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Brand value: how affective labour helps create brands

Nicholas Carah

School of Journalism and Communication, University of Queensland¹

One way brands create value is by engaging the capacity of cultural labourers to animate affective connections with consumers. Brands assemble social spaces that harness the communicative capacities of cultural actors. A mode of branding that works by managing an open-ended social process depends on affective labour. Affective labour involves not only the capacity of individuals to produce specific meanings and feelings, but also the open-endedly social capacity to stimulate and channel attention and recognition. This affective labour does not always depend on making particular ‘authentic’ representations but on facilitating a general circulation of meaning. By investing in social spaces and relations corporate brands engage popular musicians in new forms of labour. This article examines the participation of popular musicians in branding programs run in Australia by corporate brands between 2005 and 2010. I examine the accounts of musicians and managers who participate in these programs to consider how they make their participation in social relations that create brand value meaningful. They employ a variety of practices: identifying with brands, endorsing brands’ claims of socially responsible investment in culture, and distancing themselves from their own participation in branded space.

¹ Correspondence to: Nicholas Carah, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Queensland, Australia. Email: n.carah@uq.edu.au

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Introduction

The creation of brand value and the circulation of popular music are interrelated forms of cultural production. In the past decade firms that manufacture digital devices, own and control social media platforms, or own and operate live music and entertainment precincts have profited from the easy circulation of popular music. Firms that own popular music as content, like traditional record companies, have been threatened by these rapidly expanding flows. Corporate brands are part of a series of strategies that respond to the diminished direct value of musical recordings and the growing indirect value of music that can be experienced and circulated within cultural life (Cluley 2009, Meier 2011).

Corporate brands have capitalised on a changing music industry by engaging popular musicians as affective labourers who facilitate social relations and a circulation of meaning around the brand and within social spaces managed by brands. This article poses two related questions: how do popular musicians account for their participation in the creation of brand value? And, how does their participation contribute to the creation of brand value? The article contributes to efforts in this journal and the field to conceptualise how new forms of cultural labour contribute to the management of brands and creation of brand value. In the cases considered here, brands extract value from musicians' creative ability to facilitate the circulation of meaning, identity and social relations.

The article examines the participation of popular musicians in experiential branding programs run in Australia by Virgin, Jack Daniel's, Tooheys Extra Dry, Jagermeister,

Coca-Cola and Levi's between 2005 and 2010. In each of these programs a brand forms a short-term partnership with popular musicians. They engage musicians to perform live at branded events, compete with each other for publicity, touring and recording opportunities, embed the brand in their social network and produce content for branded broadcast and online media.

The article begins by outlining contemporary formulations of branding, cultural production and affective labour. This framework is then related specifically to critical accounts of popular music and marketing. The article then considers these accounts of brands, affective labour and popular music in relation to the explanations and practices of musicians and managers who participate in branding programs. These accounts help to illustrate how brands create value by harnessing the musicians' affective capacities to capture attention and circulate meaning. Musicians create value even as they simultaneously identify with and distance themselves from brands.

Brand value and the circulation of meaning

Current conceptualisations of branding describe a continuous production and management of meaning to create value. Brands do not just attribute a standardised set of qualities to a product or service. Brands are social processes that rely on the participation of consumers and other cultural actors to create value (Arvidsson 2005, Foster 2008, Hearn 2008, Holt 2002, Vargo and Lusch 2004).

Douglas Holt's (2002) 'postmodern' theory of brand management articulates the shift from seeking to impose particular meanings to managing consumer activity around cultural resources provided by the brand. Adam Arvidsson's (2005, 244) critical cultural

formulation similarly argues that brands work by ‘enabling and empowering the freedom of consumers so that it is likely to evolve in particular directions’ rather than impose a ‘certain structure of tastes and desires’. Arvidsson and Malossi (2011, 229) have argued that brand production relies on creativity as a general social ideal and is ‘no longer premised on a disciplinary repression of the freedom of individuals’. In their account, branding’s reliance on creative participation can be conveniently confused with ‘emancipatory developments’ when it actually ‘works through that freedom, constructing a bio-political environment where such freedoms tend to take quite naturally the right direction’. Each of these formulations suggests that brands are ‘open-ended’ (Lury 2004) but establish certain coordinates within which they manage consumer activity and innovation. Cultural anthropologist Robert Foster (2008, xix) argues that brands limit this ‘open-endedness’ by working to simultaneously ‘cultivate’ and ‘constrain’ consumer activity. In this article, I examine how musicians make sense of these ‘freedoms’, ‘open-endedness’ and ‘constraints’.

Brands seek to anticipate and harness – rather than control – the creation, experience and mediation of social relations and identities. To do so they construct branded spaces or integrate branding processes into already existing social spaces (Andrejevic 2007, Moor 2003, Thompson and Arsel 2004). These social spaces incorporate both consumption and production processes (Pettinger 2004). Moor (2003) describes a music festival created by an alcohol brand as a ‘branded space’, Thompson and Arsel (2004) conceptualise Starbucks coffee stores as part of a ‘hegemonic brandscape’ and Andrejevic (2007) describes interactive media like social networking sites as ‘digital enclosures’. What each of these conceptions share is an effort to conceptualise a mode of production that operates at the level of controlling social and communicative spaces

in order to cultivate, watch, harness and respond to the creative activity of consumers and cultural producers.

Moor (2003) observes that brands are partially constructed by consumers who create ‘unintended consequences’ that contribute to the brand over time (Moor 2003, 47). These consumers are affective labourers in the sense that the brand harnesses their creative and communicative capacities and appropriates their innovations, ideas and social relations. The ‘unintended consequences’ are the specific meanings and social relations that brands do not anticipate in particular, but instead aim to appropriate in general. A brand does not need to know or control exactly what musicians will say or do at a music event, rather it needs those musicians to help produce social spaces and processes that it can engage with.

Consumers and cultural intermediaries are productive where they use their identity to create social networks in branded space, circulate branded artefacts and mediate branded experiences. Brands that are built within branded spaces or communicative enclosures rely less on telling their audience or market what to think or believe, and more on facilitating social spaces where brands are constantly ‘under construction’ as part of the ‘modulation’ of a way of life (Clough 2008, 16). If brands are a continuous social process, then they work by adapting, adjusting and responding to cultural practices and identities. Within this process people ‘give meaning to cultural commodities, though rarely under circumstances of their own devising’ (Foster 2008, xix). Like other forms of purposive and instrumental communication brands are part of a shift where, as Patricia Clough (2008, 16) suggests, ‘the function of media as a socializing/ideological mechanism has become secondary to its continuous modulation,

variation and intensification of affective response in real time'. In this mode of cultural production brands rely on affective labourers who deploy 'linguistic, communicative, or intellectual capacities' they have by virtue of their place in the social body (Clough 2007, 71). I examine popular musicians as one specific type of affective labourer in this mode of branding. Popular musicians are labourers who 'perform' the brand within social space (Pettinger 2004), though the brand doesn't necessarily seek to control the content of that performance.

