

# Attempting to measure the intrinsic value of live music

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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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