mind or health, a necessarily intense promotion schedule might seem reasonable and unavoidable or even desirable at the outset, but later become too much and too difficult for the artist to cope with. It would be difficult to say what the specific action was here. The complexity of these situations, in legal terms, would make both foreseeability and causation for any harm done, difficult to establish. The blame here is as fragmented and dispersed as the reasoning.

Can a duty of care go beyond artists and their managers? Should a manager assume care for their artists’ personal life and their mental health? Can and should they do so if they are not trained? How reasonable would that be? The role of music management, although far more professionalised now than it has ever been, does not in itself require any qualifications. It is interesting to note here that this lack of supervision, qualifications and regulation is mirrored in the mental health space, where there is very little governmental regulation of mental health practitioners outside the medical sector. In this respect, the idea of lay mental health workers, as it were, is very much like the position of unqualified and untrained music managers. If we were to accept that music managers have a personal duty of care that goes beyond the fiduciary duty, what would that duty look like and how would music managers become qualified to do this job? The idea that all those working with artists would need additional qualifications to cope with an additional level of liability, as the lawyers for FAE argued in the Lil Peep case, would doubtless not only impact insurance costs,

which for those working within media and entertainment are already high, but would also indeed be ‘unworkable’.

Insurance for alleged liability against injury and death would be difficult to procure and, if available, exorbitantly expensive. The greater risk and added cost of insurance would have the chilling effects of driving smaller entertainment companies out of the business and deterring larger firms from assisting the higher profile clientele they typically represent.

—*Womack v First Access Entertainment LLC* (2020: 15)

Risk is a core characteristic of the music industries. It would seem that any expansion of the duty of care will inevitably be resisted in favour of the development of best practices in wellbeing and mental health awareness as we are already witnessing. Apart from the obvious difficulties of implementing such a far-reaching duty one also has to consider if it is in anyone’s interest, including society’s, to increase the range of such duties. When does protection become control? It is difficult for the adventurous to ask for protection – almost a contradiction in terms. Artists that want creative control do not want to be controlled in any of their behaviour. Policy changes may well be needed and it is apparent in duty of care cases that it is often policy implications that impact the final legal decisions. These often can feel unjust, particularly when people have lost their lives. However, the apportioning of blame to a single identifiable action (or absence thereof) or attributed to any one individual, is often too simplistic. Extending the legal remit of the duty of care is not going to resolve the systemic issues that this book identifies. This is not to say that we do not need to care more. Far from it. However, despite our sympathy with the objectives, a ‘duty of care’ is unlikely to be the mechanism through which we achieve this care.

6.4 Music Education Now: Reflections

The final objective of this book was to critically consider how contemporary musical production and its impact on wellbeing relates to education and professional training. For this we draw on our experiences of teaching and managing in a university environment in the UK. We wanted to do this both to better understand our own practice as academics, researchers and teachers, but also to help our students understand the world of work they want to enter. Having undertaken this research, we were struck with a real sense that not only were we preparing our students to enter a precarious environment – ‘training for precarity’ if you like – but also a potentially dangerous one. So, what have we learned?

There appears to be wide support across all sections of society for encouraging music making in education – from social uproar about cutting music lessons in schools (Savage and Barnard, 2019) to the explosion in both

music and music industry courses in higher education which we contextualised at the beginning of the book. However, when we read these findings and unpack some of our proposed explanations, the picture is a messy one. In an article published by the website *Crack Magazine*. George wrote:

I remember some years ago a secondary school asked me to come and speak to the young people there about being a musician signed to a major record company and ‘living the dream’ in London. They wanted me to tell them to ‘follow their hearts’ and believe that they could do it. I said that message was irresponsible, and that I couldn’t with a clear conscience do that. I said I could tell them that some of the most incredible experiences of my life had come from music – from the big things like performing on stage at [BBC] Radio 1’s Big Weekend, to little things like hearing your music on [BBC Radio] 1Xtra when you’re driving home... [But] much of being a musician is, I told them, horrible. So no, I wouldn’t tell the young people to follow their dreams. I’d tell them it could be a nightmare, and now, I had research evidence of this. Suffice to say they didn’t want me to come and talk.

—Musgrave (2018)

Squaring what we have found as researchers with what we do as educators is extremely difficult. In the first instance, as educators we need to ask ourselves some hard questions about what we are doing in our subject areas aside from fulfilling our teaching obligations? In many respects, this consideration brings us back to the question Angela McRobbie asked in 1999: ‘How many cultural workers can there be?’ In a similar vein, how many music graduates can there be? The MA in Music Business Management we run is a perfect example of the kind of course that was set up as the heady days of the Brit-Pop era were coming to an end, and it was marketed to appeal to the ‘next generation of music industry leaders’. In the early days of the course, the approach was very much based on the model provided by the Masters in/of Business Administration model – MBAs. There was even a deliberate nod to this in the course acronym: MA MBM.