The conceptualisation of affect and affective labour in this article follows Clough et al. (2007) in taking affect to be 'pre-individual' and 'open-endedly social'. This means affect isn't the property or creation of the labourer, but is found in the capacity of the labourer to channel and modulate social connections, ideas and feelings. Affect refers to ideas, thoughts and feelings that we can access, embody and circulate through our place in the social body. The affective labourer might narrate specific affects, but more generally they stimulate and channel the attention of others. Affective labour is the irreducibly social and relational 'capacity to affect and to be affected' (Clough et al. 2007, 65).

Following Clough (2007, 2009), I suggest that popular musicians who participate in brand programs are affective labourers because brands don't need to specify that musicians communicate *particular* meanings within branded social space; the fundamental work they need them to undertake is to animate and facilitate the *generalised circulation* of meaning. Brands don't necessarily seek to acquire particular individual meanings from musicians, but instead their creative capacity to animate social connections in general. Musicians' interactions with brands contribute to a

market structure that incorporates the activity of creating and circulating popular music within the communicative architecture of branding. Even when they distance themselves from their participation in branded spaces, musicians undertake the affective labour of protecting a market structure that harnesses value by modulating and managing a generalised circulation of meaning.

Regardless of what musicians and their audiences might think the meaning of any particular performance in branded space is, they construct social networks that are visible and accessible to brands. The distance and doublespeak evident in these practices is arguably crisis inducing for creative labourers who find themselves working in cultural formations that harness their activity in general terms, regardless of the particular meanings they create. In this article I draw on the accounts of musicians and managers to consider how they make sense of their participation in a communicative enclosure organised around a generalised circulation of meaning.

Popular music, cultural labour and flexible brands

Several recent accounts of popular music argue that the affective and creative aspects of making, circulating and enjoying popular music must be considered in relation to the evolving market structures that facilitate, harness and contain those practices (Hesmondhalgh 2008, Meier 2011, Powers 2010). As the market structure changes so too do the accounts that musicians, marketers and consumers give of the meaning and value of popular music. In his critique of popular music studies, David Hesmondhalgh (2008, 333) argues that there is an ‘overly optimistic understanding of music, which implicitly sees music as somehow independent of negative social and historical processes’ and ‘primarily as a positive resource for active self-making’. Counter to this

understanding he argues that ‘music, with its strong links to the emotions and to values of personal authenticity, may well have become bound up with the incorporation of emotional self-realisation, authenticity and creativity into capitalism’ (Hesmondhalgh 2008, 333).

Popular music is integral to the stimulation and circulation of affects, emotions and social connections within market structures (Powers 2010). By relating Hesmondhalgh’s (2008) argument about popular music with Hearn’s (2008) and Wernick’s (1991) conceptualisation of promotional culture, Meier (2011, 403) advances the term ‘promotional ubiquitous musics’ to describe the role of popular music in a ‘cultural and economic condition marked by ubiquitous or ambient media whose *content* may be culture, but whose *intent* is promotional’. In this condition, popular musicians can create brand value regardless of any particular meaning contained in their performance. One indication of this is the way musicians and managers distance themselves from bohemian or romantic ideals, anxieties about selling out or preoccupations with resistance (Klein 2009, Meier 2011, Taylor 2007).

The general circulation of meaning and affect facilitated by popular music aligns with the contemporary identity, lifestyle and participatory strategies of brands. Meier (2011, 403) claims that brands have used popular music to ‘break through promotional clutter’ and speak to consumer ‘identities’ in an effort to be ‘cool’ and ‘authentic’. This is not a new development however; brands have sought out cool, authentic and counter-cultural lifestyles since at least the 1960s (Frank 1997, Hesmondhalgh 2008). These strategies have rested on brands identifying with particular representations of authentic, cool and counter-cultural values. As Holt (2002) argues, these strategies have a diminishing

return as brands gradually ‘exhaust’ the cultural resources ‘outside’ the market and consumers grow savvy to the contrived nature of their appeals. This appears to have led to the development of a mode of branding that attempts to bypass the need to stake a claim on particular representations of ‘authenticity’. Instead, brands aim to facilitate a continuous circulation of meaning. Brands contract musicians because they are nodes in a social network and are adept at circulating affect and animating social connections.

For brands, musicians and consumers, popular music is part of the social practice of being seen and felt, of gaining attention, and being interacted with. Popular music literature based on authentic self-making needs to grapple with the way those meaning making practices have been enmeshed in market structures that valorise cultural activity regardless of the particularity of the meanings being made (Hesmondhalgh 2008, Meier 2011). Emphasising the meaning making of individuals within the market obfuscates how that meaning making renders social networks and affective connections appropriable by brands in general. Where romantic or bohemian ideals are invoked by musicians or popular music scholars, they need to be understood as articulated in a cultural context that appropriates them regardless of their sentiments.

Methodology

The analysis to follow draws primarily on interviews with musicians and managers who have participated in, or managed, brand programs. I also draw on participant observation at music events and analysis of branded texts and social media spaces (see also, Carah 2010). By including the accounts of musicians, managers of bands, and managers of brand programs I illustrate a variety of positions from which cultural labourers account for the role of popular music in the production of brand value. The

aim, in focussing specifically on the participation of musicians and managers, is to elaborate on how they account for their part in social relations that create brand value. The aim is not to offer a ‘behind the scenes’ account but instead to examine what John Caldwell (2008, 2) calls the managed ‘industrial self-theorising’ of musicians and managers who participate in brand programs.

On the basis of the interviews with musicians, band managers and brand managers, I argue that three explanations are invoked for the participation of musicians in branding programs. Firstly, those involved identify with brands and endorse the brands’ claims to socially responsible investment in culture. Secondly, while praising brands’ investment in them as artists, musicians (and band managers) express ambivalence about the brands’ presence in cultural life and space. And thirdly, they also distance themselves from their own participation in branded space and are reluctant to acknowledge their own role in creating brand value. Analysing these explanations helps to illuminate the contradictions and paradoxes of creative labour within branded social and cultural space. In particular, the ambivalence and distance articulated by musicians needs to be considered as interrelated with their identification and participation. By articulating their identity as resistant and autonomous they nevertheless generate affective connections that are the basis of building brand value (see also, Fleming 2010). They participate in maintaining the co-ordinates brands establish even where they symbolically resist them. Like other accounts of cultural work (Andrejevic 2008, Caldwell 2008, Mayer 2011), I find musicians’ accounts of their participation in brand programs ‘frequently combine contradictory and competing impulses’ (Caldwell 2008, 18) and ‘frame their labour in paradoxical terms’ (Mayer 2011, 136).

