Key Issues

in the Arts and Entertainment Industry

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12 Responsible Entertainment: Greening festivals and events

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Introduction

This chapter explores the contemporary issue of responsible production within the arts and entertainment industries, focusing on live music events and festivals in particular. In its broadest context the entertainment industry is vast, encompassing 18 unique sectors (Moss, 2009), each providing a plethora of tangible and intangible products that, according to Vogel (2007), is estimated at US$1 trillion annually. This makes it the largest industry in the world, generating more revenue and growing at an exponential rate as leisure time becomes increasingly important as an escape from, or antidote to, the pressures of modern life.

Live events bridge the distinction between high art products which are considered as a 'merit good' (Pratt, 2005) and forms of popular culture and leisure that can be consumed both at home and in designated public spaces. Hughes (2000) states that live performance of both art and entertainment is a distinct area for management, as such events require active participation on the part of an audience. As pop/rock consumers can now choose from 'an almost limitless number of events' (Mintel Group, 2008) at any given time, the viability of continued growth in the industry becomes of real concern, and the impact of such intense consumption levels can no longer be ignored.

In this chapter, the notion of sustainability is introduced and applied to live arts and entertainment, and the various drivers for event producers to adopt

sustainable and responsible management are considered in detail. The debates surrounding the 'greening' of events are outlined, and the various models and concepts introduced. A number of examples are given to illustrate the range of approaches to sustainability adopted within the music industry, and an extended case study of Jack Johnson's music production and touring is provided to exemplify how entertainment can aspire both to achieve a 'closed-loop supply chain' – a holistic approach where production, consumption, customer service and post-disposal disposition of products are managed sustainably (Linton et al., 2007) – and to motivate consumers for social good.

Furthermore, in common with the overarching theme of this book, the relationship between producer and audience is given particular consideration, and sustainable entertainment is considered as a space and place for both producers and consumers to practise and engage in dialogue about responsible consumption. In line with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) notion of the 'experience economy', responsible entertainment is therefore conceived as a form of co-created leisure, and this concept of entertainment as social justice is examined as a pointer to the shape of arts and entertainment events in the future.

Responsible entertainment: concept and context

Music has a long tradition of social commentary, with recording artists exploring the human condition or using their songs as a platform to promote particular concerns. As such, entertainment often acts as a mirror to reflect contemporary issues and the impact of humans on the natural world has been a prevalent theme across many genres of music for some time. From the counter-culture protest songs of Joni Mitchell and Marvin Gaye, to The Beloved's 'Sweet Harmony', redolent of Britain's rave-inspired second summer of love; and from the personal lament of Julian Lennon through Michael Jackson's more bombastic 'Earth Song' to the political activism of Sting, U2, Coldplay and Band Aid/Live Aid, the use of music as a political medium is clear.

Social and political concerns are also present in the organisation of live music events: festivals that are now considered mainstream, such as the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary and Performing Arts, have their roots in the counter-culture movement of the post-Second World War period. Free festivals (as Glastonbury was in its second year of operation) were a natural expression of disaffiliation with the dominant culture, as according to Whitely (1992: 2): 'Progressive rock was acknowledged as the major communicative organ of the counter-culture'. Music provided a channel for explorations of self within

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