At that time, the concept of the music entrepreneur was yet to emerge from the millennial dust. When Sally took over as course leader in 2005, she came with a history of working in the independent music sector and managing artists. In this regard, music management to her was more about caring for, facilitating and encouraging the healthy development of diverse musical practices than it was about producing new music executives. In a small bespoke course in an area that lacked a formal disciplinary background, the approach she took was the one she knew best: the DIY music scene, coupled with that of the old art school tradition of making things happen through doing, learning by doing, being critically reflective, and culturally, politically and socially aware. Everyone working on the MA was still actively working in music as professional

practitioners. Change in educational institutions takes time and is usually an underfunded activity to which most people are resistant because they are already exhausted and feel undervalued. It has been interesting how many people that read our initial report on the wellbeing of musicians said that many of the features could easily apply to academics as they, too, are part of the same knowledge economy.

Music as a medium is in a transition period. As we interrogate both it and the enterprises and industries related to it, courses such as ours need to evolve and ask challenging questions too. The biggest and most challenging question – particularly in a higher educational context with such a focus on buzzwords like ‘recruitment’ and ‘retention’ and ‘employability’ – is whether there are simply too many music courses. Are we churning out too many musicians for the system to take? This is a question that rages across many disciplines both at undergraduate level in terms of how we prepare graduates for a world of work which might not be able to accommodate them, right up to PhD level where there is an enormous mismatch between the number of doctoral candidates and the number of academic positions available to them (Yerkes et al., 2012). There is often a discrepancy between the desires and hopes of our students and the reality they face upon graduation. For example, when thinking about what jobs students might go on to, we know that data and tracking are growth areas, alongside what Bennett (2018b) has called ‘embedded non-creative work’ or back room administration. But do students come on a Master’s degree like ours, where they get to meet the biggest players in the UK music industry on a weekly basis in central London and discuss music on a daily basis, to do data processing? Classical music has been grappling with the challenges of employability for many years. Considering this dilemma, Bennett (2008: 121) succinctly notes that ‘far from making a living by making music, the majority of musicians finance music making by making a living.’ This is an uncomfortable position when asking young people to invest thousands of pounds in a context which espouses a rhetoric of employment, value for money, debt and reward. It may be that with the continuous growth of free online courses and alternative training and music education provision that higher education courses begin to lose their appeal. For many, when looked at purely as an economic exercise (an approach of course we would reject) it is difficult to balance the investment needed against likely future earnings. Numbers from the Institute for Fiscal Studies put it in stark terms: ‘Graduates from LSE earn around 70% more than the average graduate 5 years after graduation, while graduates from Guildhall School of Music and Drama earn around 60% less’ (IFS, 2018: 46). More broadly when considering the creative arts as a subject, the report notes that: ‘Medicine, maths and economics graduates all typically earn at least 30% more than the average graduate, while creative arts graduates earn around 25% less on average’ (IFS, 2018: 5). Many creative courses have been able to ignore figures such as these because of the nature of self-employed work, it being the

norm as a 'graduate destination'. However, a light is certainly being shone by central government on the sector more generally, and arts courses in particular, for failing to deliver (whatever 'delivering' means). This is in many respects a far wider public policy discussion that has raged ever since Prime Minister Tony Blair famously sought to get 50% of young adults into higher education, a goal eventually achieved in 2019, two decades later.

There is a second tier to this debate however, and that is how those of us running such courses interrogate what we do, how we do it, and who we are doing it for. Interestingly, the MBAs which formed the basis for our course in the early days are having their own crises too, rooted in challenges such as 'the moral failure of the business elite' (McDonald, 2017), corporate social responsibility and sustainability (Wright and Bennett, 2011) and their impact on recruitment practices (Eberhardt et al., 1997). Indeed, Datar et al. (2010) suggest that this type of education is at a crossroads in its history. This is true of music and music business courses too. Put simply, we cannot keep cramming more and more students into this system while promoting an essentially mythological vision of what the music industry thinks about itself, and selling them the same dream. It is irresponsible. What is needed, and something we have been doing on our postgraduate course, is to nurture and encourage critical approaches to music and the way in which these changes implicate the complex field of industries in which music is embedded. By centring our studies on music's uses and sites of production, we are better able to identify global infrastructures and their impacts on music production and exchange.

