

## TRANSCRIPT

### Sound As Ever (Australian Music Vault Podcast) Episode 6 Youth in the Australian Music Scene

**Music:** Before Too Long by Paul Kelly

Welcome to Sound As Ever. An Australian Music Vault Podcast produced by young content producers and radio makers interested in exploring stories and issues in the Australian Music Scene. This episode discusses the barriers young people face within the live music scene and explores why live music is an important part of the youth identity. This episode was produced by Rebecca Maakasa and Bridget Bourke.

**Music:** There's Eshays In My House by Jungle Cuffs

**Narration (Bridget):** Australia's known for its large and diverse live music scene.

**Narration (Rebecca):** We've had rockers, punks, sharpies, jazz fanatics, teeny boppers...covering fans from every genre across generations - Australia is the place for live music!

**Narration (Bridget):** Every generation has been amongst it. Just ask your mum, your brother - your nan even! Everyone's been obsessed with an Aussie musician and have craved their presence on the stage.

**Narration (Rebecca):** But is the opportunity for young people to see live music on the decline? As the years go on, there are more liquor licensing laws, with the cost to put on live shows skyrocketing there are less incentives for artists and venues to do multiple shows. Including ones that cater to underage audience.

**Narration (Bridget):** In this episode, we explore what it's like being a young person in Australia wanting to see live music, and what it's looking like for future generations.

**Music:** Joker And The Thief by Wolfmother

**Narration (Rebecca):** Meet Josh. He's a young media maker living in Melbourne. But live music wasn't always just a few tram stops away. He grew up in Busselton, a town 3 hours south of Perth with a population of about 22,000.

**Josh:** Busselton was a very quiet town and still is very quiet town in terms of the music scene there. There's a bigger town a bit north of us called Bunbury which sort

of got people at the size of say like a British India - But for any larger acts it was pretty much ruled out. That was until a festival called Southbound which was a large festival which brought some big acts. We had people like Arctic Monkeys, The Flaming Lips, The Yeah Yeah Yeahs. But that was just the one time of the year. So we had one weekend to watch all of your live music and then after that you were travelling.

**Music:** Joker And The Thief by Wolfmother

**Josh:** The first act I ever saw it was at the West Coast Blues and Roots festival in Fremantle. My dad to my mate Jack and I up to the festival to see WolfMother. They were the biggest band in the world to Jack and I and we were, thought we were being rockstars and pushing our way to the front of the barriers to see this band that we idolise. In reality a lot of people let us go through because you are so small and they thought, they felt sorry for us. Having that experience seeing Andrew Stockdale up there shredding on his guitar, it was really special because we had not ever like seen anything like that before. Yeah Wolf Mother were pretty special at the time.

**Music:** Hot Wax by King Gizzard AND The Lizard Wizard

**Narration (Rebecca):** What an incredible first live music experience to have...

**Narration (Bridget):** ...And living in Australia, that's what a lot of our first experiences are like. There seems to be a lot of blues, rock, roots festivals around that your parents would take you. But not all of us have parents that are into music and can drive us all that way!

**Sound:** Teenagers chatting in the background

**Narration (Bridget):** We sat down with some inner Melbourne teens, - Evie, Claire, Harry and Luke to hear their thoughts on the current festival structure.

**Evie:** ...seeing the same bands in the indie surf rock scene is like yeah... It's fine ... it's the same couple of bands in an - [Harry agrees in the background] - indie surf-rock scene, like yeah it's okay it's fun but like ...

**Harry:** Usually what happens with festivals is that most festivals are overage, minus things like Groovin' [Groovin' The Moo Festival] but yeah 90%-100% are overage and then 100 - 90 % of side-shows are overage as well because festivals are in charge of booking the venues and and festival managers are in charge of where these bands play. So, yeah that's the problem that festivals 100% don't think about the underage market and don't cater for the underage market.

**Music:** 6 pack by Dune Rats

**Luke:** Obviously the reason why these festivals are over 18 is because you know, what they think about the music industry now. have a big problem with music and alcohol - that they're kind of going hand in hand and people say... but even working in the music industry, it's a part of the culture. If you're not a part of the culture, if you don't drink heavy and go out really late at night then you don't know anything about it ... it feels kind of destructive and exploitative almost. You come along, you see a band or a festival you have alcohol shoved down your throat not literally ...

**Music:** 'Between Friends feat Jesse Davidson' by Japanese Wallpaper

**Narration (Bridget):** This group of teens are pretty special. They were a part of a program called New Slang in 2017, an initiative that gets young people involved in creating live events. There's monthly events at The Art Centre and it's one way that young people have been at the forefront of the music industry.