On the basis of these accounts I don't intend to generalise across the whole music and marketing industries. At the time of interview, none of the musicians interviewed made an on-going living wage from their music. Some aspired to make a living from being an original artist, but most saw it as one creative pursuit combined with other ways of making a living. Cluley (2009) and Rogers (2008) also identify similar combinations of professional and amateur practices in music scenes. In these contexts, it would be a mistake to consider the labour of these musicians as flexible or precarious only in terms of wages and conditions. It is also flexible in the way it exploits their identity and social networks for the promise of in-kind opportunities like exposure to a wider audience or access to closed scenes of cultural production. Like the scenes Rogers (2008) and Cluley (2009) identify, and unlike the musicians in Bradshaw et al.'s (2005, 2006a, 2006b) studies, the musicians in this study are not on the cusp of breaking into professionalised forms of work. Different to Bradshaw et al.'s (2006a) study, in the cases examined here participation does not give musicians financial means to realise artistic ideals. There is often no financial reward for participation or the in-kind artistic benefits are bound up in their participation in the brand program. The brand programs examined here tend to partner with bands that are independent, aspiring or amateur. Musicians' participation in brand programs cannot be understood only in terms of cultural labourers' attempts to 'make do' in a 'commercial world' (Bradshaw 2005, 594); rather, I would argue that it is also enmeshed in flexible combinations of amateur, paid and unpaid cultural practice.

With regard to other studies of musicians who participate in branding, Taylor (2007), Meier (2011) and Klein (2009) interview a variety of musicians who are independent and major label. These studies focus mostly on musicians who have licensed music for

advertising and offer limited insight into how musicians account for forms of participation like live performance and social media promotion for brands. Bradshaw et al. (2006a, 2006b) focus on the accounts of musicians, though their sample appears to be exclusively professional musicians, several with limited direct engagement with brands as part of their performances. The study presented here is unique in focussing on the accounts of musicians who have actively participated in programs that involve live performance for a branded event, as well as media production like television appearances, web and social media content, press and advertising.

In the article I quote directly from eleven participants. Below I outline who those participants are together with the additional fieldwork and interviews with participants not directly quoted I did relating to the brand programs they participated in. In cases where I haven't explicitly identified the brand this is because a participant requested anonymity or they would otherwise be easily identifiable.

- Participant 1 managed a program for a global alcohol brand that ran a series of gigs for independent bands. The gigs were held in one of the favoured inner-city music venues of local musicians. Over the course of the research I attended the gigs that were part of this program and talked to attendees and musicians, and followed online discussions about the program. In addition to participant 1 I interviewed the brand manager, the venue manager and two bands that played the program. Participants 9 and 10 were musicians that played in this program.
- Participant 2 managed a program for a global fashion brand that gave unsigned bands a development package that included media exposure, recording and touring opportunities, film clips and fashion. Participant 7 was a manager of a band who played this program. I also worked with a freelance journalist who interviewed bands that played this program.

- Participant 3 was a brand manager for Tooheys Extra Dry and the Uncharted program. Uncharted invited unsigned bands to compete for recording and touring opportunities. The program was showcased with performances in local music venues and on MTV. Participants 4 and 8 were musicians who played Uncharted. I also interviewed one other band that participated in Uncharted, collected press material on the program, and followed it online.
- Participant 5 was a band who played in Coca-Cola's Coke Live program. Coke Live was an all-ages music tour run by Coca-Cola in capital cities around Australia featuring Australian bands. To attend the gig young music fans had to collect Coca-Cola bottle labels and enter the labels together with extensive demographic and cultural data online. I attended Coke Live gigs, interviewed two bands and two band managers, and a brand manager, and tracked interaction between Coca-Cola, bands and young music fans online. Participant 11 was a manager of bands that played Coke Live.
- Participant 6 was a musician who played Virgin's Garage 2V competition. Unsigned bands participated in Garage2V for a chance to play at the national touring V Festival. I also conducted fieldwork at the Garage2V events in local music venues and at the V festival, interviewed festival attendees and followed the festival on social media.

In addition to the interview participants and programs above, I also include observations made at Jack Daniel's JD set gigs in local music venues. At those gigs I also spoke with local music fans and band managers involved with the program and venue.

Managing Affect

In this section, I draw on accounts of brands and their managers to illustrate how they frame the interaction between brands and popular musicians. This discussion helps establish the context for musicians' own accounts of their involvement. Firstly, brands and their managers claim to support and invest in already existing cultural spaces and practices. Secondly, they claim brands seek out musicians who are 'authentic' or 'from the street' but who also understand 'how the world works' and will 'work hard' in performing and promoting themselves. And thirdly, brands claim that musicians entrepreneurially initiate or invite brands' participation in popular music events. Each of these claims present brands as facilitators of cultural spaces where the brand becomes synonymous with already existing tastes and interests of the musicians and music fans who create them. These accounts are also evident in Klein (2009), Meier (2011) and Taylor (2007).

Tooheys Extra Dry is a beer especially brewed to appeal to the less developed palate of younger drinkers. In addition to this strategic appeal to the young market's physiological sense of taste, the beer is embedded within the popular music scene through branded installations at music events, pouring rights at music festivals and a national Uncharted music competition. Uncharted was presented as a material investment that gave musicians access to an infrastructure of cultural production they otherwise couldn't afford. Through the program Tooheys offered musicians recording, touring and media exposure opportunities. The brand also presented the program as an investment in the heritage of popular music in Australia. Coca-Cola, Virgin, Levis, Jagermeister and Jack Daniel's all presented their programs in similar terms. Brands

describe their programs as an investment in cultural life that offers tangible opportunities in a rapidly changing music industry. Tooheys claimed that the program enabled them to speak to their target market of music fans 'in their language, really engage them in a conversation, as well as providing value to their lives'. Tooheys claimed to provide aspiring musicians a 'dedicated on-going program for the support and promotion of fresh new emerging music and Australian talent'(Participant 3). For Tooheys, the program represented their approach to brand marketing, which placed importance on

provid(ing) something of value to your target market, working out what they like, what they want and where they will be, so that ultimately you can be wherever they are... music is obviously a key interest of this demographic. Having our brand closely aligned with this interest is key to driving increased awareness and purchase amongst this important consumer group (Participant 3).