It is interesting to us that when we speak about this subject in music colleges specifically, young people often ask questions such as: 'Are you saying we shouldn't make music then?' or 'Should I give up even bothering trying to work in music?' This is absolutely not what we are saying. What we are saying is that music cannot be reduced to its economic value alone and that it is not possible to consider music as a viable, singular career option. Indeed, as Attali (1977, 2014) predicted there are millions of people making and enjoying music but there will only ever be a very tiny proportion who will make money directly from musical work. There are of course political ramifications to this and as our work on the gig economy suggests there will need to be policy changes going forward (Gross, Musgrave and Janciute, 2018). In addition, and this is something we consider central, our courses need to meaningfully straddle both the professional (the 'how') and the critical (the 'why'). This is something we consider across our entire suite of modules: which ones lean more towards practice, and which lean more towards theory, and how can we refine this balance. There must be a dialogue, albeit one that is often uncomfortable, between the professional practice base and the cultural/sociological base, with critical and challenging approaches adopted. The old idea that music business courses should not be in music departments (as per Cusic, 1991) was inaccurate and we firmly reject that position. Our course is about music. We need to equip

our students with the tools to navigate this environment and to think critically about it. After all, the future of the music industries is likely to be shaped by these young people. It will be them, not us, who come up with the solutions to adapt to the situation we have uncovered in our findings.

6.4.1 Questions of Content and New Ways of Teaching

What might this balance look like in terms of content? Our responsibility to new students must be that we now situate their learning in more realistic terms in the context of the new technology and digital media industries. We must devise new avenues of teaching that explore, acknowledge and adapt to the changing uses of music and examine ways in which musical activities and musical work may form part of future industries, from health and wellbeing to tourism, virtual reality, gaming etc. We must also contextualise the use of music as an economic driver and its impact in terms of data use and energy consumption on climate change, for example. An important part of what we have learned from our research is that music practices have the ability to improve social relations when removed from hypercompetitive practices, and this is another area we need to address. Despite the claims to be more inclusive and to widen participation we can see from data that higher education institutions have had disappointing results in terms of race and gender. There is work to be done and we have to consider the validity of purely vocational courses in a workplace dominated by the gig economy. Attali's predictions are, on many fronts, coming true but as much as he overlooked the importance of music workers to our communal wellbeing, we would be foolish now to ignore them. The challenge today is to think beyond music production's direct economic value. This is clearly an unsustainable path as both the data above on incomes show us, but also as this book has argued in its presentation of findings. We need to start thinking about how music and musical practices can be used to improve the lives of individuals and wider society. Music has always been more than just an economic driver; that is its attraction, and it is why the widening of music education to include popular music, performance and business has been so welcome. However, we need to think about how to best serve those young people who want to continue studying music in higher education. Our job is not to feed to the music industry those who believe its myths, but those with the skills to understand, challenge and navigate them.

Our findings should impact the shape of music education and how it is designed and taught in a number of key ways. The first and most obvious way is the inclusion of mental health and wellbeing within curriculum design. Jepson (2019: 152) noted recently, 'I see music business degrees and courses, but where is the mental health and wellbeing module? Everyone involved in the industry should be given the information on how to support and look after themselves

and those around them.’ We quite agree. The question is what should this education look like? We might explore history, the service provision landscape, use case studies to explore moral challenges and produce student-led debates, and so on. What is key is that we move beyond talk of resilience and attempts to individualise the solution. On our course, George integrates material on mental health and wellbeing in the context of the module where this challenge between the how and the why, between commerce and creativity, between the individual and the social, plays out in perhaps the starkest terms: entrepreneurship.

Our findings present interesting challenges for the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship. George also teaches in the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship at Goldsmiths (University of London) where he is seeking to grapple with these challenges too. On the one hand, we must acknowledge the model of freelance, gig economy work which many of our students are doubtless about to engage with, and we must tackle questions as to how to deal with that – marketing, promotion, strategy and so on. At the same time, modules and courses such as these require a level of balance where we ask what the nature of the contemporary workplace means for the future of work, its sustainability, and issues of access. The playing field of course is far from level, and we must not pretend to our students that it is.

There are broader concepts to be challenged too. We know students are told to ‘be their own brand’ and we must help them in some respects, but Sally also often challenges the idea of branding. Cattle are branded, slaves are branded – so what does this mean for matters of identity, autonomy and respect? We need to tell students how to build their brand, but engage them in a robust discussion about the damaging impact this can have on health and wellbeing. We need to both reject the idea of things like working for free on grounds of equity, or use Rawlsian ideas of social justice to explore them. At the same time we have an obligation to prepare students for the ‘real world’. We need to contrast ideas of ‘entrepreneurial resilience’ (Bullough and Renko, 2013) with data on inequality to challenge the narrative of individualism. Put simply, we need to use insights from Forbes but also Foucault, from Barrow but also Bourdieu. Entrepreneurship education sits, in many respects, on the frontline of many of the debates our findings have thrown up (see O’Hara, 2014 for an overview on music business education).

