

Music, Creativity and the Cultural Economy Research Group

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Welcome to the July 2026 newsletter of the Music, Creativity and the Cultural Economy research group.

In this edition of the newsletter we continue to celebrate the academic and practice work of our members.

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 the Research Group, promote your research and knowledge exchange activities or get involved in any other way, please email Dr. Chris Anderton (Research Group lead) at chris.anderton@solent.ac.uk

Researcher updates

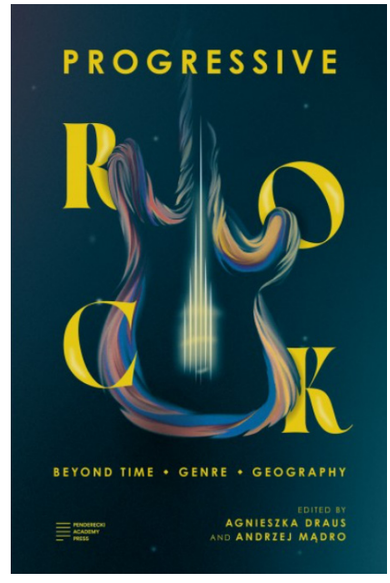
Dr Chris Anderton (Associate Professor)



Since the previous newsletter, Chris has been involved in a number of research activities.

He was a guest speaker on three panels at the Eastside Jazz Festival, hosted by Birmingham City University in February 2026, alongside other academics and jazz festival organisers. Topics included the future of the jazz festival, the role of festivals in local communities, and how festivals can become more socially and culturally inclusive.

In May he travelled to the University of Strasbourg to extend his work on the lyrics and politics of progressive rock at the 7th Biennial International Conference of the Progect Network for the Study of Progressive Rock (for which he is also a member of the executive). While at the conference he received a copy of the book Progressive Rock: Beyond Time, Genre, Geography, which includes both his contribution to the previous biennial conference and that of Dr. Paul Goodge, who was awarded his doctorate from Southampton Solent University in 2023.



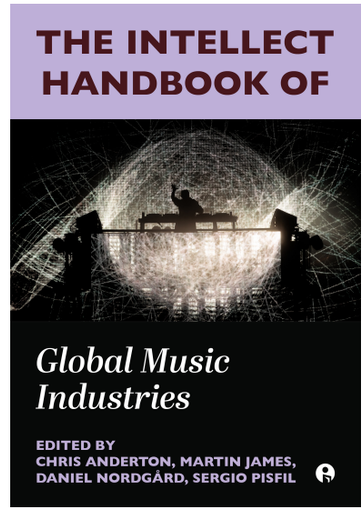
In September, Chris will be presenting with a Polish colleague Patrik Gauszka at the 17th International Music Business Research Days conference at the Institute of Cultural Management and Media at the University of Music and Theatre in Munich. This research extends on both author's earlier work on legacy rock bands, and will develop the concept of the 'music franchise', which is also the topic of a journal article currently in preparation.

Finally, work continues on the inaugural issue of a brand new academic journal that Chris has co-founded with Dr Sergio Pisfil of Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas, Peru. The *Journal of Live Music Studies* will publish twice a year from 2027: https://www.intellectbooks.com/journal-of-live-music-studies.

Journal of Live Music Studies



And on the *Intellect Handbook of Global Music Industries,* which is now at the proofing stage of the production process. The book will be published in late 2026/early 2027, and includes a chapter by Chris on 'copyright imperialism' and another from current Solent PhD candidate Angela Young on music-making in rural areas.



Researcher updates



Congratulations to **Kevin O'Donovan** who is graduating this summer with a PhD for his thesis on the teen magazine Smash Hits, titled "Authenticity and the teen gaze: Smash Hits magazine 1988 – 1989."