The program, together with associated marketing initiatives, has quadrupled the brand's association with music and increased the brand value and volume growth of the product.

A tactic used by brands and their managers is to present brands as 'partners' of already existing tastes and interests. The manager for a program run by a global alcohol brand in local music venues explained to me that the audience was 'savvy' and wanted to

be in control of their label associations, they want to be in control of their media. Individuals want to set trends instead of following them. The marketing people know this. So rather than saying, 'hey this is going to make you look cool' they say, 'we think you're cool so we are going to support what you are doing' (Participant 1).

The manager saw the program as contributing to both the brand and the community. She described it as a form of 'corporate social responsibility' that supported 'experimental and emerging art forms', 'cultural development', 'community' and the 'cultural production of a city'; at the same time, the program enabled 'brand association to a demographic that's traditionally becoming more and more harder to access' (Participant 1).

Brand managers appear to develop a narrative about the creation of mutual value by distinguishing their programs as innovatively responding to the technological, social and cultural changes impacting cultural production that popular musicians and brands are caught up in. Tooheys' media agency stated that the way consumers 'digest' brands is changing, and so,

We are seeing a changing structure and dynamic in the distribution of entertainment, the evolution of advertising and media and how consumers are digesting brands. This is leading to the rise in entertainment marketing and branded content. And instead of hijacking an entertainment vehicle and interrupting people with a brand message, we're creating our own entertainment that represents the core values of the brand' (John Rash, Peer Group Media press release, 2007).

These ideas echo Holt's (2002) diagnosis of brands' changing claims about culture: rather than 'hijack' or 'coopt' culture Tooheys set out to 'invest' in cultural life. They shift away from explicit claims about the ideological content of the brand and toward modulating the spaces within which culture is created and circulated (Clough 2009).

The manager of a global fashion brand's program described it as,

innovative in the sense that a brand sees value in creating culture as a way to communicate who and what it does. Legitimately create culture not just put a logo on it but make a culture. The bands make records that contribute to culture. As opposed to someone who makes the culture and they want some money and you say can I have some money, the brand is stuck on the outside. In this program the brand is making it, creating it, engaged at the grassroots. That's a big difference. That will happen more and more. Market forces will dictate that will happen more and more because revenue in music will continue to decrease and artists will always want to make records. Brands will play a bigger role in creating culture as traditional revenues associated with culture will continue to decrease (Participant 2).

The account of cultural production offered here is one in which the brand facilitates space in which musicians create and circulate meaning. The brand doesn't seek or specify particular meanings. The manager's objective was to create a 'culture of music that comes from the street' rather than the 'music factory'. The manager also explained they sought out 'credible and authentic' musicians partly because it was too expensive

to work with pop musicians who required a much larger infrastructure of production and also because they wanted to support the development of artists that would leave a 'legacy'. The implicit notion of authenticity invoked here does not rest on particular values but on the capacity of the chosen bands to be recognised by the audience the brand is seeking out. Authenticity really refers to the capacity of musicians to attract an audience the brand is seeking. This follows Meier's (2011, 409) account where managers use authenticity simply to refer to the capacity of the musician to establish an affective link between the brand and the target market.

The manager argued the brand had a role to play in cultural life because 'revenue in the music business has shrunk so much' record labels no longer 'put significant money into the development of careers'. In his view, 'market forces' would dictate that programs executed with 'authenticity and legitimacy for all concerned' would work and ones without would fail. Again, authenticity is directly related to the production of relationships the brand can capitalise on. The programs develop new relationships between brands and musicians that integrate branding and popular music. This changed market formation calls for new kinds of labourers. The brands seek musicians that will 'work hard', 'do media', tour and produce cultural content that attracts audiences. That is, musicians who will produce a valuable audience commodity and content for the brand. It is musicians who then need to 'balance' the demands of being 'from the street' and 'working hard' for the brand.

The musician is an affective labourer in the sense that they embody these competing

concerns, and construct a reflexive identity that modulates the brand's demands for the instrumental management of their identity with their own felt narratives about the qualities of being a musician. Bradshaw et al. (2005) and Cluley (2009) also describe musicians and promoters working to balance these competing concerns. Bradshaw (2006a, 115) articulates a 'complex balancing act' where musicians balance artistic ideals with commercial imperatives. In the sections that follow I examine how musicians do the work of producing this simultaneous identification and distance within the always-already commercial character of popular music.

As the popular music industry changes, musicians themselves play an active role in making branding a legitimate form of labour for popular musicians. The manager continued to explain:

In the 1980s and 1990s the role of brands in culture was kind of – had more taboo around it. The role of brands in culture in 2010 is not only an accepted part of culture it is an actively encouraged part of culture by people who create culture – like musicians and event organisers. I'm sure brands are being contacted more in 2010 to play a role in cultural activities than in 1995 – that's coming from people who are creating the culture. Don't for a second think its brands who are preying on this situation, it's this dialogue between brands and the creators of cultures. It's a symbiotic relationship (Participant 2).

Repeatedly managers articulate the idea that brands do not and cannot coopt or direct cultural action. Instead, they must partner with cultural producers like musicians. In this account, brands move toward managing the communicative architecture within which cultural producers circulate affect. This in turn is said to offer musicians opportunities in a changing industry. Musicians and brands have a mutual interest. Both are dependent on being caught up in a continuous circulation of affect, made valuable by an audience's engagement with them and incorporation into their own communicative practices. Musicians undertake the work of anchoring this circulation of affect within communicative spaces managed by corporate brands. Corporate brands provide the

infrastructure for musicians to circulate their music. While musicians might appear to endorse the brand (though many of them refute this), more fundamentally they endorse the branded social spaces that brands use to interact with audiences. The next section of the paper examines how the musicians themselves (and band managers) account for their involvement in this process. Two contradictory themes emerge, often simultaneously: musicians identify with the brand program in ways that often echo the discourses articulated by brand managers in the above accounts whilst nevertheless distancing themselves from their involvement in the branding process. Each of these discourses is examined in turn.

