

# Working in a Coalmine: Post-Industrial Spaces and Local Music in Saint-Étienne, France

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*Abstract: Local music scenes remain an important space for identity formation within the contemporary music industries. The city of Saint-Étienne, France is one such scene. Drawing on interviews with local musicians and cultural figures, along with observation and analysis of local music practices, this article examines the ways in which connections to the city's industrial, working-class past are made manifest within the products and activities of its contemporary music scene.*

*Résumé: La scène locale demeure un espace important pour la formation de l'identité au sein de l'industrie de la musique contemporaine. La ville de Saint-Étienne, en France, est l'une de ces scènes. À partir d'entrevues avec des musiciens et des figures culturelles du lieu, de pair avec l'observation et l'analyse des pratiques musicales locales, cet article examine la façon dont les connexions avec le passé ouvrier de cette ville industrielle se manifestent dans les productions et les activités de la scène musicale contemporaine.*

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## Scenes, Labour and Identity in the Contemporary Music Industry

The nature of local music scenes is undergoing a great deal of transformation in an era in which technological change is transforming all facets of the music industries. Despite this, the notion of “scenes” remains particularly relevant to contemporary popular music production and consumption. As Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson note, “the scenes perspective focuses on situations where performers, support facilities, and fans come together to collectively create music” in a manner that “contrasts sharply with that of the multinational music industry” (Peterson and Bennett, 2004: 3). Changes wrought by new technology have also altered the nature of labour in other industries, and in locales that have been particularly hard hit by industrial decline, music has often become part of the emergent cultural or creative economies that are frequently relied upon as part of any rebuilding or reimagining of the local.<sup>1</sup>

This article is derived from a much broader study that I have undertaken to examine local music within Saint-Étienne, France. A consideration of Saint-Étienne provides insight into the evolving nature of music scenes in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in a city that has had to struggle to reposition and redefine itself in light of a rapidly disappearing industrial base. As traditional means of producing, disseminating and consuming music undergo rapid change due to the digital revolution and globalization, traditional notions of locality and community are also being challenged. The broader study is concerned with understanding the shifting ways in which the “local” continues to matter within the music industry. In contrast to scholars like Richard Florida, who advocates for the concept of “music clusters” that can help exploit and market fixed notions of local identity, this study draws, rather, on the “scenes” perspective articulated by Andy Bennett and Richard Peterson above.

Musicians do come from “somewhere,” and the nature of the music industry is such that local connections remain significant to a great deal of music production despite the increasing pressures of globalization. Understanding how local musicians and other contributors to the local scene interact with global flows of culture, both in terms of how they use culture that comes “in” to Saint-Étienne, and how they employ those flows to promote and enhance their own work, provides an understanding of how researchers of popular music and popular culture might understand the everyday effects of these broader industrial and technological changes. More specific to issues of labour, changes within the local music scene are intertwined with the challenges the city has faced in responding to shifts away from traditional industry. Music and culture are emerging as loci of civic identity. Local and regional governments are frequent sponsors of cultural activities, such as the popular *Festival des 7 Collines* (<http://www.festivaldes7collines.com>), which draws its name from the hills that surround Saint-Étienne. As a city that has been dependent on the coal industry, alongside manufacturing—particularly of arms and bicycles—Saint-Étienne has been hard hit by the collapse of traditional manufacturing and resource extraction industries. Music production itself is, of course, a form of labour, and the work of local musicians is also being challenged and transformed by the changing technologies of post-industrialism at the same time that local policymakers are citing “music clusters” and creative industries as critical components of local economies.

In fact, this notion of “creative industries” is central to some of the issues being raised here. David Hesmondhalgh has suggested that a distinction needs to be made between “creative industries” and “cultural industries.” The latter are defined by Hesmondhalgh as “involved in the making and circulating of products—that is, texts—that have an influence on our understanding of the

world” (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 3). Hesmondhalgh suggests that the former are “increasingly popular in policy circles” and include the cultural industries, but also extend to a range of “craft-based activities,” which Hesmondhalgh argues includes elements of fashion and design (Hesmondhalgh 2002: 14). Elsewhere, the creative industries are often seen to extend into other forms of creativity, including media, advertising, architecture and other forms. Here I have used “cultural industries” in considering music as a form of labour that does produce a product, but have reverted to using “creative industries” to mark out the points where the cultural industries (and particularly the music industries) are being employed as part of a wider framework of cultural activities, such as festivals, encompassing music alongside other art forms, and where such events are often aligned with policy decisions.