Abstract:

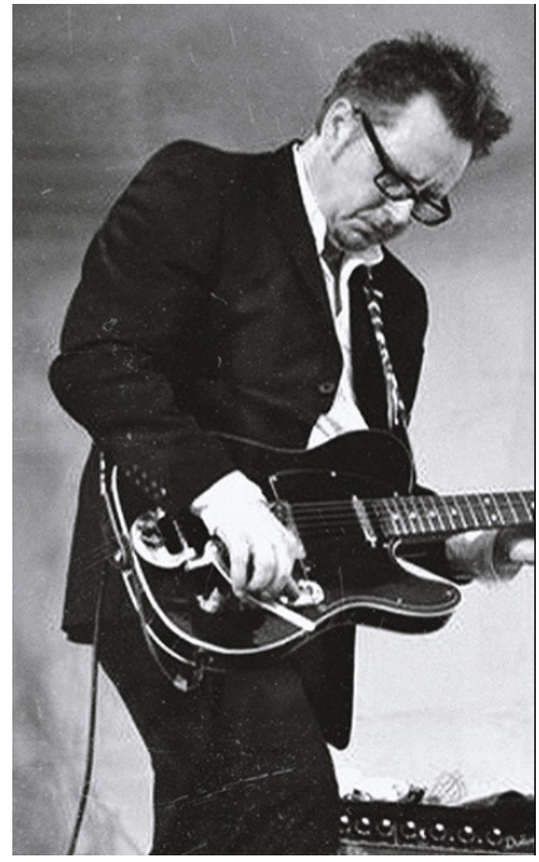
Pop music journalism written for a younger teenage audience, and which covers pop acts who appear overtly designed for commercial success, is a relatively under-explored area of research - especially in comparison to scholarly work on journalism based around other popular music styles (such as rock and hip-hop), which are considered to be more “serious”. This categorisation is often unquestioned, despite both pop and “serious” music sharing the same motives for profit.

There is a persistent media narrative, for example, about the teenage pop music magazine Smash Hits, that places it in opposition to the established tropes of rock journalism, yet acknowledges its influence and uniqueness within music journalism at the height of its success (the late 1980s). Supported by a framework of conceptual sources exploring many aspects of popular music journalism (such as its links to gender, age, genre), this thesis questions the news media narrative, which developed after Smash Hits closed in 2006. What emerges is a new way of thinking about Smash Hits' content and readership.

A qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis of feature stories finds that many of the positions established in rock music journalism actually persist in Smash Hits but are subverted through the use of humour. In the process, the magazine builds and strengthens a relationship with its readership, which is constructed as non-gender specific, which runs counter to the news media narrative that states that the magazine was aimed at teenage girls. Underpinning everything is the concept of authenticity, which is developed in the thesis into a number of different co-existing forms that may be in conflict with each other. The overall conclusion is that the existing news media narrative about the magazine, while accurate in some respects, is also limited in that it lacks the gender-based nuances and treatment of authenticity that this project identifies.

Researcher updates

Dan Pennie (Senior Lecturer)



Dan's latest collaboration (his fourth) with the Australian sound artist and electronic musician Paul Schütze is out now, and his innovative and textural guitar playing can be heard across all the tracks. Entitled *The Crystal Suite*, the album is inspired by J.G. Ballard's classic 1966 novel *The Crystal World,* which details an ecological disaster in which time 'leaks', leaving a crystallized landscape in which vegetation and creatures transform into glittering jewels.

The review of the album on the Soundohm website describes the album as follows:

Working with electronics alongside guitarist Daniel Pennie, [Schütze} builds pieces that move at a glacial, inexorable pace, more like weather systems than tracks. Harmonic fields drift into view and then seem to ossify, held in place by barely perceptible internal shifts. High, glassy tones flicker at the edges of the stereo field like light catching on faceted surfaces; low, granular textures suggest something grinding to a halt beneath the surface. The music often feels suspended between decay and radiance, echoing Ballard's paradoxical landscapes, where catastrophe appears in the guise of exquisite beauty.

Pennie's guitar work threads through these environments as a source of both warmth and corrosion. Sometimes it arrives as long, bowed-sounding lines that blur into Schütze's electronic drones, adding organic instability to otherwise static harmonies. Elsewhere, the guitar fractures into chiming harmonics, clipped figures and distant, reverberant chords that hang in the air like remnants of a more recognisable musical language. This interplay of recognisable and alien is central to the suite's mood.

https://www.soundohm.com/product/the-crystal-suite



The album is available directly from the record label's bandcamp site here:

https://anomala.bandcamp.com/album/the-crystal-suite

Researcher updates

Matt Brombley (Lecturer in Music, and Creative Practice Researcher (Sonic, Digital and Immersive Arts))



Matt has been selected for a project with the British Science Festival and The Mayflower. Working in collaboration with an AI researcher, he will produce a new creative work that will be presented on Saturday 19 September 2026 as part of the festival programme. The work will use custom-coded, biodynamic audio-visual systems to explore themes of ownership and exploitation through the lens of AI deep fakes.