Identifying with brands

Musicians employ similar explanations to brands and brand managers in their accounts of brands' involvement with popular music. The musicians I interviewed actively participate in brands' programs by creating meaningful relationships between themselves, the brand and their audience within designated communicative spaces like branded music festivals and social networking sites. In my interviews, musicians always recounted that the brand was not prescriptive about performances or endorsements. Their accounts emphasized that they did not adapt at the behest of the brand, but rather that their usual cultural practices happened to intersect with the brand. A musician who participated in Tooheys Uncharted expected they would be required to do some 'promotional' work and considered this part of the exchange, but was relieved they weren't 'pushy about drinking Tooheys' (Participant 4). This musician, like others, expressed a concern between the realities of brand-building labour and ideals they had about the qualities of being a musician. This musician expressed her reservations about

being involved in promoting alcohol because of her 'own ethics':

I did think at first maybe, this is when I read more into the competition, oh maybe I'm compromising my ethical ideas about things, about marketing, about brands, about beer companies and things like that because I think this country has a big problem with alcohol so I kind of sort of was like, what are you doing? But the devil lured me in. But they don't go out of their way to go 'drink up', 'get pissed'. I never got one feeling from anyone involved in Tooheys or Uncharted that it's all about beer. So I felt really good about working with those people and I think that there is nothing wrong with alcohol in moderation. My reservations lessened as the competition went on. It wasn't the prizes, it was observing how things were conducted by the Tooheys people because it wasn't like, 'give her a beer', 'say something about beer'.

The musician continued:

I don't think it's right to say it's blatantly about the marketing because there is a genuine outcome for the band, you do get that opportunity and when you do it's really good. So they are committed to what they are putting out there.

This musician suggested that the program offered tangible and meaningful opportunities. These were articulated in terms of the chance to get media exposure, play large music festivals, secure recording opportunities and to meet industry insiders associated with the programs. Their reservations were allayed by the 'tangible' commitment of the brand to their creative practices and that the brand made no demands for explicit endorsements.

Throughout the interviews musicians offered a variety of other explanations of their motivations and rationale for participating. They expected the programs would give them the chance to meet professional cultural producers who could give them advice or further opportunities. For instance, Tooheys offered mentorship from industry figures involved with music television, record labels and festivals. Virgin, Jack Daniel's and Coca-Cola offered emerging bands the chance to tour with established bands. Musicians also saw the programs as legitimate if they could point to the success or opportunities provided to other bands that had already participated. Two bands that participated in the

Tooheys Uncharted program told me that they were partly motivated by seeing bands they knew or looked up to participating. And, the programs offered access to normally 'closed' sites of cultural production that many aspiring bands sought access to, like being featured on MTV or playing live at the Big Day Out music festival.

Musicians routinely described to me their efforts to measure the benefits of the program. In particular, they would monitor the publicity generated through friend requests and plays on social networking sites and website hits. They also told me the programs built their profile and connections in the scene which made it easier to book gigs. In describing their involvement in this way, musicians articulated how, just like brand managers, they aim to build their band as a visible and valuable communicative object that people interact with in cultural and mediated spaces. By employing many of the same strategies as brands in judging their value they imagined their band in similar promotional terms to brands. It appears this is a point of mutual recognition between brands and some musicians, even in cases where those musicians were engaged in amateur cultural practices. Bradshaw et al. (2005, 231) also identified musicians who participated in branded gigs in order to access promotional opportunities. A band who participated in a program run by Coca-Cola told me it was

obviously a massive marketing thing for Coca-Cola, but at the same time it is a massive marketing thing for us. Its better promotion than for our last record, they're doing a better job than our last record label. If someone is gonna get us on TV, then I don't have a problem with that, if someone is gonna help us, so be it (Participant 5).

The band recognised they sought the same audience as the brand:

the audience is very young and for us get to that audience it's a hard thing to do. We try to do a lot of all ages stuff anyway, but on this kind of scale, I think tonight might be ten thousand people or something like that we just don't have access to that kind of crowd. Especially like young kids, the first show you go to I guess, you always remember it, I remember mine.

While the band portrayed the mutual promotional interests in relatively benign terms, a manager of major label bands to play Coke Live was much more direct. He told me, ‘let’s face it (Coca-Cola are) not trying to do it to help the music scene, they are trying to do it to help expand the marketing for Coca-Cola’ (Participant 11). To the manager the band’s participation was explicitly part of recruiting their young audience as both fans of the band and consumers of the brand. He explained, ‘you are taking corporate money to play in front of a bunch of little kids. Now if the bands totally acknowledge that, ‘yes we are doing this to grow our market and reinvent ourselves’ then they totally accept it for what it is’. The bands he worked with saw the Coke Live tour as an opportunity to recruit a new generation of young fans and extend their album cycle. As musicians perceive a mutual interest with brands, through a shared pursuit of a young and valuable audience, they go to extensive lengths to promote their participation in the program using their peer networks. For instance, bands told me that they self-funded promotional gigs encouraging fans to vote for them in branded competitions, in some cases using their own money to offer free drinks or bar tabs to fans, they created animations and other media content for their website, and they used their online social networks to encourage participation in the program.

Brands can also capitalize on the perceived intersection between the brand’s values and musicians’ lifestyles. Musicians indicated to me that they were approached by brands they already incorporated into their identity by wearing or drinking the product. The manager of a band that participated in Levi’s Levity project didn’t have any reservations about being involved because ‘Levi’s jeans are pretty cool. The deal was too perfect to have any reservations’ (Participant 7). In a media interview about the project one of the musicians explained that they had to wear Levi’s jeans but ‘you never had to make sure

that you could see the logo'. While the band was always waiting for the 'dodgy corporate thing to come... it never did' (Stockwell 2011).

In their account the musician and manager identify with the brand because of the symbolic fit between the brand's lifestyle and their own. In this case, they already wear Levi's jeans. And, they perceive the brand is making a material investment in the band without the need for explicit promotional endorsements or commitments. As the manager told me, 'there was never a Levi's sign next to a picture of the band though, so it wasn't literally an ad, otherwise the band would definitely have reservations about it.' Band managers are also involved in the process of mediating the competing demands of artistic ideals and commercial objectives (Cluley 2009, 382). The band simultaneously identifies with the brand and retains a sense of autonomy and distance. Parmentier and Fischer's (2011) account of fashion models illustrates a similar disposition. Fashion models explained they were recruited or 'discovered' because they 'fit' with the look the brand was after. This account arguably distanced them from any explicit endorsement of the industry or brand. The musicians prized the flexible and short-term nature of relationships where they wouldn't be 'locked in for years to come' (Participant 7). Furthermore, the band identified with the brand by being proud that they enabled the brand to 'get more money than if they had, as I said, just thrown an ad in a (magazine)'. The band could make value where other branding techniques couldn't by virtue of their place within social relations (Foster 2008).

