

# MUSIC, CREATIVITY AND THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Research Group Newsletter - November 2023

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## Welcome to Newsletter 4

Last summer the research group met to discuss the future direction of the group. It was decided that a new name was needed to better reflect the membership and scope of the group, yet that was still open enough for researchers from across the University to join and participate in should they have an interest in issues related to music, creativity and/or culture.

As a result, the Culture, Media, Space and Place research group has now transformed into the Music, Creativity and Cultural Economy research group.

What is the Music, Creativity and Cultural Economy research group?

- An inclusive and interdisciplinary group with a broad understanding of research (traditional, practice, knowledge exchange, public engagement).
- Open to all, no matter your pre-existing experience of research.
- Celebrates and promotes the work of our members.
- Fosters collaborations, peer support and capacity building.

**To join and get involved, please email Dr. Chris Anderton (Research Group lead) at [chris.anderton@solent.ac.uk](mailto:chris.anderton@solent.ac.uk)**

## What is practice research? (by Dr Chris Anderton, Associate Professor)

I'm often asked for a simple definition of practice research, but this is far from easy! In part this is because there are so many different terms (e.g. 'practice as research', 'practice-based research', 'research through practice', 'practice-led research', and so on), and in part because different academic disciplines have different definitions, and there are crossovers between them.

Nevertheless, I like a challenge, so I want to propose a couple of definitions that may be of particular relevance and resonance to the members of this research group:

- Practice-led research
- Practice-based research

The key thing to remember is that all such research involves the setting of research questions that can only be answered by engagement in some form of practice.

**Practice-led research** provides new knowledge and understanding about a specific form of practice (e.g. artistic, technological or pedagogic). It involves researching how people do things, what it means to them, what we can learn from it and, perhaps, how things might be done differently (and with what potential effects).

Practice-led research doesn't necessarily involve any creative practice from the researcher themselves - it is more about studying the practices of others, and finding answers to the research questions being investigated. This is in contrast to practice-based research which is very much about the role of the researcher themselves.

**Practice-based research** is where the researcher is themselves a practitioner or creator who is personally engaged in exploring the creative process in order to address research questions. Knowledge and understanding are therefore developed through the process of undertaking and analysing their own creative or other practices. In essence, this is knowledge generated through doing.

It is important to note that in practice-based research, the creative practice itself must be central to answering the research questions that have been set, and must demonstrate the outcome of the research process as a whole. In this sense, it acts as evidence of a process of enquiry into a research question. If you are undertaking a creative practice PhD it is this process that is being assessed.

A recommended text for creative practice PhDs is Tara Brabazon et al. (2020) *The Creative PhD*. Emerald Publishing Ltd.

## Conference report - Matt Annis

Last month, I found myself standing behind a lectern in the University of Huddersfield's music performance theatre, presenting a paper on my research into historic rural rave culture in East Anglia. It was my first public engagement as an academic researcher (albeit one who has yet to go through transfer and become an official PhD candidate) and I was making it at DC23, the only conference focused on research into dance music culture (it was hosted by the Dance Cult Research Network, the community behind the Dance Cult journal).

Imposter syndrome is real – especially for those, like me, who are relatively new to academic research environments and don't yet have deep-rooted knowledge of critical theory. Being confronted with an audience of approximately 50 people was daunting, even for someone used to speaking to audiences as a journalist. It's one thing hosting a panel discussion at a music festival, another making a case for your research in front of experts in your field – especially when you're still relatively early in your PhD research journey.

Aside from realising early on that I really should have included at least one map of East Anglia (I hadn't considered that there would be delegates from Australia, the USA and other parts of Europe), the presentation went by in a flash, and the one question I received was one I could easily answer. I was buzzing, but also relieved.

Afterwards, during the subsequent coffee break, I was approached by five people who wanted to discuss my project. One offered useful information on rave activity in the region I'm researching, a couple of others praise for spotting an under-researched area, and another positive feedback about specific aspects of the presentation. An academic from Prague, Dr Ondrej Daniel, even suggested collaborating on a project in future.

I was taken aback by the positivity and how far more experienced academic researchers treated me – it was a positive, supportive environment, which is not something that can always be said about academic conferences. I left enthused, more convinced than ever that I'm on the right track and belong in this environment.



Matt Annis, music journalist, PhD candidate, and author of *Join The Future* (2nd edition, 2023)

## Conference report - Paul Stevens (Lecturer in Media Production)

We've all got to break our live conference presentation duck sometime, I suppose. And perhaps due to lockdown, it's been a long time coming for me.

My first academic presentation outside Solent was online at the Emerging Research in Podcast Studies Symposium in 2020, organised by the Podcast Studies PhD Group (the self-styled "Podacademics"). It was nerve racking, largely because after more than 20 years in journalism I started out here as a "hackademic" and at that point I wasn't sure if I was ready to transition to being a podacademic, let alone an actual academic!

