

Reflections on a Festival Tourist Experience in Queensland

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The Queensland Music Festival (QMF) is a biennial festival that offers events all over the state of Queensland. The festival organisation's main goal is not only to identify local cultures and tell local stories, but also to unite the state and to bring Brisbane and the regions closer together (QMF, 2011). For tourists, there are several opportunities to encounter community music making or learn about the history of a place through a QMF performance. In this paper I reflect on my ethnographic research with the QMF during the 2011 festival season. I use narrative and thematic analysis (Cortazzi, 2001; Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003) in order to deal with the festival tourist experience in three particular QMF musical performances: *Ailan Kores* - a choral work performed on Thursday Island which was webcast live to the city of Brisbane; *Drag Queen's Land* - an urban community arts project about being a drag queen in Brisbane; and *Behind the Cane* - a regional event about the history of the South Sea Islander community in Bowen, Queensland. All three events were attended and field notes were taken.

Through reflection on my visitor experience in these events, I identify the importance of learning about local stories and communities, the creation of meaning and an understanding of the Queensland identity through music. Several interviews with event participants and visitors have also been conducted and perceptions on these issues identified. I argue that not only major city music festivals, but also small-scale community performances can enhance the tourist experience and understanding of local culture (Picard & Robinson, 2006). The selected QMF events provide examples of three very different ways (a webcast, an urban and a regional community event) for visitors to engage with local communities and learn about their culture.