**Music:** 'Feel The Way I Do' by The Jungle Giants

**Narration (Rebecca):** The New Slang team also put on special events during the school holidays. Last year they curated a high tea and music experience. Here's Harry.

**Harry:** We did a gig last year where we had a partnership with Parliament House and it was all ages, it was free, no alcohol event. But there was plenty of - actually we did high tea in traditional Parliament House style! So there's all these kids from areas all over the place who are not fancy at all but they're still being included into this whole high tea thing. It was really fun experience to get all these people into this venue that was never made for live music. And to have this inclusive setting. And I feel like that that's maybe a good idea that we could do. To experiment with different places to hold live music. Different places that don't need or hold alcohol licences. And places that aren't you know so motivated into making a dollar over including what is going to be the future of live music which is kids are our age and kids all over the country.

**Music:** There's An Eshay In My House by Jungle Cuffs

**Harry:** I went to Golden Plains Festival over the weekend. And while it is still underage festival, it is completely un-corporate there's no sponsorship or anything like that. There's no incentive for you to get piss drunk. There's also a system they have in place, where if you are underage, if you can get a legal parent or a guardian to

come with you so you're allowed to go. And I think that that's really responsible and exciting for young kids - because there were still plenty of big name acts at the festival - there was Thundercat and King Krule, big international acts that you would never see elsewhere.

**Narration (Bridget):** Josh also expresses the importance to exposure to live music at a young age.

**Josh:** When you're under 18 you obviously aren't allowed to buy alcohol and I think that can linger on in people. They've been these gigs sober. They're there for the music and I think that carries over into adulthood as well I think for people who haven't attended gigs until they're 18 they may be seeing it as a drinking day or night and not a music day or night. So they may not have the sensibility to watch the band without being that social lubricant of alcohol to really enjoy themselves. I think people who have been there before they know that they can watch a gig sober and really enjoy the night without it can control themselves more I guess have a bit more of the musical experience rather than a drink experience with music in the background.

**Music:** Belgrave Line by Turn South

**Narration (Rebecca):** Current law in Victoria stipulates that minors can be on licensed premises, providing alcohol is not served, sold or made available. But almost every music venue does serve and sell alcohol when live music events are put on.

It is also interesting to note, that current legislation also says that minors can consume alcohol in certain situations safely and supervised - such as having a meal, with parents or a guardian in a restaurant. However, when we are seeing live music we are generally not wanting to eat a full meal, or attend with our parents.

We reached out to Stephen, from Sooki Lounge, a licensed venue located in Melbourne's outer suburbs in Belgrave. We asked him if they offer up gigs for the underage community.

**Stephen:** We have had a couple of events, offered to us from an underage gig which we have declined because essentially the amount of logistics to make that work, for us, is virtually impossible. We don't have a separate room where we can do that, there's security as well which you do require for that sort of stuff. For us unfortunately while we want to do it - it is in the too hard basket.

**Narration (Rebecca):** As you can imagine, keeping a bar closed for an event means a hefty chunk of potential profit for the business is lost and this means owners and operators need to weigh up if it's worth putting on an underage event.

**Narration (Bridget):** The sentiment we gathered, was that although these laws are in place with concern to the problems alcohol can create - for the most part, young people are solely focused on attending the event, for the music.

**Music:** 19 by Eliza & The Delusionals

**Sound:** Crowd noise from a live show ("Ambience, Large Crowd, A.wav" by InspectorJ of [Freesound.org](https://freesound.org))

**Narration (Rebecca):** Back to Josh about his Regional festival highlights.

**Josh:** So the next year we we went to the Southbound Festival in Busselton at the time so it was a bit more accessible to us we can have to do to go with our parents at the time that the festival was an under 18's show. So, myself Jack all of the other mates the whole crew went and having that I guess big social event with lots of people who you know that was really special because everyone was there. Everyone was experiencing the same thing at the same time and yeah I guess that first festival experience really kicked it off for everyone else because myself Jack are the people saying to my mates let's all go to this festival in Busselton, we probably about 8 of the acts like let's go 'cause this is a really sick thing to do whether or not you know the band I reckon it's just going to be fun regardless. So yeah that festival definitely get triggered something you within us and yeah really pushed us to explore live music as much as we could by being young people without licences in a regional area -we did as much as we can to experience more.

**Music:** Parkway Drive - Carrion

**Narration (Bridget):** We've all had that one festival that tips you over the edge and turns you into a festival fiend! For me, that was The Push Inc's Pushover Festival.

