In Concert: Growing NewcastleGateshead as a Music City

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Foreword

The research for this project was carried out in the spring of 2005. Since then music in NewcastleGateshead has continued on its upward trajectory. Maximo Park, who used to rehearse at Polestar in the Ouseburn Valley, were the toast of the festival circuit this summer and earned themselves a Mercury Music Award nomination; The Editors, signed to Newcastle’s Kitchenware Records, have now just ‘gone Gold’ with 100,000 sales for their debut album; this summer’s Evolution Festival was the biggest ever. And the addition of the Carling Academy in October looks set to raise the profile and availability of music in the city further still.

But the questions posed and the challenges highlighted in this paper back in the spring are perhaps even timelier now. If NewcastleGateshead is to avoid an ignominious slide from music city to musical almost-made-it, it must ensure it works with the grain of passion for music in the city. This means creating and maintaining the environmental conditions for the enthusiasm for making and listening to music to thrive- starting from the bottom up. The vulnerability here can be sharply felt. The Bunker, where bands like the Futureheads, the Golden Virgins and Your Code Name Is: Milo got together, is going through yet another funding emergency. The growing pressure of new housing development in the Ouseburn is casting doubts over the future of the legendary Cluny as a live music venue.

In a welcome move, the Government has recently voiced its commitment to providing better support for music in the UK. It is currently carrying out a feasibility study on setting up a Music Council along the lines of the Film Council. But amongst all the excited talk of a £5billion industry and the digital revolution, any Music Council that is not also charged with the remit and authority to deal with less glamorous issues such as city planning, noise regulation and grass roots funding models will fail aspiring music cities across the UK.

Now is the time to learn from places like NewcastleGateshead and make sure we get Music Council that is fit for purpose.

Melissa Mean and Charlie Tims
Demos
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1. Method and Brief

During spring 2005 we made three research visits to NewcastleGateshead.

Attracted by the emergence of The Sage Gateshead, The Evolution Festival and the city’s growing alternative music scene, we were interested in how NewcastleGateshead supports people who make and experience music. At a moment when the city seemed to be reaching a tipping point, we looked for where the city’s key strengths were and how it might grow in the future.

Rather than focussing on one particular music agenda, such as “music education” or “the music industry”, we interviewed and spoke to the widest possible cross section of people whose life related to music – in whatever form. This encompassed everything from hanging out with punters at gigs, to talking to people fumbling through boxes of old records at RPM, and interviewing full-time record producers and policy-makers charged with supporting the creative industries and culture in grant-giving bodies and public agencies.

In order to contextualise this, we also interviewed key stakeholders in Glasgow, London, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham and drew on our international network in Aarhus, Gothenburg, Rio, Montreal and Brisbane. In total, we conducted 30 interviews and 60 vox-pops in NewcastleGateshead coupled with 30 interviews elsewhere in the UK and overseas.

Although there is a wealth of research looking at the relationship between creative industries and cities, cultural organisations and cities, and the emergence of “music scenes”; the relationship between music “as a whole” and cities is an under-researched area.

This report is not the last word, it’s the start of a debate.
2. One Nation Under a Groove

Music saturates our lives. Filling concert halls, weddings, i-pods and idle moments, it summarises, explains and rearranges our thoughts and perspectives. In an increasingly elusive and uncertain world, music reminds us who we are, where we live and how we feel. It creates a space where friendships begin and others end, where paths are altered and others crossed. Music is there when we relax, when we dance and even at our funeral. It is an invisible language that tells me who I am and who I think you are.

Enthusiasm for music in the UK is at an all time high. In 2004 Britain bought more CDs than anywhere else in the world, more guitars than ever and fell in love with legal downloading. Live music has exploded across the country, with small musicians playing bigger venues and bigger musicians reaching an increasingly global audience. In schools the Music Manifesto is ratcheting music up the education agenda while 13 years of lottery funding have provided a major impetus to the construction of cultural institutions and concert halls.

These changes are crystallising in the UK’s music factories: cities.

As communications technologies grant entrepreneurs a greater degree of choice over where they choose to locate, music scenes are less susceptible to being siphoned off to London. Glasgow and Manchester have already built a reputation for building autonomous regional record industries. The question now is whether other cities across the UK are set to step up to the mark.

As a city at the centre of the urban renaissance keen to embrace culture as an agent of urban renewal and social change, NewcastleGateshead encapsulates the experiences of a number of other cities in the country that are undergoing an upsurge in enthusiasm for music and an interest for developing music. For NewcastleGateshead we could easily read Cardiff, Sheffield, or Leeds.

Pubs, small venues and clubs shake with live music of all kinds, the practice rooms are full and music shops in the city centre are doing a good trade. Bands who cut their teeth in the city like Maximo Park, Your Code Name is: Milo and The Futureheads have secured credibility for the city in the eyes of the national music press. Music guru Steve Lamaq named Newcastle as his tip for new music in 2005, while the central-powers of the music industry in London are increasingly finding themselves striking out for the North East when they are looking to sign musicians.

The Orange Evolution Festival, now in its third year, provides an important point of connection between different music styles and public spaces in the city.

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1 Figures released by the British Phonographic Industry this year attested that during 2004, 174.6 million CD albums were sold in the UK. This represented a 4.5% growth on figures for 2003 and amounted to approximately 3.2 CDs per head – more than anywhere else in the world. See press release, BPI Website “Britons are the world’s greatest music fans”: 22:3:2005 [www.bpi.co.uk](http://www.bpi.co.uk).
The past year has also seen the culmination of millions of pounds worth of major public investment in music in the shape of The Sage Gateshead and a state of the art Performance Academy. Although ultimately unsuccessful, the Capital of Culture bid has altered the way that the city is perceived and has generated a wider engagement and interest in the diverse cultures within it. Musicians in the city are reporting that, for the first time, they are able to work full time and make a living out of it too. More promoters are emerging and a flurry of small labels are being set up: as one record storeowner put it; *People aren’t waiting around – they are just doing it themselves.*

But as NewcastleGateshead enjoys its day in the sun, things backstage are coming to a head. Policy makers and those associated with music in the city can either sit back and bask in this honeymoon period of shimmering cultural institutions and a fashionable face in the popular music press, or they can think about how to build a long term future for music in the city. NewcastleGateshead might be enjoying a boom now, but has it got the assets base to avoid a bust?

London has 540 record labels, NewcastleGateshead a mere 6. Glasgow, the most successful city outside London, can only muster 25. If cities like NewcastleGateshead are to convert their dynamic music making cultures into more substantial, sustainable gain, they will need to be proactive about seizing the opportunity that the current music surge presents. This report aims to identify what the key assets in the city are; how people access and use them; how threats or weaknesses might be overcome; and how NewcastleGateshead might grow as a music city.