The work is part of a wider programme when The British Science Association, in collaboration with University of Southampton, bring the British Science Festival to Southampton in September 2026. More information on this five-day festivals can be found here: britishsciencefestival.org, while more detail about Matt's work and his music releases can be found at mattbrombley.com.

Frankie Murdoch (Lecturer in Media Production)



Frankie has received Arts Council Project Funding to produce a series of events following her 2025 pilot project 'Re:Play - rewild the dancefloor'.

She will be running 6 sound recording expeditions in the South Downs National Park and other green spaces around Portsmouth, followed by electro jam workshops at Casemates in Portsmouth. In these workshops participants will integrate their field recordings with electronic music production though samplers, synths and drum machines.

Part of the funding will also cover the launch an album as someday, sky on Saturday 26th September at Casemates. This album showcases collaborations with musicians who are responding to their environment and demonstrates how electronic music can build reverence for the natural world.

Find out more https://someday-sky.com/replay/

Researcher updates

Tim Forster (MPhil/PhD candidate)



At the Solent Student Conference in June I gave a presentation on the progress and development of my PhD research project on the work of artist Robert Calvert, entitled "Robert Calvert: Contesting the Hegemonic."

Calvert was a multidisciplinary literary and performance artist whose art practice stretched from the 1960s to the late 1980s. Best known for his time as front man and lyricist with countercultural rock band Hawkwind in the 1970s his counter hegemonic, multifaceted art practice included poetry, lyrics, plays, prose and a novel as well as several ‘solo’ albums.

The overarching research question is: In what ways and to what extent did Robert Calvert’s art practice (including interviews and published letters) challenge hegemonic ideologies, narratives and representations in the 1970s and ‘80s?

Initially the presentation considered my research philosophy (social constructionism) and its flow through into methodology (interpretivist/realist, critical/dialogic)) and the consequential methods (including Critical Discourse Analysis). It was also the first opportunity to present on a relatively recent development in the project around the question: In what ways and to what extent was Calvert’s art practice influenced by Brecht’s approach to theatre?

After considering Calvert’s statements of enthusiasm for Brecht, the presentation then considered examples of the influence of Brecht’s approach to theatre on Calvert's 1970s and 1980s albums, his performance art with Hawkwind/Hawklords and as a solo artist, as well as his Brechtian use of props in live performance.

The presentation observed that the project should enable the recuperation of an important outsider artist and his art, expand discussions around Brecht and rock music beyond the normal references to The Doors and David Bowie, and extend and challenge discussions around 1970s rock and theatricality. In addition the research should speak to contemporary cultural and political contestations including highlighting the use of culture as a space of resistance.

In October 2026 I have been invited to present my ongoing research at the Peterborough Radical Bookfair.

Parallel Music Conference 2026

Parallel
MUSIC CONFERENCE '26





The Parallel Music Conference returned to Southampton on 23rd and 24th April for two days of music and media industry guest speakers, including several Solent alumni.

This was the third year for the conference, which was completely sold out for all panels, and was the first to feature funding provided by Arts Council England.

The conference was created by Jamie Ford and Matt Bisgrove, both graduates of Solent's music business course. It encompassed both Solent University and the University of Southampton, with current students provided logistical support, including conference management, artist liaison, panel chairing, social media content and media support.

Guest speakers included industry professionals from Warner Music UK, Openstage, Eleven Management (Bastille, Gorillaz, Blur), the Featured Artists Collation (FAC), LAB Records, The Joiners, the Association of Independent Promoters and many more. The conference acts as an important cornerstone for the local music industries in Southampton, helping to build and support the local music community. The next event is slated for March 2027.

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