This paper is also concerned with understanding the specific role that music plays within Saint-Étienne itself, particularly in relation not only to cultural industries, but also to “heavy” industry and manufacturing. The loss of two of the area’s largest employers, the local coal mine, and French manufacturing and mail-order giant Manufrance, has led to a decline in the city’s fortunes and to efforts to reinvigorate the local economy. Young people have responded by using music not only as a form of local identity construction (often actively reflecting on the city’s industrial past), but also entrepreneurially, as a form of job self-creation. Their efforts intersect with broader cultural industries, both public and private, such as: local community radio; local venue owners; local and regional government cultural initiatives; and other cultural forms, such as theatre, film or graffiti. Both the work of musicians in the scene and the connections the scene fosters make Saint-Étienne a valuable case study for understanding these shifting cultural flows, in a city that, culturally, seems to “punch above its weight.”

One of the striking things that has emerged in my study of Saint-Étienne is the ongoing importance of self-identity to Stéphanois (as the people of Saint-Étienne are called) musicians, particularly the relationship between this identity and the working-class culture from which it has emerged. While the broader research from which this article is derived provides an overview of the Saint-Étienne music scene, here I focus on the many ways in which the relationship between this scene and the city’s labour history is made manifest. In interviews with a number of musicians and other figures involved in the Saint-Étienne music scene, the city’s labour and industrial history are frequently connected to aspects of self-identity. There is a practical component to some of these ties in the sense that abandoned industrial locations are frequently used for practice and performance space. The most iconic of these spaces is the city’s former coal mine, which now houses a museum of coal mining; the museum

celebrates the history of the industry within the city, but it is also occasionally employed as a music venue, with its outdoor areas housing a stage, and smaller acts often performing within other former mining buildings. Beyond such cultural infrastructure, many musical texts and performances by local cultural producers also enact links to this labour history, underscoring how a sense of space remains embedded in multiple facets of the local music scene.

### Saint-Étienne: An Industrial Past, a Post-Industrial Present

Coal mining is a crucial component of the lengthy industrial history of the city. Arms, bicycles and ribbon-making have represented prominent former industries. Additionally, French catalogue company Manufrance was based in the city, and its production and distribution facilities dominated the city core. Manufrance was the familiar trade name of the company fully named Manufacture Française d'Armes et Cycles de St. Etienne, which began in 1888 as an outdoor equipment supplier of hunting and sporting goods, but by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century it had grown into a French retailing giant, supplying numerous household items. Not coincidentally, Manufrance also served as shirt sponsors for the local soccer team, Association Sportive (AS) Saint-Étienne, which dominated the sport in France for much of the 1970s, helping to cement the firm as central to the city's identity. The loss of industry has obviously had a negative impact on the city.

Music arguably sits on the border between the industrial and post-industrial. It is primarily, and most often, a form of labour where something is produced, whether in the more tangible form of recorded music or the less tangible "listening experience." At the same time, music has close connections to the service and cultural industries, which are often positioned as central to a post-industrial economy.

Post-industrialization has had an impact on the rise of a local music scene, particularly in relation to how previously industrial locales, such as the coalmine, have been repurposed in ways that create a connection to the city's past, and its identity. Much of the analysis here is based on interviews with musicians and their comments on their relationship with the city's industrial history. A consistent theme from these interviews was that dominant genres in the scene, such as punk, hip hop and industrial metal, defined and represented a working-class ethos that is equated with Saint-Étienne. The local scene is also dependent on the remnants of the city's industrial infrastructure. Musicians are able to find adequate space cheaply, for living, for rehearsal and for performance, which contributes to the vibrancy of the local scene.