When music works well in NewcastleGateshead, it is clearly not simply a matter of funding. It is a broader public climate within the city that encourages and supports people to make and experience music. The long-term sustainability of a vibrant music making and experiencing culture and the growth of a viable music industry rests on developing that climate. This requires both building an agenda shared amongst many different organisations within and around the music sector, and making the grass roots, often small-scale interventions that help release the power of music entrepreneurs and enthusiasts.

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2 Information available on Music Industry components from the Music Week Directory, 2005 [http://www.musicweek.co.uk/directory/](http://www.musicweek.co.uk/directory/)
3. NewcastleGateshead Rising

A hurricane of cool may be sweeping across the North East, but what does that really tell us about the health of music in NewcastleGateshead? This chapter looks at the relative strength of the city’s assets.

At the start of the year music guru Steve Lamaq name-checked Newcastle as his one to watch in 2005. Music in the North East is officially cool. Maximo Park, Your Code Name Is: Milo and The Futureheads have forced the music press to switch their standard stance on the region from disparaging to quietly inquisitive. The Bunker in Sunderland was recently featured in international style barometer Dazed and Confused - it could have easily been The Cumberland Arms or The Cluny in NewcastleGateshead. After a period in the wilderness, Kitchenware Records are set to come in from the cold, with their hotly tipped new-signings The Editors. The last six months have also seen The Sage Gateshead emerge as a national icon with a mission that fuses performance and learning.

But how long does cool really last? And is it really an accurate temperature check on the success of a music city?

The cycle for a scene is about a year to eighteen months. Things started happening in Liverpool about three years ago: six months on people outside the area started to take notice. A year in, and more mainstream media were getting in on the act and then you got the hype. Now Liverpool is dead. It is a curse to be a band from Liverpool. – Industry Executive, London

There’s a lot of hype, like how you see how these “scenes” get constructed – it’s a joke. Like when X started doing well. All their friends who were playing the same clubs got signed, just because they kind of looked the same, and it would sell. Those bands are rubbish – no one will remember them in six months. But because they are a “scene” from the same place and they look and sound like a bad version of the other bands they’ll sell too. But it lasts five minutes.- Industry Executive, London

Cool cities, music scenes and city brands may be the dominant language that we have to describe the relationship between music and cities, but they’re not very helpful when trying to establish what the deeper quality of a city’s music assets are. Sunderland, for example, may have one of the coolest music venues in the country but, in terms of actually having anything resembling a record industry, it is not even on the starting grid.

So what actually are NewcastleGateshead’s music assets and just how strong are they?

**a. Live Music**

In 2004, the government’s Live Music Forum reported that nearly 50% the clubs, halls, pubs and bars of England and Wales had staged a live music event in the last year: a total of 1.7million events³. In the wake of this work it is live music in cities that has attained the greatest degree of public attention. All the indications are that this is on the up, with unsigned bands able to command a considerable live following before they even secure a record deal.

*We went up to Sheffield recently and there’s bands who don’t even have a deal yet, playing in front of 500 people.* - A&R scout, London.

We may be undergoing a national upsurge in enthusiasm for live music, but in NewcastleGateshead this has long been the defining feature of the city’s musical face.

*About ten years ago we wanted to leave London to set up some practice rooms. We went to Hull, Sheffield, Leeds and up here to like, gauge the temperature. We were totally blown away up here; all the pubs and the bars seemed to have somebody playing in them. There were kids walking around everywhere with guitars.* - Practice Rooms manager, NewcastleGateshead

Folk, Roots, and Blues have strong traditions stretching across the last century but the performance of music in the city is currently dominated by rock and roll music. At the time of writing, of 541 concerts currently listed on The Crack magazine’s website 2% are pop events; 7% world, folk and roots music; 69% rock and roll; 3% classical; 11% Blues and 7% Latin and Jazz⁴. The Insangel, the North East’s largest promoter, lists 421 bands on his website, most of which comprise the 69% outlined here, and dominate the landscape of music in the region⁵. Although both The Crack and Insangel work across the North East, the majority of their listings refer to NewcastleGateshead.

The smallest venues in the city are pubs like the Head of Steam and the Cumberland Arms, which can hold about a hundred people. They provide a first port of call for aspiring musicians. Venues of this size are growing around the city. Writers in the formal and informal local music press confirm that, in line with national trends, live music at this level is on the up.

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⁴ The Crack Magazine; Listings correct to 23/04/05 http://www.thecrackmagazine.com/crack/html/index.htm
⁵ www.insangel.co.uk
It is the best it has been for music here for over ten years… for the first time the quality is good, the scene diverse and people don’t want to look like or sound like they are from somewhere else. - Music journalist, NewcastleGateshead

Testimony to the growing pull of live music in NewcastleGateshead came from one hardnosed bar owner who reported that a year ago he junked his Sky satellite system because he thought he could make more cash from putting on live bands than showing the footie. Within six months, he was proved right.

Meanwhile, clubs like the World Headquarters and Foundation are making more space for live acts. NewcastleGateshead can now claim to be able to play host to a wide range of musical experiences - from an amateur harpist doing her first live concert for 30 people in a church, to Rod Stewart’s world tour in the 40,000 capacity Gateshead National Stadium.

Adding to this stock of venues, is the confirmation in April this year that the Academy Group will be opening a new 2,000/400 capacity venue in a former bingo hall in the centre of the city. The potential impact of this enterprise was a consistent theme in our interviews and one that will be returned to later in the report.

b. Professional Amateurs and Enthusiasts
Throughout the city, the health of live music is supported by an army of amateurs and enthusiasts who pursue their hobby to professional standards6. Apart from musicians themselves, there are a host of band managers, promoters, fanzine writers and website editors who are crucial to making music work, building links between bands and venues, creating the publicity to develop audiences and potentially bridge the gap between an isolated region and the national music industry. Many of these people are pursuing this activity in their spare time as an adjunct to their actual day job or something they do as a student or retiree.

From A&R scouts working for major record labels in London, to people running venues in NewcastleGateshead, all were keen to point out the importance of amateur promoters in providing the life blood that drives the development of music as a cultural and a commercial proposition.

It is simple. If you don’t have promoters then you don’t have half as much live music. If you can’t play live, then no one will see you and you’ll have no chance of getting signed- A&R Executive, London

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Generator, established in 1991 to build better links between the music worlds in the North East and London, works specifically to develop young promoters.