But I needn't have worried: my presentation was well-received and prompted some questions afterwards, which is always (I've since discovered) gratifying. But most of all I remain grateful to the podacademic who changed my title to Immersion, remediation, and the experiential: establishing a distinct podcast identity. I can't remember what the original title was, but this unknown abstract reviewer did me a huge favour as his version remains to this day.

In-person is a wholly different experience. At MeCCSA 2023: Connected Futures? in September I could of course see the audience, but the most valuable part of the three-day event at Glasgow Caledonian University was socialising with other academics during breaks and social events. I've made some very useful contacts. (But my presentation was too way too long and I didn't get through it all, but you live and learn!).

In October I was back online, at another MeCCSA event, the Radio Studies Network Conference 2023: Radio Studies @25, hosted by Sunderland University. Unlike Glasgow, I delivered my whole presentation, having cut it back ... substantially.

So, what have I learned?

In-person is a more holistic experience, although if you find socialising with people you don't know difficult (as I do) it's a challenge. But I feel more confident about that now.

And secondly, less is more: at Sunderland I even undershot my time (in a good way, I hope), but by being ruthless with the number of slides and my copy (thanks journalism!) I think I was clearer, less rushed, and more impactful.



## Researcher profile - Jennifer Skellington (Lecturer in Popular Music Studies)

I joined Solent in 2014, having taught at a number of universities following the completion of my PhD in Music Journalism in 2010 at Oxford Brookes University. Prior to this I had completed an undergraduate degree in Music and Education Studies, a Masters degree in Music, History and Culture and a PG Dip. in HR Management. I worked in HR management and management training roles prior and during my university studies, so have a long established and keen interest in adult learning and development; teaching popular music provides me with the perfect opportunity to indulge in two of my key interests.



My research specialism is music journalism, and I have publications in this field; however, my research interests and teaching specialisms are broader, including music and entrepreneurship, critical theory and popular music cultures. I have previously curated a music-themed exhibition for a rural museum, and contributed conference papers, radio discussions and public talks on my research. More recently I collaborated with two former colleagues from Oxford Brookes University on a two-year funded research project on English rock band Squeeze with my role focussing on the migration of music copyright (interviewing Chris Difford was a real highlight!). I am currently progressing several pieces of work for publication based on former research projects, but would love to hear from any colleagues at Solent who would be interested in future collaborations.

## Only Love Matters - Dr Kamran Qureshi (Lecturer in Film Production)

Only Love Matters is a 92-minute romantic feature film set in London, UK. Directed and executively produced by Dr Kamran Qureshi, it has won over 30 awards on the festival circuit around the world, and premiered in the UK at the prestigious BFI Southbank in October 2023.

It is the first feature film in cinema history to have intersex lead characters set in the UK. It is a story of sacrifices of a mother for her adopted daughter and her struggle for the rights of people like her through the discovery of a life-changing book, Only Love Matters. There are two women, two timelines, two generations and always the one thing that truly matters is Love.



The film sheds light on the social, psychological and medical issues of intersex individuals in British society, and flags the discrimination and impact of society's behaviour that leads to the mental health issues created for intersex people and their children. It is a story of love, relationships, existence and acceptance, examining the powerful bonds between us and inspiring great change.

## Researcher profile - Greg Mudd (Senior Lecturer in Music)

I am Greg Mudd, a part-time PhD student juggling my research alongside my teaching roles at Solent University and at the Royal Marines School of Music (where I am Professor of Bass Guitar and Jazz).

I hold a Master's degree in Musicology from the University of Southampton, a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Humanities with Music from the Open University, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education from Solent University. Additionally, I am a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.



The working title for my PhD is "Towards Art Music and Concertos: Composing for Diploma Level Electric Bass Guitarists and Portfolio of Original Compositions." The purpose of my project is to explore the potential for the bass guitar to be used in art music settings, specifically by diploma-level musicians.

My objectives include creating an art music composition portfolio that bridges the gap between popular music graded exams and virtuosic art music. My creative output is guided by research, including an assessment of existing pre-diploma-level bass repertoire, which helps determine the competencies pre-diploma performers are likely to have. As part of this process, I am working on creating a tool that can calculate the level of difficulty in existing bass guitar works. This tool will also be instrumental in projecting the scope of the new compositions. Once my project is complete, I am enthusiastic about publishing the compositions in both printed score and audio formats.

## Research update - Dr Brian McDonough (Course Leader, Sociology)

Dr Brian McDonough worked with his Sociology students on a research project that involved interviewing waste sector workers about what a greener workforce might look like in the future.

The research was carried out on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Management, with the findings feeding into the production of the Institute's report 'Beyond Waste: Essential Skills for a Greener Tomorrow'.