Geoff Stahl noted a similar situation in Montréal during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Stahl identifies the fact that economic decline does lead to the greater availability and affordability of “informal settings which allow and encourage forms of individual and collective expression (i.e., cafés, lofts and abandoned warehouses)” (Stahl 2001: 101). Saint-Étienne’s scene shares other attributes with Stahl’s description of Montréal in the sense that much musical activity is not focused on economic success. As Stahl writes, the “specific symbolic and material practices [are] oriented in such a way that they privilege the virtues of cultural productivity and creative labour over economic or commercial success” (Stahl 2001: 101). Saint-Étienne’s affordability allows for a greater availability of cultural spaces, while the city’s relatively small centre means that such spaces are in close proximity to one another, allowing for greater interconnectedness between elements of the scene.

## Industries and Scenes: The Local and the National in a Global Economy

Much of the anxiety around the “decline” of popular music has been focused on what might be considered the traditional, mainstream music industry.<sup>2</sup> Whereas these changes have impacted cultural policy on the national level in France, musicians in Saint-Étienne’s local scene have responded in far more nuanced ways. In her examination of the impact of the Internet on local scenes, Holly Kruse maintains “that even in the Internet era of music production and distribution, local spaces and identities remain important, providing the necessary infrastructure still required for music scenes to survive” (Kruse 2009: 210). This is certainly true of the scene within Saint-Étienne, where various bars and clubs, a supportive local community radio station, a number of arts and music festivals, and ties between various local musicians of varying genres, ensure that a thriving music scene exists. Much has been made of the significance of new digital technologies in relation to the music industry. Undoubtedly, there has been substantial change in the ways in which music is disseminated and consumed, and yet simultaneously, music remains an activity that is linked very closely to local culture. Music practices have been perceived as a means of articulating individual, and group, identity in relation to the wider global forms of culture. Whether we are addressing specific geographic locality, or aspects of online scenes, these community circuits in which music is exchanged, discussed, produced and consumed are significant.

In France, the music industries play a significant role within French popular culture. Hugh Dauncey has noted a 1996 survey “that revealed that

music is a more important leisure pastime for the French than sport, television, travel, cinema- or theatre-going” (Dauncey 2003: 42). As Dauncey stresses, “musical ‘consumption’ of all kinds is thus unarguably a fundamental aspect of the everyday life of French people” (42). What is striking, is that Dauncey notes that much of this consumption relates to popular music, *variétés*, and rock and pop. Dauncey makes note of Mario d’Angelo’s examination of the French music industries and their vulnerability in relation to current developments, where French culture remains understood as, what is termed in France, “exceptional,” with traditions that set it apart from the rest of the globalized world. Yet, such exceptionalism means that French popular music is thus seen as vulnerable. The policies and infrastructure erected to support the industry in France tend to be focused on more traditional francophone forms that struggle against the tide of globalized music. At the same time, d’Angelo, and Dauncey, do point out that there are “manifest strengths of music in France in terms of public interest in it as a leisure activity or government willingness (since the 1980s) to invest in it as an aspect of cultural policy.” (Dauncey 2003: 43)

There is a vibrancy within the Saint-Étienne scene that allows it to engage with the global, but in ways that are locally adapted, and which also retain some of the notions of French cultural exceptionalism. The political desire to pursue this exceptionalism in France is focused almost exclusively on francophone music, yet many smaller, local bands, as is the case in Saint-Étienne, tend to perform in English. The exception in these cases is not one of language, but one of cultural inflection. Arguably this inflection comes from precisely the local strengths that need investigating. The scene in Saint-Étienne answers some of d’Angelo’s concerns, since rather than needing a strong industrial sector in a more traditional sense of a music industry (or industries), what is needed is a strong local culture, or a sense of that culture, to enable traditions that perhaps retain a degree of “French exceptionalism,” if indeed this is necessary. This is less about overt aspects of French identity being maintained through musical practice than about the ongoing role of local music scenes and culture and their contribution to these wider music industries. Notably, local identity remains significant, and that in itself may reflect the ultimately local nature of most music-making and consumption practices; they happen “somewhere.”