New approaches to music making and new ways to access it often come from people operating in this professional-amateur capacity. Hip-Hop, dance culture and DJ-ing today have become a multi-million pound global business, and an international cultural phenomena but began with a mixture of electronics students and reggae enthusiasts running free street parties in New York in the early 1970s. The digital distribution and consumption of music, the defining pressure on the music industry today, was also driven by part-timers and students.

It is from this culture of grass roots entrepreneurship that many of the key players in music in NewcastleGateshead have emerged. Although many don’t actually come from the North East, most made their key future relationships and cut their teeth at clubs, and venues like Shindig, The Soul Kitchen and the Riverside.

People working in this capacity often received little remuneration for their efforts or at least did not see it as a key motivating factor.

Did I make any money? Not really. I think we just about broke even. I swear though, it was one of the best nights of my life, just to see people having a good time, it was great. - Promoter, NewcastleGateshead

You can talk to us about how much you think we’re worth to the local economy, but that doesn’t mean much to us. Loads of our mates earn more than us. We do it because we f***ing love these bands and we love this place, and that’s worth something.” - Venue Manager, NewcastleGateshead

Music offers a simple yet beguiling everyday way for people to participate in and feel connected to the public life of their city. Whether in the back of a pub, in a classical concert hall, or festival in a park, music has the power to make you feel - in a very personal way - part of a shared experience. Strikingly, running through many of the conversations we had with people, “doing music” provided a strong sense of civic contribution. People saw themselves as making the city better for people.

During the research we encountered a club manager who runs nights for people with disabilities; promoters building a venue that would provide desk space for local social entrepreneurs; a record label that only bought from local satellite industries; and a record shop that did DJing workshops for local children.

Many of these people did not fit the conventional bill of ‘civic leader’. Some were on benefits and had a marginal economic existence, few had been through the doors of a community centre - let alone City Hall. Nevertheless, they believed that music cut through this and provided a way by which they could make a difference.
Why are we doing it? We really, really care about Aarhus and we want to make a difference. We want a place that's for us. When people heard about what we were trying to do they responded. We’ve had people plumbing the toilets, painting the floors, building that bar; and we’re not paying any of them. They just want to contribute and be a part of this thing - Music Entrepreneur, Aarhus, Denmark.

c. Technology and the DIY Ethic

People like us sometimes feel that we are let down, but we are not let down because we can do it for ourselves, and put it there for the people…. I have plenty of albums. I have my own label. It doesn’t matter where you are today as everything is easy; you know! things get on the net. I can stay in my house and sell music - by post, by shipping it…. There’s no way you can predict music. You can make a record tomorrow which is a flop, you can make a record tomorrow and life will change, so is the mystic of life. - World Music Producer, North East of England.

Music has always thrived on a DIY ethic. Jimi Hendrix didn’t wait for a left-handed guitar. He played a right-handed guitar upside down and backwards, re-strung for a left-handed player. Kids in the Bronx didn’t wait for hip-hop to make it to the shops, they passed mix-tapes around the street. Brian May still plays with a guitar he built with his dad when he was 9.

The strength of music performance in NewcastleGateshead and the entrepreneurial amateur culture that supports it are testament to the health of this DIY ethic in the region. The combined forces of the digitisation of music and the internet, however have created new opportunities for it to be released. The quote above illustrates an example of a musician, who is able to make, record and distribute his music using these new technologies and, in the process, circumvent the music industry.

In NewcastleGateshead, however, this seemed to be the exception to the rule rather than tip of an iceberg of music revolutionaries waiting to topple the music establishment in London. While the internet has revolutionised the production and consumption of music, it is yet to bring whole scale change to the space in the middle; marketing and distribution of music. As one-music maker in NewcastleGateshead observed;

I can record an album, manufacture a CD, put it on the website. But the problem is, how does anyone hear about it?

And another:

It’s not a myth that its easier to get into the record industry… But it’s a myth you can make any money from it
While it seems that musicians in the city are as yet unable to fully utilise the internet to realise their ambitions, it is at least creating the scope to chip away into the cliff face that confronts musicians attempting to realise their ambitions. Most aspiring bands have their own websites, or are indexed on another site. This can make a big difference. Take the example of the following NewcastleGateshead band, now signed to a subsidiary of a major record label. 

*How did I sign them? Someone mentioned their name and I liked it, I found their website. I listened to some tracks. I went to go and see them, and we signed them pretty soon after that.* - A&R Executive, London.

d. Music Education
In December 2004, The Sage Gateshead opened its doors as a building, but The Sage Gateshead has been active in creating music related learning and development opportunities, as well as promoting a wide range of performers, across the North of England (Cumbria, Tees Valley, Durham, Tyneside, Northumberland) since the establishment of the organisation in 2001. Its founding partners, Folkworks and Northern Sinfonia, have been active in the region since 1987 and 1959 respectively. Although The Sage Gateshead is physically more recognisable as a building housing the Northern Sinfonia, Folkworks and a host of international performers, half of its resources are targeted at working across the community to create learning opportunities for people of all ages, in all genres of music. Although the interviews we conducted in NewcastleGateshead did not reveal a great knowledge of this work, the programmes generated a million person-contacts across the region in the last four years. The work of the organisation in this regard has attracted national attention of policy makers.

While The Sage Gateshead works through partnerships with community organisations, local authorities, schools, Sure Starts, voluntary sector music networks, youth services and individual artists, Performance Academy provides a more directly delivered form of music education. Opened in 2004, as a part of Newcastle College, it provides courses in a range of music making activities from courses for sixteen year olds to degree programmes with state of the art technology. Although focussed on “performance” The Academy assert that their aspiration is to support success of different levels.

*There’s an unfair assumption in this business that to be successful you have to be on Top of the Pops. If you want to be a banker you don’t have to be Governor of the Bank of England, so why, if you want to do music, should being successful mean being famous. Although we do have some people who have gone on to be famous, we try to support a whole range of versions of success including being a better musician, to being able to financially support yourself.* - Director, Performance Academy, NewcastleGateshead
With a more commercial mission, Generator works to develop more directly focussed skills for people who want to make a living out of music. Providing seminars on the industry, music skill workshops, and showcasing platforms for local bands, Generator has developed a model that is name checked in different parts of the country and cities like Bristol are keen to replicate.

**e. Record industry**

NewcastleGateshead has a powerful, growing, and potent live music scene, which is supported by a small army of amateurs and enthusiasts, keen to pursue their love of music, and to a certain extent, their desire to make a contribution to their city.

However, while this activity has a considerable economic dividend for the city in the form of ticket sales, wet profits, music retail and rehearsal room hire, there is a larger question mark over whether this has translated into anything like a regional record industry.