We cannot provide the answers for how we can reconstruct music education in the future. What we know is that music is a rich part of our human heritage and it matters. It is a medium through which we articulate and understand how we might live better together. Music and art have value. One of our musicians ended their interview by saying: ‘We kind of need people to do the art shit otherwise life is fucking dead, and what’s the point?’ [Musician, M, Dubstep, London [18]]. We need to increase music’s social return and might do this by encouraging our students to think more deeply about the art form they are working with. Even organisations such as UK Music, which for many years

has extolled the economic contribution of the music industries to the country's wider economy as being evidence of its value, are now saying that music is more than money. The issue is that this position is being weaponised, particularly by technology companies, who say that given this, belief and emotional labour in the form of self-expression through music don't need or require economic reward because music is about more than money. The making of music doesn't earn money; the earning comes from selling it, which is entirely different. How do we square this with musicians and others coming to our course and others like it, wanting to make money from music? All we can do is critically interrogate this landscape, and encourage our students to critically interrogate it too.

6.5 Concluding Thoughts: Myths and Wellbeing

What do our findings tell us about the society we live in and the world we work in? Musicians are the risk takers, the heroes of technological modernity, the shining light leading the way to the new world order; the sexy, out-there, confident, fluid agents of change and creative destruction (and distraction); the brand and/or flag-bearers of neoliberal economics, with no contracts and no ties. But what happens when this kind of utopian (or magical) thinking falls apart? We are all told to make 'stuff' – to make music – because this is both 'good' and it is good for you. The question our work throws up is: is it really? Smoking was once promoted as being enjoyable, sophisticated and even healthy too: it can take a long time to learn what the negative effects of something are.

Music in the digital secular age stills invokes ideas rooted in mysticism, magic, and the power of the unknown. Being a musician is seen as a 'calling' similar to that of religious belief; the randomness that pervades the music industries' workings seems to have more to do with luck, happenstance and superstition than logic. We hear all the time that there are no rules, that A&R is based on gut instinct, that creativity is based on 'little bits of magic' and that success is down to luck and timing. In this environment, music makers are encouraged to take part and believe in the myths – the myth that taking part is a good thing, the myth that you are in control, the myth that the environment is democratic, the myth that you need to be connected at all times, the myth that playing live is the root to economic success, the myth that we all need to make more. Musical ambition is rooted in the idea of signing up, taking part and believing the myths.

These are the complex and contradictory messages that permeate the whole music ecosphere. People enjoy music and have done for thousands of years. But what happens when the economic rationale for music making is so pronounced and so situated in the individual, that the individual is responsible for making their own future as a cultural entrepreneur? In this new economic

framework and driven by diktat that you must ‘capitalise on your creative talents’, people are barely surviving. There has never been a moment in time when so many people have believed they can be artists, and likewise there has never been a time where we believed that artists could be sustained by the market. This is entirely new, and in framing creativity in this way, two things take place. Firstly, the social, historical and political existence of the infrastructures which are actually there are denied. The internet is not a free space where we reconstruct something; the infrastructures of the material world are reconfigured and amplified, and we can see where privilege lies. Pretending otherwise is a distortion. Secondly, the overemphasis of the economic value of music denies the sociality of music which must be re-emphasised.

None of this is to suggest that those working in the field of music production are deluded or naive, nor that there are nefarious individuals at play, nor is it to doubt the sincerity and good intentions of the vast majority of people working across these industries. Rather that there are very human social desires and practices that are vulnerable to the distortions of these new models. It is musicians’ sociality that draws them in, rather than the obvious glare of economic opportunity. It is our desire and need to connect, to see ourselves reflected in each other’s vulnerability, that keeps us hooked. When you ask a musician to tell you how they feel, they really want to tell you. It is implicit. Their embodied musical practice needs to be heard; they are doing it in an atmosphere that tells them they will be heard; what they find, too often, is that they are not heard. When every message you get contradicts itself, it is unsettling. Hypercompetition is fundamentally unsafe.

How might we conclude and synthesise the arguments we have sought to develop and interpret in this book? The relationship of musicians to the music they make is intimate and embodied and yet fraught with contradictions. It is a relationship which creates meaning and great joy, but it is also experienced as destabilising. The high levels of anxiety and depression experienced by these musicians cannot be explained simply. But it seems evident that the way in which our relationship to music is changing impacts how these musicians relate to their music and their working conditions. The challenge this presents us all with is: can we live better musical lives? Our interviewees are on the frontline of this precarious emotional work and are also fully aware that this is a privileged position. Precarious work is not new or exclusive to music; what it is that distinguishes music from other creative work is the idea that even though these conditions are difficult, they are seen as the lucky ones doing work they love. The idea that musical and creative work is special holds within it the idea that it is, in and of itself, ‘better’ work. Music is a site of pleasure, joy, meaning and fulfilment. It is supposed to be the type of work towards which we might all aspire. However, if that is the case, what does this research tell us about the price of this kind of work? Is the price of musical ambition just too high?