I went the year *Parkway Drive* headlined and I got see all my favourite local hardcore bands, weaved in with some incredible hip hop and RNB. It definitely set the tone for the rest of my live music experiences and after talking to Kate Duncan, now the CEO of the Push Inc, it seemed like this was the case for a lot of other young people!

**Kate:** Yeah The Pushover festival played an important role in those formative years for people. Continuing to do projects like that I guess are definitely a part of the

space that Pushover were delivering you know in the 90s and 2000s so yeah it's definitely it is something we see the importance in and will continue doing.

**Music:** Cold Clocks Ft Oliver Tanks by Wzrd Kid

**Narration (Rebecca):** The Push are passionate about providing young people the opportunity to experience live music and this isn't just limited to inner Melbourne. It stretches to across regional Victoria where they regularly work with the well known youth music program 'Freeza' to provide workshops for regional youth.

**Kate:** I was up in Mildura last week and yeah it's so easy to think you know what's going on from an office in Brunswick but the moment you actually drive 4 hours away you actually see first hand how isolated those communities can be and the limited opportunities they have like Mildura is not exactly on the touring schedule of many artists. It is really important we can support those communities with networks and skills to try have the same opportunities we have here on Sydney Rd. We recognise particularly through our *Freeza* program as well you know, although we are talking about these challenges in metropolitan areas and you know, delicensing and venues wanting to do shows and stuff that there are different barriers in regional areas so we recognise how taking out industry representatives to regional areas is super important for those networks and inspiration and business outcomes.

**Narration (Rebecca):** One person who has benefited from the *Freeza* programs reaching out to regional communities is Joe Toohey. Now the CEO of Regional Arts Victoria, Joe remembers his first *Freeza* gig...

**Joe:** It is the defining moment, the first *Freeza* gig I attended in Wodonga, and in fact I credit that experience with a lot of what I ended up doing in my professional life later on. Vividly remember it, it was in Wodonga because Albury is in NSW, and the *Freeza* program is a Victorian program

**Sound:** Excited screams from fans at a live show ("Crowd Screaming, A.wav" by InspectorJ of [Freesound.org](https://www.freesound.org))

**Music:** Leaving Home by Jebediah

**Joe:** It was Jebediah, on tour and the support band was Motor Race and both bands that I listened to on, it would have been, Triple J in Albury, and really admired, and was really excited and could not believe they were in my town. I remember, Pat the singer from Motor Race had red hair or pink hair, there was some kind of really bright shade of it I remember, Jebediah doing an encore, I remember seeing a mosh pit for the first time and I was maybe 15 about 15 years old? and I remember Mum had to

drop us off and pick us up and the public transport and we couldn't get there...the other thing that I saw at the gig that really made me think, and really inspired me was the volunteer Freeza committee members, working side stage one of them I knew from school and I remember thinking "I can't believe he gets to meet this band" and saw that and had a moment much later on, where I realised and had a chance to work on a Freeza committee myself, how important that role was in making that all happen. And now, will often reflect on that moment as a bit of a, without knowing it at the time, noticing that and that image stayed with me and that desire to make things happen, I guess has been what has driven my professional interest in the arts alongside my personal passion for just witnessing and participating in it.

**Music:** Relay ft Joone by Nark Submarine

**Narration (Bridget):** After having first hand experience of some great initiatives that helped him and his friends get amongst the art community, Joe got involved in Regional Arts Victoria and made his way up to the CEO role he is at today. Regional Arts Victoria help bring art skills to regional communities and more importantly non-art skills to regional communities that help accelerate creative projects.

**Joe:** Organisations like Regional Arts Victoria are important as a bit of a link, a bit of a broker, a bit of a connection to ugh I guess a lot of the decision makers - especially around funding.

We have 4 people that are based in regional Victoria. They don't write the grants, because a big part of our work is about building the skills of people to be able to do those kind of things themselves. So sometimes it's about guiding them through that process, we'll often providing feedback to drafts or ideas or thoughts or comments on the eligibility of the fund uh but ultimately we're trying to pass the skill of actually writing it onto the community and artists. It's access to those resources that help art be made rather than there being any kind of deficiency of the arts, artists and attendance that exist in regional Victoria. It's access to those things that makes that process a little bit easier I think where where there tend to be some additional challenges in regional Victoria.

**Narration (Bridget):** So it's not JUST inner Melbourne kids that are creating and are interested in music. But growing up, are they seeing enough live music? Here's Kate reminiscing about her time as a teen in the 90s...