During 2004, eight bands from the North East of England, many of whom had developed their unsigned careers in NewcastleGateshead, secured deals with record companies. Although this is encouraging, particularly for a city that lacks the kind of commercial role models somewhere like Manchester has, the fact that they signed to companies based outside the city at the point of “professionalisation”, indicates a certain inability to retain value.

Bizarrely however, there is almost an inverse correlation between having a strong indigenous live scene and strong regional record labels. London with approximately 75% of the British record industry, definitely doesn’t produce 75% of the country’s musicians.

> Everyone may come to London-based labels when they are signed, but really the live scene in London isn’t that good for local musicians. There’s too much competition for them. There’s the grime thing, but that stands on its own. There may be a few bands who’ve made it recently, but proportionately they are not as many as there should be. I’ve actually heard of bands who get signed and move to London and then get told by their management to move back to Leeds, or Sheffield as they might get more attention there. - Venue Manager, London.

In any-case, despite there being a vibrant live scene, there is limited evidence of this so far translating into a regional record industry for NewcastleGateshead.

Kitchenware Records represents the only significant independent record label in the region, but even in this case, there is no sign that their core value is generated through local musicians. Although they are popularly associated with bands from the North East such as Hurrah, The Kane Gang and Prefab Sprout, their most commercially potent new signing, The Editors, rather than being from NewcastleGateshead, hail from Birmingham.

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**In Concert: Growing NewcastleGateshead as a Music City**

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There are however other bright sparks emerging. One example is the consortium of Insangel/Big Fat Records/Mighty Joe Public, who between them cover a large portion of the music value chain, from live venue, production, management and promotion. Though operating at a fairly small scale now they have aspirations to expand.

Nonetheless, talking to young musicians, most seemed to hold that being successful was synonymous with going to London.

*I guess if we want to take it seriously we’ve got to go to London. You know, there’s more people down there. It is just what you do*

Band Member, NewcastleGateshead.
4. Making and Experiencing Music

NewcastleGateshead has significant assets in a vibrant culture of music performance, an entrepreneurial culture of amateurs and enthusiasts and a strong platform for music education and learning opportunities for young people. But how do people in the city navigate this rich tapestry?

The areas outlined in the previous chapter outline different aspects of how music is made and experienced in the city, they do not however represent a production line for the delivery of musicians or music.

The interviews suggested no direct linear progression from learning music in a school in a partnership developed, for example, with The Sage Gateshead, to playing in a gig at the Cluny, to signing to a local record label.

In fact, the path for people actually making and experiencing music in and around the city’s music ecology is a winding road with many a junction and u-turn. Those on that pathway in NewcastleGateshead have very different ideas of what it means to develop as a musician, to be interested in music, or what counts as success.

Take Emma for example:

"It is Wednesday night and Emma is in a neighbourhood pub that has a touch of Phoenix Nights about its decor. She’s standing at the back with some friends watching her boyfriend’s post-punk band kick through a mix of covers and their own songs. Emma works at a secondary school where as part of a publicly funded arts programme, she teaches children to play music. In her spare time she enjoys playing classical music on the cello and violin, but she wouldn’t consider going to a classical concert. Her music of choice, she declares, is “cheesy pop”.

However, just because Emma plays classical music doesn’t mean she wants to listen to it. And just because she can’t play a certain kind of music doesn’t mean she isn’t interested in experiencing it in other ways. Emma’s music is not supported by one institution or funding system, but instead rests on the diversity of experiences that the city she lives in can offer and connect her to.

Although Emma is just one example, most of the people we spoke to during vox-pop interviews in the pubs and clubs of NewcastleGateshead confirmed that they travel around the city as a part of their music life. People into experiencing and appreciating music travelled between record shops, clubs, concert halls, pubs and small venues, just as those interested in making music also moved around rehearsal rooms, studios, production facilities, friends houses and - in some cases - formal institutions like Generator, the Performance Academy and The Sage Gateshead.
Rather than simply being “experienced” or “consumed”, it is in this culture of exchange in NewcastleGateshead that new forms of collaboration and music are made.

Take Paul for example:

Paul is a promoter and jazz enthusiast. He’s standing at the bar in an arts club talking to a friend about the next gig he’s putting on. He says in passing that he wants to stay true to the jazz ethic of experimentation and improvisation and is thinking about putting on a night with a famous avant-garde electronica artist. At the mention of his name the barman pricks up his ears. They talk. It turns out the barman is a promoter too and though he isn’t into jazz he is into putting on interesting acts. Three months on they’ve formed NOFI, an initiative to promote links between experimental performers and jazz music and have just put on their first sell out gig in Newcastle.

It is moments such as this that get to the heart of why cities are good at making music and sustaining the music making process - bringing people together from different backgrounds to create something fresh and new.
5. Challenges for NewcastleGateshead

The experiences of Paul and Emma touch the heart of how music is made and experienced in cities. However, cities face a series of challenges that can work against this energy at the grass roots of music. NewcastleGateshead is no exception.

NewcastleGateshead has experienced an unprecedented surge of new energy driving music. If the city is to keep and develop its music, it will have to face down a series of challenges.

a. (Creative) Industrial Waste

It is easy for cities to assume that the cultural industries are slick, beautiful and clean; not only will they fix your economy, but they’ll make you look good too. But just like the heavy manufacturing industries that preceded them, the cultural industries create a dirt of their own, without which they could not exist.

Just as factories created soot, grime and carbon monoxide, music needs space for flyers, posters and noise. Cities like NewcastleGateshead need to strike a balance between the liveability agenda as narrowly defined as clean streets, and a broader liveability that plans for and permits some space for the life-blood of music, an equally vital part of what makes a city a good place to live, work and visit.

There are two flash points in NewcastleGateshead.

The first is in the disused area around the Ouseburn Valley, where a cluster of recording studios, record labels and live music venues have taken root. The vibrancy they have bought to the area, or “sweat equity” as it is sometimes called, has attracted the attention of property developers. Tension has already arisen over complaints from new residents about noise, and the music entrepreneurs have become suspicious that the Council would like the area to shift to quieter-creative industries, like artists’ studios. If noise fails to be planned for, NewcastleGateshead could experience the same collapse in its music scene as Brisbane did. Brisbane’s music district, the Valley, was effectively closed down by residents’ complaints about noise. Only the closure of the legendary Empire Hotel spurred Brisbane City Council into action, and six months ago the area was declared an entertainment zone and venues are slowly beginning to reopen.