Musicians involved in the Tooheys and Jagermeister programs articulated similar narratives. Musicians who played Tooheys' Uncharted told me they were happy to

participate because they were ‘all pretty good drinkers. And all excited about the fact the band’s name would be on the bottle.’ One musician quipped that being told to ‘hold a beer’ wasn’t ‘that hard’ because the band were all fond of a drink. Distancing himself from explicit promotion of the brand, the musician explained that ‘they never emphasized saying Extra Dry because they kinda handled that side of it themselves’ (Participant 8). A band that participated in Jagermeister’s Jager Uprising recognized how their own lifestyle and consumption of the product was a source of value to the brand. He suggested that the brand could be ‘going by the theory that people in bands wield social influence’ and are ‘like social nodes’. He then ironically joked that musicians ‘are also potential alcoholics so that’s good’ for the brand (Participant 9).

Musicians who perceive that brands give them opportunities and access to exclusive spaces of cultural production appear to identify with brands in how they participate in these programs. This disposition reflects Mark Andrejevic’s (2007, 2008) analysis of TV recappers on the fan website Television Without Pity who began to identify with the imperatives of TV producers. Musicians perceive mutual interests with brands, agree with brands that the brand doesn’t make explicit demands, imagine and assess themselves in promotional terms, and present themselves as knowledgeable about brands’ strategies. These forms of identification were often, though not always, presented without any anxiety about traditional romantic bohemian or counter-cultural discourses identified in Bradshaw et al.’s (2005) interviews with musicians. This was despite these musicians all coming from ‘indie’ or ‘rock’ music, rather than ‘pop’, genres. Like Meier (2011) and Taylor (2007), I found that my participants – younger musicians coming of age since the 1990s – appear to have a different sensibility to the

romantic bohemian or counter-cultural discourses that are said to have underpinned popular music since the middle of last century. In the next section I examine how they distance themselves from brands' claims. Where they do offer narratives of artistic autonomy or ideals they are often couched in reflexive and ironic terms.

Similar to the effect Andrejevic (2007, 2008) articulates, these forms of identification with brands obscure the lack of meaningful access musicians get to the communicative architecture they work within. Following Foster (2008, 29), this identification with the brand obscures how musicians 'transfer control over aspects of their persons to corporate owners of the brand, who defend their brands legally as intellectual property'. This identification of musicians with brands also reflects Vicki Mayer's analysis of labour and identity in the new television economy. Mayer (2011, 175) observes that:

The routine enlistment of workers who do not recognise their own labour value and who yet provide forms of low cost and no cost services to the industry demonstrates how cultural processes of identity and identification are integral to the formation of television's invisible workforce.

Further, by mobilising their identities and social relations as sources of value for brands musicians normalise branding as an interconnected mode of production of capital, culture and identities. The creative workers' identities, their place in social networks, and desire to be seen and felt, is the source of value over any particular meaning, stance or cultural artefact they might produce.

Distancing from participation in branded space

In tandem with identifying with brands, musicians also distance themselves from their participation in branded social spaces. They do this by either claiming that they do not explicitly endorse brands, or they mock the brand as a contrived interloper in their

cultural world. A band member who played Coca-Cola's Coke Live tour, after earlier explaining the mutual marketing opportunities, told me:

When I first heard about it 3 years ago or whatever (I thought) fucken Coke tour, Coke tour this, fuck off, whatever, Coke tour, then you actually think about it whatever. Any festival you go to there is massive branding anyway there is the Jack Daniel's bar, the Channel V stage, the Milo ski jump, like you know what I mean. At the end of the day the kids aren't coming to see Coke they are coming to see bands (Participant 5).

The band's discussion of their participation continued with:

Band member 1: It's like you try and be an independent band and promote yourself with minimal funds and it's like someone is going to help us, so be it.

Band member 2: We are not here to endorse Coke we are just here to play music and that's it basically.

Band member 1: Well I guess in a way we are.

Band member 2: We are, it's not like I walk round drinking Coke all day.

Band member 1: I don't drink it anyway.

The band positioned themselves as artists trying to find an audience and play music.

They create a distance between themselves and the brand by emphasising that they don't make any particular or explicit endorsement of the brand. Arguably, this distance protects the brand and the branding program. It reinforces the brands' claims that the musicians are independent and autonomous. And, it legitimizes the brand's claim to being merely a background provider of the communicative space within which musicians and their fans freely circulate popular music.

Another strategy employed was to ridicule the program and portray participation as ironic, savvy or insincere. A musician who participated in a branded program run by Virgin told me they also entered because they thought they stood to profit in media exposure, gigs, and access to industry insiders. The musician told me that the program was:

bizarre... there was this fucking crazy guy in a red jump suit. Before they announced the winner we had to do an interview backstage and then look into the camera and say 'we're going to the V festival!' The competition was a pile of shit (Participant 6).

After they had participated, and perhaps privately backstage, the band made fun of the program. This disposition sets up a distinction between what the band 'did' and what they 'thought', a condition Žižek (1989) describes as 'fetishist disavowal' and Caldwell (2008) describes as 'doublespeak'. Participants might not 'believe' but they still participate, in this case, mouthing the lines requested by the brand on camera and performing on stage even while, as the musician told me, it was 'super-contrived'. They went on to explain, 'artificial hype really stinks, you can smell it. You can feel the old people trying to be cool. Doesn't feel like a house party, feels like an orchestrated, arranged, elaborate, mutton-dressed-as-lamb, weird thing.' While the band 'thought' this they played the gig as 'normal'. At the time of this interview the musician told me they had told their management it was the 'first and last' time they would participate in a branded program.

Since that time however, as the band's profile has risen, they have participated in other branded programs, played branded venues and licensed music to advertising campaigns. In the press release for one of these programs the band emphasizes that they participated on their own terms and retained creative control over the media and advertisements produced. One of the brands, for their part, claimed to have purposively selected the band because they were 'in charge of (their) own identity and creativity'. Both the brand and artist emphasised that the participation was out of a shared mutual interest in creativity, and that the artist maintained a distance from the brand as the creative director of the program. Like Arvidsson and Malossi's (2011) analysis of brands and cultural production, 'creativity' is positioned here as the foundation of both the value

and authenticity of the partnership. Taylor (2007, 25) describes similar contradictions with cultural workers in advertising agencies who are simultaneously ‘dismissive of ‘commercial music’’ yet see no harm in licensing ‘underground’ music for commercials... they believe their motives to be altruistic in that they are helping obscure musicians survive’. One of the bands interviewed by Taylor (2007) distanced themselves from the brand by claiming that a friend who liked their music, rather than the brand, had selected their song for an advertisement. The musicians’ focus on the effect their participation has on their image obfuscates the role they play in creating brand value.