**Music:** Black Bugs by Regurgitator

**Kate:** I think the culture has changed, I don't know I feel like when I was growing up and going to all ages gigs in the 90s, like they were everywhere in pubs um it was really every weekend you could go to The Punters Club or the Evelyn and you know

go to those kind of shows but it's very much less so now and I think it is just that maybe priorities have shifted. It was a thing - if your favourite band - Spiderbait or Regurgitator were doing a tour did more regional tours as well. They would put out a tour release like here's our tour and we are doing a 30 day tour - that is very rare these days.

**Music:** 'Death To The Lads' by The Smith Street Band

**Kate:** Like I saw Smith Street Band have announced they are doing a 33 date tour with Bec Sandridge and Press Club and its like that is unheard. They're doing Alice Springs, Launceston all over the country. Most artists these days, in quotations "national tour" it's just major capital cities ... so on that is how artists used to be. Artists would jump on the road and go to all of those regional towns and would do all ages shows, like it was just side-by-side - was how it was just how it was done. So yeah over the years, that model has changed and priorities shifted elsewhere.

**Narration (Rebecca):** The New Slang team are hands on! They orchestrated *Live at the Steps*, an all ages, free public event that was planned at the steps of parliament house. Last year, in 2017, it got so big it was moved to the nearby Treasury Gardens. This was a testament to the obvious demand that Australia's youth have in wanting these events, and despite a decline in all ages events since the 90s, its hunger is still alive.

**Music:** Suck by Tired Lion

**Harry:** I can think of an all ages event that I've been too that didn't have an amazing atmosphere. It had y'know people who were really inclusive and caring in the moshpit but you're all just having a good time. The 2016 Live at the Steps was a great example of that, and the one we threw last year is also a pretty good example of that. I've seen Skeggs twice at Wrangler which was sweaty but also fun... I also saw the Jungle Giants couple of months, while I was still underage at the croxton, that was a fun show yeah... Those sort of shows really make think that young people are keen to break into that market.

**Kate:** You know this is what excites me so much about what is going on right now and standing there on November 17 last year surrounded by 10,000 people that were all there to see the music that had all been programmed by a group of high school kids. There's definitely a momentum. There is definitely a need there and young people want to see live music now more than ever, we just need to champion that and make sure there are more opportunities for them to access that because yeah, if you book them they will come!



**Narration (Rebecca):** When underage music fans are denied the privilege of seeing music live it promotes a feeling of exclusion. Evie and Claire from New Slang told us about this frustration and the measures they have taken to attend underage gigs in the past. It is evident that there is a strong relationship between the alcohol and music industries relying upon one another for the sponsorship of live music events.

**Evie:** Claire and I - we sneak into underage shows already. We've had enough! None of the acts we wanna... well Laneway Sideshows was a big, for us, no one put on all ages show - **Claire:** there was not a single show

**Evie:** and we thought well we can't miss these opportunities so we thought well we're just gonna do it and that happened and they are probably some of our favourite gigs. But like, it's not that same community that you get at an all ages gig or an underage gig. which is something really important to us being young and in the music industry, so like gigs like...hmm yeah - far out!

**Narration (Rebecca):** Obviously this method is not ideal, however it does highlight the determination and mindset that underage music fans have in craving being able to be a part of this scene. This anecdote highlights that most young fans are in it for the music and not the appeal of alcohol.

**Music:** Not for You by Void

**Narration (Rebecca):** But why should underage kids have access to live music? Can't they just wait till they're 18? Josh and Kate both emphasise that allowing underage audiences to be a part of the live music scene will mean they come back as adults and therefore contribute more to the music industry economy and community .

**Josh:** Under 18 gigs are really necessary and they really ignite that passion within you from the get go and so I think, rather than holding people back until they're 18 to experience this kind of gig then only having i don't know, say say 10 years of them only going out and seeing bands all the time. If you're seeing gigs when you're 13, 14, 15, all ages gigs then your giving an extra 5 years to these bands that are playing, and also to the venues who are hosting it and I guess like alcohol sales can be the major driving force behind venues holding stuff. But then things like merch sales and stuff can also contribute as well um and i think under 18s are in a bracket where they have like they don't have a high number of disposable income but the amount that they have is all entirely disposable. If you're still living with your parents you don't need to pay rent and rego things like that so all of the money you have

your very happy to spend on your favourite band shirts you know 1,2,3,4 of the same band shirts because you feel like you're really contributing and supporting