The second flashpoint is around flyering. The running battle between promoters and venue owners and council authorities to keep the streets tidy is common to many cities, but seems particularly tense in NewcastleGateshead. Newcastle City Council has a well-earned reputation for vociferously pursuing people flyering from local venues and will prosecute them if they are doing so without a permit on their person (even if they do actually own one).
b. Culture and Entertainment
As the Licensing Act (2003) comes into effect, control of the licensing of new premises will pass into the control of Local Authorities. Proprietors of clubs and venues that champion music have complained for a long time that they are not treated or recognised as different from the vertical drinking establishments that have come to dominate the city centre. Despite the failed Capital of Culture bid, many people involved in music acknowledge that it contributed to a greater degree of recognition for what they do. However, at the same time they feel that the “party toon” image has contributed to their misrepresentation. In response Newcastle City Council has attempted to develop a new licensing policy that only permits new premises that “enhance the cultural diversity of the city”. Whether this can be made legally viable remains to be seen.

c. New Kids on the Block
Together The Sage Gateshead, Performance Academy and Newcastle Academy (due to open October 2005) represent considerable acquisitions for NewcastleGateshead. But they have not arrived without creating something of a disturbance in the city’s music ecology; these new arrivals are big fish compared to most other operators in NewcastleGateshead.

The Sage Gateshead
The long running education programme, that pre-dates the building itself, has had a considerable effect on schools and communities in NewcastleGateshead and the wider region. The degree to which The Sage Gateshead has integrated itself into the cultural fabric of music making in NewcastleGateshead however seems open to question in the minds of people we spoke to.

Broadly speaking, opinions are divided into three points of view. The first welcomes its arrival, the second is frightened by the competition it represents while the third is sceptical of its long-term sustainability.

We think it is great. Some people have been a bit suspicious, but it is the best opportunity we’ve had since I’ve been up here. We’ve done a couple of small events with them and if they can’t sell their tickets for gigs then I send out an e-mail to all our members. They’ve been able to get better performers up here than we’ve ever seen before, and using our distribution list we’re able to help them to get the audience.

I mean it is a state-sponsored out of town shopping centre isn’t it? They buy up all the advertising space we used to have, forcing us to take corporate sponsorship, which we don’t want to do. They are able to pay people far more to be able to play there than we ever would and some things there are running directly on top of the same stuff that we’ve always been doing. It is frustrating but we might have to rethink our game a bit.
It can't last! I mean it's for the beards. No one round here wants to go. You’ve got to have a car to go there and the gigs are too expensive. Who wants to sit down at a concert? At the moment it’s a concert hall that does conferences, but when they realise they can’t make any money they’ll become a conference centre that does concerts!

The Sage Gateshead’s management team recognises that there is a complicated and subtle long game to get right here.

Our aspiration to ‘irrigate not drain’ needs to be realised through the thorough and honest establishment of long term partnerships with musicians and promoters that maximise the value of all partners’ creative and material assets. As a large voluntary sector organisation, we have a responsibility to deploy our resources to serve a sustainable and developmental purpose. This means trying out a range of collaborations and initiatives across the formal and informal sectors in the music environment and continuing to learn and change in response to musicians, learners, promoters and audiences.

Director of Learning and Participation, The Sage Gateshead

The Newcastle Academy
On April 25th 2005, The Academy Group announced the acquisition of the Gala Bingo Hall in Newcastle. The Venue will comprise of one 2000 capacity venue and one 400 capacity venue.

Group Operations Director of the Academy Group, Steve Forster was recently quoted as saying:

“Having grown up in Newcastle, I realize how important great venues are to a thriving local music scene. Since the demise of The Mayfair and The Riverside, Newcastle has sadly been lacking in quality venues. The consequence of this has been that many artists at the larger end of the market have by-passed the City and at the lower end, emerging local talent has not had the platform of a venue to hone their performing skills. Our Newcastle venue will fulfill both of these needs with a 2,000 capacity main auditorium and a 400 capacity second room, both of which will be production complete.”

While the deal had not been completed while the research was being undertaken people interviewed were keen to voice an opinion. Rather than feeling that the Academy venue would attract acts who normally “by-pass” the city, many existing venue managers felt that the Academy would take business away from slightly smaller venues like the University of Northumbria, which has a 1,600 capacity

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7 Academy Group Press Release; 25/04/05 http://www.shepherds-bush-empire.co.uk/academy_music_group/releases/newcastle.pdf
concert hall. Others went further suggesting that the city was by-passed as it lacked a venue, larger than that which the renovated Bingo hall will provide; venues like Manchester Apollo (3,500 capacity) or The Blackpool Empress Ballroom (4,000 capacity).

Others however were more sceptical that the size of venue was the reason for certain musicians by-passing the city. Instead, they recognised that having a professional outfit like the Academy Group in the city could only be a good thing, forcing other venues to readjust their offer to the city.

Another serious concern voiced was whether the arrival of a chain will do anything to promote indigenous music development, as it may cap the ambitions and potential for growth of homegrown entrepreneurs. Promises of community outreach work made by the Academy will need to be made to work to ensure that it generates wider value for NewcastleGateshead.

d. Professional and Public Disconnect

Although the way that people experience music in the city occurs across a set of organisations, the research showed little evidence of people within those organisations talking to one another. There seemed to be little knowledge of what was inside The Sage Gateshead or the Performance Academy, or what opportunities they offer to young musicians, promoters and small venues.

There was little evidence of a network in the city to discuss and act on issues. Most of the communication seemed to occur bilaterally with a few well-connected individuals in the council or Generator, rather than in a distributed network. Competition rather than collaboration characterised the relationships between different venues; few venues permitted other venues to advertise on their premises, the universities being a classic example. It was clear that from the perspective of makers of music and people using organisations the most value was created when organisations came together; like for the Orange Evolution Festival, or when venues form ladders passing bands between them as their profile increases, or the partnerships between The Sage Gateshead and community and education organisations.

Equally, there seemed to be a limited connection between the venues and gig-going public and the rest of the people in living, working and going out in NewcastleGateshead. There are weak bridges between the bar and night-club culture of NewcastleGateshead and the live music life of the city. Independent venues like Stereo and the World Headquarters are some of the few who are bridging this divide.