In relation to their participation in Virgin’s program a musician told me that brands attempted to ‘seem part of the actual creative development of artists rather than a faceless corporation that dumps cash into a festival and gets to have the V symbol everywhere’ (Participant 6). Like the band that suggested musicians ‘wield social influence’, this musician could articulate strategic reasons for why brands invested in these programs. At the same time however, the musician was reluctant to agree that they endorsed Virgin:

I’ve been thinking it that way (that I did endorse them). We’re just starting out. All the bands were starting out. I’d never heard of any of them, they were all unsigned. I guess there is an inherent... in order to feel like I was endorsing the brand I’d have to feel like my band had equal weight to the brand, which it doesn’t. I’d say definitely not, I wouldn’t have thought that, it’d be them stamping us, not us stamping them. They stamp us to make them cool, to promote their shit in the street press, get across what the fuck is Virgin (Participant 6).

The strategy in this case is to distinguish between the symbolic power of Virgin and the symbolic power of the band. The band disavows their role in embodying and circulating affect that the ‘old people trying to be cool’ cannot access.

Musicians can also make ironic and subversive comments about the brand as part of their performance within branded social space. These practices illustrate another practice of disavowal or doublespeak, in this case acting in a 'knowing' or 'ironic' way on stage. One of several instances of this practice occurred at a Jack Daniel's JD Set gig in a revered inner-city venue. Rock musician Tim Rogers pointedly thanked the venue for supporting live music and then said, 'thanks to Jack Daniel's for ruining my marriage.' While on the surface he subversively rebuked the brand, he also articulated it with rock mythologies and his own excessive and tragic rock identity. Jack Daniel's advertising proclaims that 'your friends at Jack Daniel's remind you to drink responsibly'; the musicians employed in their program can say things on the brand's behalf that it cannot say, they can 'qualify' brands using aspects of their identity and social relationships that the brand cannot (Foster 2008). Where musicians work to distance themselves from brands, they ultimately serve the brands' interests because they obscure the brands' management and modulation of the communicative space within which they circulate popular music.

Musicians' and their managers' distance, doublespeak and disavowal is prompted in some cases by my drawing attention to, and asking them to account for or elaborate on, their participation in branded programs. Other times their doublespeak was embedded in their performance in branded space. Musicians, and particularly their managers, can be wary of being interviewed about this aspect of their creative labour. Repeatedly, musicians would invoke three competing narratives. Firstly, they would acknowledge the brand's investment in them and the music scene. Secondly, they would also express ambivalence about the brand's presence in music culture. And thirdly, they would be

reluctant to explicitly recognise their own role in promoting the brand. Often this distance was enacted by pointing out the absence of any explicit endorsement of the brand. For instance, they didn't have to consume the product, they were never associated with a brand logo, and the brand didn't ask them to say anything in particular. They cultivate a narrative of themselves as relatively powerless, independent and aspiring cultural producers seeking out opportunities to find an audience. They distinguish their pursuit of an audience as part of a legitimate artistic practice, distinct from the instrumental objectives of brands. This reluctance arguably obfuscates how their participation animates the circulation of meaning within a social space managed by the brand, and how their participation creates value for the brand regardless of what they think or say.

Musicians' efforts to distance themselves from their participation in brand programs – whether it is meant to invoke sincere romantic bohemian values (Bradshaw et al. 2006a, 112) or not – works paradoxically to protect a market structure that alienates value from their identities and social relations. When musicians distance themselves from brands, as much as they might invoke particular ideals, they are also cannily mobilising their identities to be seen and felt in social networks for perceived gains in attention. Cynical distance is productive for brands because it enables musicians to maintain the identities and social relations that audiences recognise and brands subsequently valorise. Cynical distance is both a form of control that short-circuits the possibility of 'real insubordination' and a productive activity that enables creativity, innovation and value creation (Fleming 2010, Žižek 1989).

Cultural labourers often find their bodies, ideas and performances regulated by the industry they work in. Pettinger's (2004) account of the aesthetic labour of retail workers and Parmentier and Fischer's (2011) account of the unsustainable identity projects of fashion models offer two examples of forms of cultural labour that demand particular performances. In the case considered in this article, brands do not demand any explicit endorsement from musicians. In doing so, the traditional antagonism between commerce and art (Bradshaw et al. 2006a, 2006b) grounded in the authenticity of particular ideals is displaced. The labour musicians perform is to anchor social relations within social spaces where brands can modulate and manage the circulation of meanings and affect. Following Patricia Clough's formulation (2008, 16), the brands seek to 'manage affective response in real time' rather than regulate particular performances, ideas and symbols.

Musicians both identify with and distance themselves from the narratives of the brand. Klein (2009), Meier (2011) and Taylor (2007) each document how concerns with 'selling out' or 'resistance' are waning, and Bradshaw et al. (2005, 235) ask if bohemian romantic ideals are anachronistic. The experiences of musicians canvassed here appear to support these views. In a market structure where the particularity of the art musicians produce, and the values embodied in it, are of little consequence to the production of brand value; and, where musicians are engaged to employ their identities and social relations to manage social space in general, then the capacity of bohemian romantic or counter-cultural ideals to have any purchase or meaning are undermined. Musicians' reluctance to invoke these ideals in interviews perhaps suggests uneasiness with the capacity of these ideologies to provide them with a meaningful account of their activity and place in social relations. Bradshaw et al. (2005, 236) see musicians who participate

in branded performances as balancing art and commerce. The musicians in my study also mediate competing demands, but rather than realising a balance, they are caught up in the continual paradoxical enterprise of identifying and distancing themselves from brands. Bradshaw et al. (2005, 2006) focus on how musicians protect their own identity and ideals in commercial processes. The findings of this research suggest that these practices need to be considered as central to the creation of branded social spaces and brand value. Musicians' identifying and distancing practices are a key productive activity.

Brands and communicative enclosure

Musicians' accounts of their participation in brand programs are marked by ambivalence in the way that they simultaneously identify with and distance themselves from brands. Musicians reflexively move between, and simultaneously account for, differing positions. A mode of cultural production like branding is resilient because it encompasses the reflexivity and competing impulses of creative workers. Adapting Caldwell (2008, 36), branding might be said to operate simultaneously as 'a creative process involving human agency and critical competence at the local cultural level' and 'a discursive process establishing power at the broader social level'. Brands thrive on the 'openness' offered by musicians' competing narratives and reflexive identities.