## Structures and Practices in Saint-Étienne

In 2009, I began to analyze the music practices within Saint-Étienne, a city of roughly 180,000 inhabitants, located in Eastern Central France, about 40

miles southwest of Lyon. Despite its relatively small size, Saint-Étienne has managed to develop a vibrant and meaningful local music scene, one that has also forged connections with other local music scenes in France, as well as in other nations. Much of this can be attributed to the success of touring bands, agreements with independent labels in other countries and local festivals that strive to bring in various international artists. My focus has been primarily on the independent sector, although as might be anticipated in a city of such size, there is interplay between the bands that continue to have a local following and those that have managed some degree of national or even international success. Among the most successful bands from Saint-Étienne are dubstep/reggae pioneers Dub Inc., folk rock-act Mickey 3D and hip hop artists MC Pampille and KnX Crew.

As G r me Guibert has noted for French music scenes, “if local audiences identify themselves with such a collective, and if nationally, media and audiences establish a link between place of origin and musical style, a local scene becomes identifiable” (Guibert 2011: 232). In the case of Saint- tienne, it might be argued that style is less significant than practice. Rather than a defined style, the city’s musical acts offer an innovative polyglot, where bands readily incorporate multiple influences, and bands and audiences are receptive to a wide range of musical styles, so much so that on one of my interview visits, a night of Eastern European industrial music at bar L’Assommoir was followed by a visit to Caf  Lecture Le Remue M nages for a rap open mic, and much of the same audience was found in both locations. This aligns with Guibert’s notion of local audiences—and practitioners, given that the two realms are so often interchangeable—identifying themselves as a collective.

Guibert suggests that the French popular music industry has been late in developing practices that benefit local scenes:

There are ... two factors which are critical for the crystallization of a local music scene. It is first necessary for musicians themselves to emphasise their (regional) origins, which is rarely done in France, and secondly, it is necessary for the local or regional authorities representing the geographical area to make use of the image created by the music scene to favour the local economy by using it in tourism policy for example, which is also rarely done in France in the “contemporary music sector” although in England this type of opportunity is already widely seized upon. (2011: 232)

Again, both of these points pertain to Saint-Étienne. The latter is evident in the significant role that music and cultural events play locally and how they are actively promoted and strongly supported at various levels of government. Guibert's first point is evident in my interviews, as Stéphanois musicians, and others involved in the local music scene, are very self-conscious and self-aware of their origins. They situate their local identity both through the economic struggles of Saint-Étienne and through distinguishing themselves from the nearby, and much larger, city of Lyon. During one interview with musician Mika, who performs in what might be described as a cabaret/folk-styled band called Pusse, and Dmitry Mbakop, a musician, promoter and programmer at local community radio station Radio Dio, Mbakop noted that in soccer matches with local rivals Lyon, the opposing fans would chant "when your fathers were dying in the coalmines, our fathers were inventing cinema" (in reference to the Lumière brothers who hailed from Lyon). Mbakop and Mika suggest that the Stéphanois did not take this as the insult intended but as a source of local, working-class pride. As Mbakop noted, "It's the truth. Our fathers died in the coalmines. We don't give a fuck. We're proud of it" (Interview, August 27, 2010).

Local musician Laetitia Fournier, who performs under the stage name Raymonde Howard (and, like so many Stéphanois musicians, also performs in a number of other bands), has underlined these notions of local, musical solidarity:

I've been to many places in France, but you don't feel the same spirit as in Saint-Étienne because people are not so involved or they have the broad range of music available every night. You don't feel a ... community spirit. It's more like, you go to a punk rock show or you go to a hip hop show. (Interview, October 20, 2009)<sup>3</sup>

Fournier goes on to attribute this local spirit to the industrial history of Saint-Étienne, noting that she has experienced something similar in Metz, another post-industrial city, with ties to the steel industry:

Metz and Saint-Étienne are places where it used to be coal mine work, so people are from poor backgrounds and they have their grandparents involved [in] this community background and links. They go out every night with the same friends. Maybe that's a sort of inheritance from this popular background, that people still convey in what they are doing, even if it's artistic work and not industrial work. (Interview, October 20, 2009)



Such sentiments are reminiscent of Stahl's suggestion that "suffering builds a scene's character" where the "sense of weakness can be positioned vis-à-vis the larger political and socioeconomic situation" (Stahl 2001: 106). Stahl may be focused on the situation faced by the "Montréal Anglo" and Québec's economic situation, but his description aligns with the Stéphanois in their relationship to Lyon along with the particular struggles of the local economy.