Despite the success of Orange Evolution, it still seems hard to get permission to run a festival in NewcastleGateshead. The city houses comparatively few compared to places like Bristol and Leeds. A number of interviewees cited what they perceived as
the bureaucratic and unhelpful attitude of some of the functions within local authorities, transport authorities and the police. People reported that their efforts at staging festivals had stumbled at the first hurdle. As a result, music tends to happen behind closed doors, rather than in the public spaces of the city.

e. Fragility of Music Set-Ups
As already outlined, cities need to find a range of ways of supporting different stories of success; from producing the next U2 or Simon Rattle to, running an open-mic folk night at The Green Mandolin in Gateshead. There is no hierarchy of success for cities other than the match between the aspirations of people involved with music and how easily a city helps them to be realised. But while it is crucial to recognise the importance of less economically spectacular stories of success, this does not remove the need to find ways of supporting people who aspire to develop a commercial side of their passion for music.

As outlined in the first chapter, NewcastleGateshead has a limited local recording industry, and those that are there are often characterised by fragility. We encountered a number of record labels, rehearsal studios and entrepreneurs who were constantly one step from being chucked out from their current homes, due to uncertain leases. Equally, plans for redevelopment were subject to protracted delay by planning authorities.

Most people in small music set-ups don’t know where or how they can access funding to develop commercially and see the investment in time required to fill out forms as a major barrier. One musician told us he would rather chance his luck with a small ad in the back of Private Eye than attempt to get any money from the Arts Council or the local authority. At the moment, while there is good support in NewcastleGateshead for younger musicians on how to do their first demo tape and where to send it, there is little support for those with more experience, but still not enough to make it onto the next stage on the commercial ladder.
6. In Concert: How NewcastleGateshead Might Grow as a Music City

The future potentially looks bright for music in NewcastleGateshead. Both in the city and around the United Kingdom there are a series of indications that the urban renaissance, alterations in communications technologies and the upsurge in enthusiasm for making music are bolstering the appeal of cities outside London for people hoping to make music.

*Because we can go anywhere [being close to the airport], we can stay where we want. There are lots of advantages to being outside London, so if we can take them, we will*
Independent Record Label Director, Glasgow

*We did a showcase in a town hall in a small village up the road and we had loads of industry types up from London, I just don’t think that used to happen*
Independent Record Label, Fife.

*Because we can record our own stuff and can get it out there using the internet, we don’t have to leave. I like Newcastle and I want to stay here.*
Band Member, NewcastleGateshead

*People go up to Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield – you didn’t get that seven years ago. We picked up a band up there, mentioned it to a few people, went back for their next gig and suddenly there were people from all over the country trying to get them to sign. People had flown in from America. It was crazy*
Band Manager, London

The experience of NewcastleGateshead suggests that three key areas will effect the future of music in the city.

- Setting the public climate
- Networking and collaboration
- Resources for amateurs and enthusiasts

a. Setting the Public Climate

*We don’t want cash handouts, but we wouldn’t mind a few more open doors*
Venue Owner, NewcastleGateshead

The temperature of the public climate for music making in NewcastleGateshead is reflected in the ease at which the grass roots of music can grow.

For small entrepreneurs and venue owners, simply being “allowed” to be creative is often more important than actually explicitly needing funding. The public climate
in a city is subsequently manifest in the ease with which people are able to perform music, run venues, promote bands, start a night at a club, find a rehearsal place or speak to people in public institutions. If you can’t publicise what you’re doing nobody will come and see you, if you can’t find a snare drum when you need one you can’t perform and if you can’t make noise, you’ll never be able to practice.

**Fly-postering as public art**

One of the principle problems with posters is that they are deemed as unsightly, and that the “drums” on which they are placed obstruct pedestrianised precincts. The NewcastleGateshead Initiative has earned the city a reputation over the last five years for ground-breaking public art. Why not apply a little of this talent to the problem of fly-postering and reframe the poster drums as public art? A competition could be run for local artists, creative enterprises, schools and universities to design advertising drums for the city centres that enhance the public environment rather than detract from it. Equally, an annual competition could be held for the best concert-poster with competition winners being exhibited on hoardings in the city centre; this could encourage relationships between graphic designers and the visual arts community and the music fraternity.

**Exemption on flyering for local acts**

Ideally there should be no restrictions on flyering in the street. This may not be possible but as a compromise venues that are willing to allow flyering and posters from other venues on their premises, should be exempt from licenses to distribute publicity materials on the street. Alternatively, a different license, or perhaps no license at all could be applied to publicity materials relating to local musicians or venues advertising local acts.

**Planning for noise**

Any new residential development in areas such as the Ouseburn should be subject to “buyer-beware” information as standard; so as to reduce the potential of future conflicts. Noise proofing should be a shared responsibility between private developers and venues.

**Distinguishing between alcohol and cultural activity**

Binge-drinking is a modern urban sickness. The cause is less rooted in the length of time people have access to alcohol, and more in the availability of activities on offer to people in city centres during the evening. Now that licensing powers have been transferred to local authorities, NewcastleGateshead has an opportunity to set some conditions to encourage diversity, including discriminating between “vertical drinking” establishments and music venues.

b. **Networking and Collaboration**

*The Performance Academy? Is that the Sony thing in Sunderland?*

Venue Owner, NewcastleGateshead
A music city is as strong as its networks; the flows of music talent, resources, ideas and people around it. Venues, studios, websites, street corners and bedrooms and garages provide hubs and destinations for these flows. Most networking is done informally. Promoters, record stores and venue owners are often the people with the highest network value. This is as it should be; the networks with the greatest capacity for innovation tend to be distributed rather than concentrated around one or two large hubs. However, there is a role for city agencies - whether directly through the council, or through music development agencies - to help ensure the music network is as connected as it could be. If a city is to think of itself as a cultural institution, producing musicians and creating cultural experiences, it has to think about how resources are moving within it. Overall, NewcastleGateshead seemed to be very well networked at the grass roots level, often based around personal contacts of promoters and venues. However, larger institutions and agencies seem to be less integrated with wider music ecology.

Festivals and public music
Festivals provide an opportunity for collaboration between makers and organisers of music, claiming public space for a social use, and opening up diverse experiences for people keen to experience music. They can start relationships between organisations that create value long after the festival is finished. The Councils of Newcastle and Gateshead should coordinate a review involving all the agencies that have a say in making a festival possible (police, transport, licensing, park authorities) and establish simple common ground rules and if possible a presumption in favour of festivals going ahead.

Open House Music Making
NewcastleGateshead have an established festival of music experience, why not one of music making too? This could occur over a day, a week, a month, or just one night. Venues across the city could make their facilities available at subsidised rates, or better still, for free. Big institutions could open for 24 hours, enabling aspiring musicians the chance to use space for free or experiment with recording equipment. Other public spaces could make themselves available for music practice and performance. A one off, or annual open house would be valuable in its own right in terms of changing perceptions and bringing a new range of people into direct and active contact with the music institutions in the city. It could also stimulate some institutions into developing a more open access policy in their everyday running.