The production of meaning is still central to the creation of brand value but not necessarily because it conveys a particular message. Instead, brands aim to facilitate a general modulation of affective, creative and communicative capacities (Clough 2008, Dean 2010). Meaning is not only useful to differentiate a brand as having particular

qualities over another. Facilitating the negotiation of meaning also enables brands to ‘exploit communication in general’ (Dean 2010). Dean (2010) points to the capacity of this mode of cultural production to reflexively capture resistance and creativity. The disavowal and distance of cultural intermediaries is not only productive, it is an important part of validating the participatory, creative and open-ended nature of this mode of production (Fleming 2010, Žižek 1989). Meaning matters because it constitutes networks of social recognition, not necessarily because it has any particular content. The autonomy and creativity of cultural workers is central to the ‘commodification of culture’ (Banks 2010, 252). The identity crisis that some musicians articulate is one where brands can exploit their creativity, autonomy and affect regardless of any particular meaning they might create or circulate. After participating in a program run by Jagermeister one musician told me:

It’s so dumb. I don’t feel very good about it. It takes the artistry out of music. If you’re in a band and you’re asked to do a corporate gig you’d do it if you needed the gig. If you do it you’re a sell out, you’re becoming a product yourself. The money thing comes into it; you’d do the gig for money if you had to. If you want to become a professional musician then that’s what you have to do. This is one reason why I withdrew from the band. It was turning into a business, becoming focussed on the scene, being a big band, rather than playing great music for friends. It’s good for bands who want to become a business. In Australia, you’re either in or you’re out. And if you decide to be out then you aren’t making any money (participant 10).

The more investment brands make in the music scene, the more they promote bands and venues that are conducive to branding. The crisis for this musician, and others like them, is coming to terms with the value of a cultural activity that does not appear able to reshape social and political life. Any attempt to make this activity meaningful outside of the logic of the market gets caught up in disavowal and doublespeak.

The role of affective labour in branding

The creation of brand value is a distinctive, and increasingly common, form of labour

for popular musicians. Musicians' labour extends beyond writing, recording and performing (Cluley 2009, Bradshaw et al. 2005, 2006a, 2006b). Existing accounts predominantly consider the licensing of music in advertising (Klein 2009, Meier 2011, Taylor 2007) or argue that the value musicians create for brands are representations of 'authenticity' (Klein 2009, Meier 2011, Bradshaw et al. 2005). This article has extended these accounts by examining how musicians not only license their music to brands, but also create social networks that incorporate music, brands and consumers through live and mediated performances. Brands, musicians and managers invoke 'authenticity' as a key element of their partnerships. However, the notion of authenticity offered does not appear to refer to particular ideals, symbolic resistance or bohemian values commonly invoked in popular music studies (Bradshaw et al. 2006a, 2006b). Authenticity in this context refers to the capacity of musicians to create affective connections with their audiences (Meier 2011, Powers 2010).

Branding requires labourers who perform the social, affective and aesthetic elements of brands (Pettinger 2004). In Pettinger's (2004) research retail sales assistants create brand value by performing aesthetic labour within branded retail spaces. This article has added to Pettinger's (2004) analysis of labour within branded space in one important way. The concept of aesthetic labour employed by Pettinger (2004, 177) examines the 'embodied capacities and attributes' possessed and performed by workers. While brands are cultural artefacts and symbols that need to be produced and performed by labourers (Pettinger 2004), the accounts of brand building labour provided by musicians in this article help to illustrate how the creation of brand value isn't necessarily reliant on the directed performance of any particular meaning. Unlike retail sales assistants (Pettinger 2004) or fashion models (Parmentier and Fischer 2011),

musicians are not simply performing an 'aesthetics' pre-arranged by the brand. The musicians examined here do not report being constrained into performing identities and meanings specified by the brand.

In the emerging popular music marketplace musicians arguably have expanding control over the particular music they produce. Careful distinctions need to be made however, between cultural producers' freedom to create and circulate meanings, ideas and information within social space and the marketers and managers who exploit the sociality generated by that participation (see also Andrejevic 2007, Zwick, Bonsu and Darmody 2008). Musicians emphasise that brands do not direct them how to dress, perform or speak; they articulate how they are free to autonomously *circulate* affect but don't address their inability to *control* or *manage* the communicative enclosures within which they work. Furthermore, these accounts do not take stock of how musicians exploit their self, identity and social relations (Hearn 2008, Mayer 2011, McRobbie 2002).

Musicians don't secure long-lasting opportunities in these market formations. The harder they work to create meaningful identities and dense social networks the more value musicians create for the owners of the spaces within which they perform and the more ubiquitous and normalised those spaces become as an architecture for the circulation of popular music. Musicians participate in creating, managing and modulating market structures that appropriate value from their identities and social relations and alienate them from the meaning and capacity of their art. This leaves them to manage the contradictions of participating in market structures that thwart the

possibility of their art having a meaningful aesthetic or political impact on the social relations they work within.

While musicians may contest these spaces by distancing themselves from their own participation, this stance appears to have little effect on the underlying stability of these brand-building formations. This suggests that the market is stabilised not at the ideological level by creating particular meanings but at the level of the affective background. Value is created by people using, extending and engaging with social space (Dean 2010). Musicians are engaged by brands as labourers who animate this circulation of affect. The production of brand value doesn't depend on what participants believe but on who manages and modulates the generalised circulation of meaning (Clough 2008). Authenticity isn't grounded in particular values, but the capacity of musicians to create a generic affective link between brand and consumer. By performing live or on social networking sites they create this affective link within a communicative space managed by brands. The moment of value for the brand is not necessarily in the production of a particular meaning, but prior to that, in stabilising and managing the generalised circulation of affect.

Conclusion

This study has illustrated how affective labour is fundamental to a mode of branding that creates value by stimulating and modulating a general circulation of meaning within a communicative enclosure. Affective labour involves not only the ability of individuals to produce specific meanings and feelings, but also the open-endedly social capacity to stimulate and channel attention and recognition. Brands assemble social and communicative relations, spaces and technologies that harness and manage the affective

capacities of consumers and cultural actors. Affective labour appears to be interrelated with more canny, reflexive and cynical forms of identity. Identity is a responsive device for channelling attention. Affective labourers' ability to generate attention, combined with their efforts to distance their identities from the work of branding, protect the communicative and social structures that brands rely on. The mode of branding described here works by assembling a communicative enclosure within which reflexive and creative affective labourers stimulate and channel attention. Any challenge to these forms of communicative space and affective labour needs to pay attention to the material and social structures that underpin the general circulation of meaning that creates brand value.

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