### MC Pampille and KNX Crew: Self Satire

These attributes of local identity have also been employed more ironically, as two of the Saint-Étienne acts to enjoy some level of success on a national level in France have been willing to play off of existing stereotypes of working-class, Stéphanois culture. MC Pampille has created a persona that satirizes the football- (soccer-) mad, track-suit-wearing, hip hop fan. He dresses in a green track suit, demonstrating his affiliation with the local soccer team, and adopts a stage persona of exaggerated hip hop iconography while rapping in the local dialect (colloquially known as "gaga") and incorporating numerous local references into his comedy/hip hop act. The ties to soccer are made evident in MC Pampille's video for the song "Mouille le maillot" ("Wet the Shirt"), the title of which adopts a popular French soccer chant. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKi1CUDRx4>) The video further reinforces ties between local identity, soccer and a stereotyped working-class image of Saint-Étienne as it is set in the home stadium of AS Saint-Étienne. Pampille's act is one of self-parody as opposed to any mocking of Stéphanois culture, and at events such as 2012's Fête de la Musique (a day-long music festival held in cities across France), MC Pampille's performance was clearly a large draw for local patrons, not dissimilar to the "we don't give a fuck" attitude regarding the city's coalmining past, where the taunts from those outside are turned on their head.

A second act that employs local references explicitly in their performances is KnX Crew. The band formed at high school out of a group of friends interested more widely in hip hop culture; they have also gained some local renown as a graffiti crew. One of their members, Pitr, is part of a well-known street artist couple, Ella and Pitr. The two specialize in pasting paper cut-outs to walls and other public spaces.<sup>4</sup> They have gained worldwide notoriety, to the point where the city and regional government have made use of their work for promotional materials and beautification projects. For KnX Crew, Pitr's style, along with other forms of street art, has been used as

a form of local self-promotion, with Ella and Pitr's distinctive artwork and other forms of graffiti often used to advertise local shows. The band have also used their high-energy stage show (with one member running non-stop on stage throughout the set), and their influences from punk and hip hop, to gain a following while touring with other, more renowned French hip hop artists. The Parisian scene (and to some extent the scene in Marseille) has had notable success, and it has been difficult for provincial artists to break through, so KnX Crew's unique performance style and ties to Saint-Étienne have helped them to stand out and gain a following, both locally and nationally. Their video for "Le Sainté des Enfants Perdus" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y0mZjUpqsTw>) offers strong links to aspects of locality as part of their image. The video features a number of local images and lyrical references. Included in the video are overt references to the city's mining past, as one of the band's members is depicted dressed as a miner, riding in a mine cart drinking wine, and also standing atop the city's now-closed mine head. Local shops, public spaces and the city's distinctive tram line are also highlighted in the video, and the song itself opens with the lyric "Saint-Étienne, je t'aime."

The same sense of self-mocking as a source of pride runs through the lyrics of the song. Listeners are told "Le charbon a noirci notre capital" (Coal blackened our capital), "Mais elle enivre par sa beauté banale" (but she intoxicates with her banal beauty). Later descriptions offer "Nos montagnes, des crassiers" (our mountains of slag), "Nos campagnes, désertées" (our countryside, deserted), "Nos rivières, polluées" (our rivers, polluted) and "Nos hivers durent presque une année" (our winters last nearly one year). Despite these apparently negative depictions, each is offered as "ours," reaffirming the band's ties to Saint-Étienne.

Both MC Pampille and KNX Crew reaffirm a working-class identity dominant among Stéphanois. The satirical nature of their respective approaches demonstrates a self-awareness that is recognizable to local audiences, serving to reaffirm the collectivity between artists and audiences that helps to define a scene, as suggested by Peterson and Bennett (2004). The ways in which these works influence an understanding of the world also underscores Hesmondhalgh's concept of the "cultural industries" and the nature of the products that they produce. Saint-Étienne is culturally imagined (or re-imagined) via the music, videos and associated art produced by these musicians. These texts thus have the sort of influence imagined by Hesmondhalgh as central to the cultural industries (2002).