NewcastleGateshead Music Network
Organisations with a mission to promote collaboration and networking in the music sector tend to be regional in their scope rather than focused on Newcastle or Gateshead, or indeed the NewcastleGateshead city region: Generator has a regional remit; The Sage Gateshead’s Learning and Participation programme is regional, as is its community music and training network; and the Arts Council. While
NewcastleGateshead is very much embedded in the wider region, it clearly has a number of issues that are particular to it. In the process of this project, a steering group has been drawn together comprising a range of public and private sector stakeholders in NewcastleGateshead. This could form the basis for developing an ongoing network. Other players would need to be brought in to ensure it was properly inclusive. Responsibility for leading it could rotate on a six monthly or yearly basis. A different organisation could then shape the agenda on the issues and hosting. This would help raise awareness of different institutions and their perspectives and give them a bigger stake in its ongoing success. A small amount of funding/administrative assistance should be made available to organisations that cannot afford to take on this role out of their core budget and to ensure that small organisations (for example venues or labels) could take the lead as much as large organisations.

c. Resources for Amateurs and Enthusiasts

This is what we can do when we have nothing. Imagine what we could do if we had something?

DIY Record Label, NewcastleGateshead

One of the city region’s core assets is the enthusiasm and passion for music at a grass-roots level. One of its key weaknesses, is enabling people with enthusiasm to convert their small operations to the level of being a viable, commercial proposition without leaving the city, if they so wish. While part of the solution comes from creating a climate that encourages music, and fostering a better sense of community amongst organisations, it also comes from making resources available and accessible to those who want them.

Technology

Recent trends in technology have been made to work for consumers, and to a lesser extent, for producers of music. It is yet to work for places. One way for cities to harness technology to work for their music development could be through tapping into the power of local networks of recommendation and referral and use this as a basis for distributing and selling music. Regional Development Agencies could construct small funding streams for entrepreneurs to come up with initiatives that link the regional development of music to technology. These might include:

- An internet station with a remit to support and showcase live local music. Radio Magnetic\(^8\), an internet radio station in Glasgow, has 125,000 listeners and regularly broadcasts from local clubs and venues. They have recently started a chart for unsigned musicians across Scotland. Rather than physically buying tracks, listeners vote through the website for music they like. Radio Magnetic potentially provides an important advertising

\(^8\) [www.radiomagnetic.com](http://www.radiomagnetic.com)
platform for musicians from Glasgow and Scotland to sell their music over the web.

- A site to index and sell MP3s from local musicians. Models such as Weedshare, Tunetribe and CD Baby all provide ways for unsigned musicians to sell their music9. Weedshare crucially combines peer-to-peer distribution of music with a saleable product, partially solving the problem for aspiring musicians, that is the existing music industry’s domination of the marketing and media channels.

- Extra funding for an existing site (like The Crack’s) or a new site publicising and showcasing local music, listing future dates.

**Loans for small labels**

A significant problem for small record labels is holding onto commercially viable music once they’ve got their hands on it. Without some cash up front, small operations find it hard to make down-payments on initial pressings of records, let alone get a substantial cut of the Intellectual Property Rights from a publisher. Along the lines of a model proposed by the Welsh Development Agency, modest loans of up to £2000 could be allocated to small labels, on the proviso that 15% of the IP Rights be paid back to the fund10. This could then be reallocated for further loans. On a more dramatic scale larger loans could be made to lure the industry from London. These loans could be made on the basis that the company in receipt, would invest the same quantity of money in a locally based satellite industry.

**DIY Centres**

Doing it yourself for musicians is only ever as good as the access they have to tools and knowledge. While in many ways the DIY movement is a liberation of creative freedom for musicians, it is also a kind of inequality. DIY may make more sense for musicians who have parents who can pay for recording time and computer software. Likewise those who have a primary career to fund their music habit, may also find themselves better positioned to do DIY music.

Cities have done well to support music development agencies that provide knowledge to musicians; helping them to send off demos, speak to industry professionals, locate studios etc. However, they are yet to convert this into providing tools to help entrepreneurs go to the next level up. Gimlet in Roskilde provides a useful model11.

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9 For more information on Weedshare see http://www.weedshare.com/help/; for more information on CD Baby see http://cdbaby.com/about; for more information on TuneTribe http://www.tunetribe.com/


11 For information (in English) of a similar model to that provided by Gimlet in Roskilde, see the Huset Kulturcentre in Aarhus http://www.huset-aarhus.dk/leng_udgave/index.html
The Gimlet is a music venue with a difference. Run as a social enterprise, one half of its operation runs the legendary Roskilde Festival and one of the premier independent venues in Denmark showcasing local and international talent. The other half operates an open source centre for people who want to develop their own festivals, venues or events. They can provide office space, a place to photocopy and create posters and materials, contacts and ‘how-to’ knowledge that other people can with relative ease plug into and use for their own enterprise. Many of the enterprises they’ve helped have established themselves as permanent nights, venues and festivals and are now running independently.

The future development of the space between The Sage Gateshead and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, the redevelopment of the former HQ of The Sage Gateshead, or the creation of extra-space alongside an existing organisation (like The Cluny, Polstar, Generator, The Performance Academy or World Head Quarters) might indicate potential opportunities for such as space.

**Instant live CDs**
In every aspiring music city there are one or two venues where up and coming acts perform after a few practice gigs. In Sheffield it is The Grapes, in Leeds The Brudenelle Social Club, In Newcastle it is probably The Head of Steam. Venue proprietors claimed that for approximately £2,000, recording equipment could be fitted to record live shows so that musicians have an instant product from performing which they can then use to promote themselves.

**Widening access to existing facilities**
Both the Performance Academy and The Sage Gateshead have tremendous recording, rehearsal and performance facilities. It is unclear how accessible these are to people not studying within their confines; in the case of The Sage Gateshead, the programming team are currently auditing the first six months demand for spaces use in order to determine what the best way is to make the resources most broadly accessible. Both The Performance Academy and The Sage Gateshead, in collaboration with other organisations in the city, could develop ways to make facilities more accessible. This could mean making rehearsal spaces available at certain times of the year, the week or even at night.

**Music fellowships**
A further option might be to develop a localised version of NESTA-style fellowships but targeted at music innovators whether producers, musicians or promoters.
7. Epilogue: Learning from The NewcastleGateshead Experience

NewcastleGateshead is not a model that other cities hoping to develop their music scenes should necessarily aim to replicate. It does however provide an insight into how a music city can work well. Taking this, the following set of propositions provide further points of investigation for other cities.