**Narration (Rebecca):** Kate agrees with Josh...

**Kate:** I think over the last few years the way in which artists do tours and play live shows that is changing so therefore, yeah, we are seeing less artists prioritising doing all ages shows, and we have been doing a lot of work around this asking industry why this is the case and financial barriers is something that is identified as a real challenge for artists. That accessing venues during the day - you know you have to pay for the venue hire and because the venues aren't making money off booze over the bar it's a cost barrier there. So um, if anyone is in the position listening to this and they do think it is too hard and that is a real mindset 'oh it's just too hard, we'll just book this tour and make the money' and I get that but yeah talk to us at The Push or Music New South Wales. and talk about a way to may it less prohibitive. It's a stupid missed opportunity because these are the people that are going to be coming to your shows when your current audience are all at home being mums and dads or just boring people![laughs]

**Music:** Belgrave Line by Turn South

**Narration (Bridget):** So obviously there are some major hurdles in place preventing young people from accessing live music, however these are particularly amplified in regional areas of Australia.

**Josh:** So the biggest barrier that I faced in terms of getting to live music as a young person in a regional area, was the financial side of things. A getting ticket to the gig and B ah being able to afford transport to the gig itself. That kind of changed when you first friend gets their red Ps because that has that sense of freedom and ah they will - 9 times out of 10 take you to these kinds of things if they're into the same band. So that makes things a lot easier.

Living in the state of Western Australia generally the only way to get to gigs really if you're not within walking distance is through driving so makes it hard for under 18 people. People are over 18 might not have access to a car, might not be able to afford it for whatever reason might not have that kind of access, whereas in Melbourne it's very different in the public transport system can get people were they need to be generally I guess lot of the hot spots in the city and stuff are fairly accessible for public transport that makes things a lot easier. when I was at home I owned a car and drive it everywhere over here I haven't owned a car since I moved over here and have not had any significant issues.

**Narration (Bridget):** Josh, and many other others would love to see regional gigs closer to home. One perspective he offered was that doing so might build a future live audience and people working in the music industry.

**Josh:** I think it's very important for young people especially rural or regional areas to be able to experience live music because that it really ignites a passion in these people from a young age and I think that's that's really crucial because having that, that flame burning from a young age especially in the age of the internet and stuff that can really translate from one gig at one pub in one regional area that can leave that person on to exploring and find heaps of new music online and that could lead them into becoming say a manager or some sort of influencer on that side of things. I've got mates at home who are really into the the music in it become super users on Triple J Unearthed and it really look to a bolster their career through using that online sort of stuff and I think that having those under age experiences are really really crucial to igniting that and without those kind of gigs kicking it off then there is no way to ignite that flame.'

**Music:** Rush by L- Dopa

**Narration (Rebecca):** One way that youth can get involved in the industry - that is not by making music necessarily - is holding a board position for an organisation. Joe from Regional Arts Victoria, emphasises that a barrier stopping young people's voices coming through might be the daunting aspect of talking to a group of older, more senior figures about their ideas and not being familiar with certain processes.

**Joe:** If there are young people who are making music or art in regional Victoria, I understand that there are a lot of barriers, there are a lot of barriers to that. And I understand that sometimes that means if you are trying to join a committee that's got power, for example to put on these kind of events and you can't get access to that or you're invited on but not listened to or ignored. That must be incredibly frustrating, but I would just like to reassure you that there is more than one way to get things done and you don't necessarily need to engage with those existing structures and committees and environments to get stuff done, you can just kind of do it yourself. Find that person, that stakeholder, find that one person who can guide you through strange council processes and how to book a venue and how to write a funding application and do a risk assessment. Find someone who can guide you through that, but don't feel that the only way to get things done is by joining something that already exists because I can tell you that some of the most successful and exciting things were started because people saw a gap that wasn't meeting their needs and they got on and done it. They are the ones that I, that I love seeing and being an audience member for.

**Music:** Pizza Guy by Touch Sensitive

**Narration (Bridget):** We are seeing a resurgence in all age events. Even during the making of this podcast, communities are coming together with the existing initiatives (like FReeZA) and putting on events for their younger members. There's been all ages shows for Mallrat, Kaiit, Smith Street band and even international acts like Mac De Marco

**Narration (Rebecca):** Such events and programs are progressive steps in ensuring there is a live music scene for young Australians to be a part of - on stage, behind the scenes and in the crowd.

**Narration (Erin Dick):** Thanks for listening to Sound As Ever an Australian Music Vault podcast. This episode was produced by Rebecca Maakasa and Bridget Bourke. Thanks to SYN Media, supporting partner of the Australian Music Vault.