This unpretentious local identity is also found in Ella and Pitr's street art. In an interview, Pitr notes that many of the characters that figure in the pair's drawings are based on images of local inhabitants. In particular, he notes

that in August, when a large portion of the city's inhabitants are on vacation (an occurrence common throughout France), "there are lots of, I call the people in August in Saint-Étienne, the freaks, because all the poor people stay in Saint-Étienne and all the rich people or middle class go on holidays" (Interview, August 2, 2011). Pitr goes on to note that these local inhabitants have provided inspiration for recurring figures in his and Ella's work, who are given some form of back story. One such figure is an old woman who shows up in a number of the cut-outs placed throughout Saint-Étienne. She often appears tired or dejected, beaten down by a hard life, but in other images she fights back, including one large image in which she is seen taking a jackhammer to the cityscape. Despite the use of the term "freaks," it is evident that Ella and Pitr intend a sympathetic portrayal of the city's inhabitants.

### Creative Industries in a "Black City"

According to H el ene Roth, Saint- Etienne "suffer[s] from a reputation of 'black city', referring to its former mining activities." (Roth 2008: 1) Roth describes the city's economic crisis as linked to its shrinking population, noting that Saint- Etienne's centre has increasingly become dominated by low-skilled workers and the unemployed, largely because of the cheap rents. In response, local authorities have focused on economic improvement, and have attempted to develop strategies to revitalize the city. This regeneration has included the introduction of a Design Biennale in 1998, and according to Roth, corresponding efforts to "rehabilitate an industrial brownfield, the Imperial Arms Factory, near to the center, and to transform a part of it into a Design Village, whose vocation is to house the Biennale, the Fine Arts School and a new research institution." (Roth 2008: 6) Roth describes this effort as "clever, because it manages to link industrial, culture [*sic*] and urban matters altogether." (Roth 2008: 6) Although these connections are directed at the project of revitalization, the heritage on which they draw is also emphasized by many musicians in the local scene.

The links to the city's labour history evident in KnX Crew's video, "Les Saint e Des Enfants Perdus," are made manifest in the frequent appropriation of industrial spaces as spaces of music practice and performance, which bring together the "industrial, cultural and urban". The most notable of these is the appropriation of the former coal mine, the presence of which still very much dominates the city. One local band, Angil and the Hiddentracks, describe in their song "Final List" "a pair of tits that look down on my city and proudly claim a constant climbing towards a brown sky, or is it black, or black-gray" in

describing the two hills of coal slag that sit in the centre of the city. (Angil and the Hiddentracks 2006)

Indeed, the actual mine head is a very visible symbol of and within the city. The now-disused mine is the site of a museum of mining, and is also prominently used as part of local music festivals, the most prominent of which is called Avatarium. It is held each April and primarily features punk, industrial metal, hip hop and electronica. The description of the Festival quoted here (drawn from the website for the 2009 version) uses mining metaphors to link the festival's ambitions to the city's industrial heritage: "20 years to dig, always dig up naturally to find ourselves at the foot of the Mine ... Continually look for ideas, cause meetings to support the counter-cultures, generate ideas and discussions, climbing slag to scream in our megaphones and sounding off at the sound of our music and what we believe ..." (Avataria 2009). Again, a collective sense of scene is established through a shared sense of identity.

The mine's grounds have also been employed as part of the city's Fête de la Musique celebration. Coinciding with summer solstice, cities across France hold day-long music festivals, usually spread across a number of venues. In Saint-Étienne, the 2012 event culminated in a concert held on the mine's grounds. Spotlights provided dramatic, multi-colored illumination of the mine head, films were projected on the walls of the abandoned mine buildings, and bands and DJs played live on a stage assembled on the mine grounds. The crowd itself was incredibly diverse, drawn from Saint-Étienne and beyond, including local politicians, musicians, artists and DJs, with a vast range of ages and genre preferences on display. It was clearly a social celebration, a community event as opposed to an event aimed at a singular demographic or taste group. What was reinforced through the particular Stéphanois iteration of Fête de la Musique was the sense that central to Saint-Étienne's scene is not a unique style, but rather the collectively shared sense of identity, situated as it was in a space that was essential to the city's industrial past and possibly (in its role as a museum) part of a post-industrial, creative industries-driven economy.