Every musician matters
Musicians aren’t created by one organisation they come out of their relationship with a series of them; a place to practice, a place to meet people, a place to learn about music, a place to see it. A rich experience and understanding of music cannot be delivered by one organisation; it comes from interactions that occur simultaneously and over time. Cities need to foster these exchanges.

The key lever is not just funding; it is the climate cities create
Chucking money at people who want to make music is not the answer. While there is a place for different agencies to fund music, cities have a key role in recognising the importance of music and removing the barriers that oppose creative endeavour. They need to discriminate between vertical drinking establishments and music venues and make public space more easily available for music festivals.

If cities want a music industry they have to plan for pollution
Just as heavy industry was impossible without smoke and noise, the creative industries also create a certain amount of necessary dirt. There should be tighter regulation of building standards with regards to sound-proofing near music venues and a better distinction between unsolicited fly-postering and the vital flow of information and publicity that makes a local music industry possible.

Music is civic participation, not just economic growth
While music is potentially a major driver of economic growth, more people have music as a hobby than a job. Cities can create a setting for people’s different musical aspirations to be realised; whether they result in economic dividends or not. If cities only go for the commercially viable, they miss the core connection between making music and participating in making your city better.

Innovation comes from informality
If cities are serious about maintaining a locally, regionally based music industry they shouldn’t drive to convert their entire amateur informal culture into a business. While it is important to help viable commercial propositions develop, in music it is from this informal culture that innovation emerges. Amongst many others, music festivals, DJ-ing, hip-hop and nightclubs all came from this informal reservoir of innovation.
Music scenes are social capital
Part of the agency of music is that it is good at stimulating social capital. For a band to put on a gig, it requires a lot of different people to collaborate, share ideas and take some risks together. They have to pull together a venue, promoter, other bands to make up the line-up, someone to design and print flyers, find a soundman, maybe borrow some equipment, then persuading all their friends and their friends’ friends to come so they are not playing to an empty room.

Being cool is not enough
Music “scenes” and the desire to be seen as “with it” or “cool” is the only way we have of describing whether a place is good or not. It is a poor language with which to characterise cultural activity, alienates those who are a part of it and can leave as quickly as it descended.

Are cities the new record companies?
Music is both culturally and economically dominated by London. If cities outside the capital are to compete they need to find ways of harnessing and developing the entrepreneurial culture of people within them who want to make and experience music. Technological innovations have opened new doors for entrepreneurs, but cities have a role in supporting them further.

Are musicians court-jesters?
Rather than musicians making profits by owning the rights to their songs, they’re increasingly starting to move to the model of court jesters, who earn their keep by performance rather than copyright exploitation. Cities should take live music more seriously as a way to develop a local music industry.

Bringing place and music technology together
Technology has revolutionised the consumption of music but failed to create a comparable revolution in its production. This has not been possible, as aspiring musicians still have to rely on the same channels of distribution dominated by the established industry. If cities want to develop better local music industries they have to plug this distribution gap by finding ways of using technology to exploit word-of-mouth recommendation at a local level.
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Web Resources

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Media
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The Crack Magazine http://www.thecrackmagazine.com/noflash.htm

Music Support
Generator http://www.generator.org.uk/index_04.htm
North East Music Network http://www.northeastmusic.net/home.php

In Concert: Growing NewcastleGateshead as a Music City
Promoters
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Double Down http://www.popkid.com/uk/doubledown/contact.htm
Jumpin Hot Club http://www.jumpinhot.com/
Sound Distinction http://www.sounddistinction.co.uk/
The Fritz http://www.thefritz.co.uk/
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Publishing

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Demolition http://www.demolitionrecords.com/
Distraction Records http://www.distractionrecords.com/weekender.htm
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Over Ground Records http://www.overgroundrecords.com/contact.asp

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Reflex Records http://www.reflexcd.co.uk/
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Fading Ways (Record Label operating under Creative Commons Licence)
[http://www.fadingwaysmusic.com/]

Electronic distribution for unsigned/independent/new music
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Global Grooving Radio [http://www.globalgrooving.co.uk/]
Karmadownload [http://www.karmadownload.com/]
Radio Magnetic [www.radiomagnetic.com]
The Unsigned Band Web [http://www.unsignedbandweb.com/]
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Knowhere [www.knowhere.co.uk]
Music Journal [http://www.musicjournal.org/home.html]
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Music Week [www.musicweek.co.uk]
Podcasting News [http://www.podcastingnews.com/]
The Guardian (Netmusic) [http://www.guardian.co.uk/arts/netmusic/]

Local Support For Music
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Sound Connections (London) [http://www.sound-connections.org.uk/]
Welsh Music Foundation
National Support For Music
Arts Council England http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/
Contemporary Music Making For Amateurs (COMA) http://coma.org/
Folk Arts England http://www.afouk.org/
National Federation of Music Societies
http://www.makingmusic.org.uk/MM/home.aspx

Young People and Music
Music Education Council http://www.mec.org.uk/
National Foundation for Youth Music http://www.youthmusic.org.uk/
About Demos

“Demos provokes exactly the sort of long term thinking missing from the current debate” – The Financial Times

“Demos never reads like a scholar along with his books…[it] bursts with new ideas. Until Demos came along, think tanks were dry academic places run by men with pipes.” – The Independent on Sunday

“We came to Demos because we needed an intellectually robust and politically astute perspective.” – Emma Gilthorpe, Vice President for Public Policy, Cable & Wireless

Demos is a greenhouse for new ideas which can improve the quality of our lives. As an independent research organisation, our aim is to create an open resource of knowledge and learning that operates beyond traditional parties, identities and disciplines.

Demos connects researchers, thinkers and practitioners to an international network of people changing politics. Our ideas regularly influence government policy, but we also work with companies, NGOs, colleges and professional bodies – any organisation that can make change happen. Our partners share a desire to understand a complex, globalising world, and to play an active role in shaping its future.

Demos knowledge is organised around five themes, which combine to create new perspectives. The themes are democracy, learning, enterprise, quality of life and global change.

But we also understand that thinking by itself is not enough. Good ideas grow out of practice. Demos has helped to initiate a number of practical projects which are delivering real social benefit through the redesign of public services.

Like a greenhouse, Demos is open and transparent. We share our ideas as widely as possible, through books, seminars, conferences and the internet. As a registered charity, all our research is carried out in the public interest.

For Demos, the process is as important as the final product. We bring together people from a wide range of backgrounds to cross-fertilise ideas and experience. By working with Demos, we expect all our partners to develop sharper insight into the way ideas shape society.