CultureCase

Attempting to measure the intrinsic value of live music

This research was conducted by **Adam Behr, Matt Brennan and Martin Cloonan** at the **University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow, UK**

Summary

This paper examined how various people (particularly concert-goers) articulate the value of live music. The paper looked specifically at six concerts across a range of genres at the Queen's Hall in Edinburgh: a 900 seat venue (in a converted church) putting on 200 live music events a year. It has a mix of income from public and commercial sources.

The research drew upon a mix of data:

Diaries written by audience members in the weeks preceding and following the concerts; interviews with in-house staff and performers and promoters; media commentary; surveys completed in the venue; and a focus group of concert-goers.

People said they valued many different things about the concert-going experience

For some it was about intimacy with a performer, for others it was a spectacle, while another factor was the smooth running of the show. Many spoke about the atmosphere of a live performance (especially in such a historic building). A widespread feeling was that people valued the immersion offered by the live music experience, whether that was introspective or a form of communal participation. People also liked the potential for transcendence (or the sense of losing one's self) offered by live music. Some values were seemingly in

opposition: some people valued the possibility of the unexpected, whereas others valued the reconfirmation of the familiar.

Measuring the intrinsic value of live music is very difficult

The paper reflects on how difficult it is for people to articulate how they feel about the concert-going experience and how people's responses to surveys contrasted with their observed behaviour. The researchers are confident however that the results show 'an abiding affection' for the Queens Hall as a venue in the Edinburgh music scene.

Value is a process not a commodity

The researchers implore policy makers to be 'thinking through the different ways in which audiences reach and experience transcendence' since that came through strongly in the research.

Keywords

music **focus group** **UK** **interview** **intrinsic** **survey**

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