## Leisure and Labour: Culture in a Company Town

The city's industrial heritage had a powerful effect not only on its economy, but also on its social and cultural structures. Saint-Étienne in many ways has been a company town, particularly in relation to the coalmine and to Manufrance in its heyday. Manufrance's buildings dominated the centre of the city as much as the mine dominated the west side of the city. The tight ties

to industry, and to unions (Saint-Étienne remains a staunchly socialist city in most elections), meant that for most workers, even their social life revolved around the company. It was the company that organized outings, concerts and other social activities. A 2011 exhibition at Saint-Étienne's Museum of Art and Industry celebrated the history of Manufrance and its influence on the city's history and development. Part of this exhibition focused on memorabilia and images from the numerous social events that had been organized for workers. The rapid decline in industry also meant the same for the social infrastructure of the city, not simply for economic reasons, but also because it was in many ways aligned with that of the industry.

The following generation, which did not work in the mine or for Manufrance, had to rebuild much of the city's cultural and social infrastructures. In many of the interviews I have conducted, members of Saint-Étienne's scene acknowledged the necessity of this work and the sense of community it built. They cited the roles played by Radio Dio (the local community radio station), by early independent bands such as the punk inspired Sixpack (themselves inspired by hearing American grunge via Radio Dio) and by sympathetic bars and other venues.

Much of this work has been supported by various levels of government, particularly at the levels of the city and the region, the Departement de Loire, of which Saint-Étienne is the capital, and the Rhone-Alps administrative region. This extends even to graffiti, which local authorities recognize as bringing vibrancy to the city, and do not always discourage. Ella and Pitr, for example, have been contacted by local officials who want painting on walls to brighten up drab areas or for cultural promotion. These artists still work illegally, but this acceptance from local officials indicates the role that music and music culture are playing as part of a wider regeneration of the city. The city's and Departement's Socialist administrations have focused on liveability, and on nurturing what is already taking place locally, in contrast to Richard Florida-style models of promoting a locale to attract new consumers. This aligns with Roth's claims that various levels of government are cooperating and that this "new strategy to revitalize Saint-Étienne is based on making the city an attractive place to live, with an ambitious action on public spaces, on housing estates' regeneration and on cultural and design projects" (Roth 2008: 5). In one interview, I was told that a closed art school, high on a hill overlooking the city centre, was turned over to artists to create graffiti, and has also been used in conjunction with a local hip hop festival.

In our interview, Pitr noted that the city, because of its industrial past, was once literally black and grey, and that cleanup efforts were initially aimed at inspiring middle-class pursuits, much as Roth suggests. These efforts were

not initially focused on youth who therefore had to construct and create their own cultural spaces and venues making use of the post-industrial space of the city, of which graffiti is an obviously visible example. Pitr suggests that the initial, very vibrant, punk scene (and its extension, the local hip hop scene) grew in large part because of cheap labour; he suggests punks were in it for fun, not money, and were willing to couch-surf or squat and make little income. The number of abandoned buildings, and cheap rentals in Saint-Étienne made this a viable locale.

### Gran Lux: Brewing Up Culture

The lure of cheap accommodation helped attract a number of artists to Saint-Étienne, and as Pitr describes it, many squatted in abandoned buildings, forming impromptu art collectives. One such former squat, which had essentially become an artists' colony, was a disused brewery closer to the city centre. In conjunction with local and regional government bodies, anxious to bolster the cultural and creative industries, the venue received funding in 2004 to turn it into a more legitimate performance venue and cinema named Gran Lux (<http://www.coxaplana.com>). Despite the additional funding, the building has retained much of its original feel and is a non-descript venue. It seems to have mainly evolved from its use as a squat into a space for local artists to work and perform. The space is clearly distinct from a more lavish Saint-Étienne venue, Le Fil. This latter venue is a relatively new space, opened in 2008. It features performance space, rehearsal and performance studios and exhibition space. The venue itself also emphasizes its ties to the city's industrial history by drawing its name from ribbon manufacturing, and incorporating industrial elements and visual cues in its design that provide links to the ribbon-making process. Le Fil features more touring groups and is perceived by many local musicians as elitist, even though a number of local artists have had an opportunity to perform at the venue, particularly as opening acts. The outward-looking aspirations of Le Fil contrast with the local focus, and aesthetics, of Gran Lux.

In August 2011, Angil and the Hiddentracks used the space of Gran Lux to record their album, entitled *NOW*. The choice of location engaged with aspects of the local, while the album's title suggested a powerful sense of immediacy. This sense of temporal immediacy and local awareness was emphasized in the series of vibrant videos that were shot by local filmmaker/designer Cédric Lamarsalle during the recording process and released on a weekly basis ahead of the album. The videos create a dreamscape of past and

present, of continuity and flow, as they investigate elements of the former brewery, including basement offices and tunnels once rumored to have been used to bring beer directly to local miners.<sup>5</sup> Lamarsalle's involvement also serves as another reminder of the collectivity that remains at the heart of the scene.

In its call to immediacy, and its articulation of a specific local, post-industrial space, the recording of *NOW* calls attention to the role played by local music scenes within the contemporary music industries. In capturing the labour of the recording process, and through the performing of this labour in this industrial space, *NOW* manages to fuse aspects of past and present within Saint-Étienne, tying the contemporary production of music to the historical production that was central to the city and its identity. Much of what I have described here, from the graffiti of Ella and Pitr, through the high energy performance of KnX Crew, to the use of the former mine grounds for Fête de la Musique and for the Avatarium festivals, all remind us that music is an industry, and it is one that involves labour. Its alignment with the broader industrial history of the city in Saint-Étienne makes this point even more evident.

As part of the wider concerns of my ongoing analysis of Saint-Étienne as an evolving contemporary music scene, these connections to labour serve as a reminder that when examining the local in music, we must pay attention to the elements of practice and praxis. The cultural industries do have the ability to shape our world. For Saint-Étienne, the struggle to recover from the loss of its primary industries, and, for those who laboured in them, of their identity, is key to its re-shaping. In this sense, the local music scene is one concerned with self-identity and collectivity. The fact is that scenes are heterogeneous, in a Deleuzian sense; they are rhizomatic, or as Matt Brennan and Emma Webster posit, we are looking at an ecology (Brennan & Webster 2011). The ways in which the various components come together and intertwine are vital. In this particular example, the ecology is one that is strongly influenced by the post-industrial nature of the spaces in which it is made manifest. Much of the current angst around the "crisis" in the music industry is focused on fixed notions of music (and of industry); on the end products (albums and singles) that are units of exchange. The case of Saint-Étienne demonstrates that we need to keep locality in the foreground if we are to recognize that the music industry is indeed in the process of being replaced by music industries, which remain crucial to the communities where they are formed. 🍀

## Notes

1. Elsewhere, I have considered the shortcomings of the sorts of creative economy, “music clusters” model advocated by the likes of Richard Florida, which seek to exploit and market fixed notions of local identity (Henderson, 2011). The Florida-inspired models are not focused on the sort of collective notions outlined by Peterson and Bennett.

2. In fact, as John Williamson and Martin Cloonan have argued, the term “music industry” is a misleading one, as it has traditionally been a stand-in for the recording industry, and that the term “music industries,” which I have used throughout this essay, is more accurate, as it acknowledges the diverse sectors of music, including publishing, live performance, promotion and so many more (Williamson & Cloonan, 2007).

3. All interviews were conducted in English. Those interviewed had varying levels of fluency in English, and were sometimes supported by friends acting as translators. I have retained the text of the interviews as spoken.

4. Examples of their work can be found on their website <http://papierspeintres.net>

5. The video for the song “This Time,” which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsJB06jB0IQ>, nicely encapsulates Lamarsalle’s style.

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