



Practical Idealism: Live Music Associations and the Revitalization of the Music Festival Scene in Finland

Heikki Uimonen

University of Eastern Finland

heikki.uimonen@uef.fi

Abstract

In the 1970s live music associations were established across Finland. They challenged the prevailing practices of event production and became major players in the live music business. In the City of Seinäjoki these associations were stabilized as part of the local music culture and still play a crucial role in transforming promotional practices related to popular music by running one of the biggest rock festivals in Finland since 1979. This article's theoretical starting point is to take into account how music culture consists of ideas, activities, institutions and material objects in general along with how to understand the relationships between the promoters of live music events and their surrounding societies. It discusses the symbiotic relationship between the live music associations, the local and national political and cultural institutions and the developments that helped these associations to become transregionally and transnationally influential cultural actors.

KEYWORDS: Live Music, Festivals, Cultural Policies, Promotion, Associations, Stakeholders

Introduction

In 1978, a group of music enthusiasts began to establish music associations across Finland. The driving force of these associations, which were colloquially called *ELMUs* (Elävän Musiikin Yhdistys; "Live Music Association"), was a concern about the state of live music. The scene was considered one-sided, opportunities for enjoying alternative music performances were scarce, and audiences and musicians did not quite meet in the desired way. There was a perceived, and stated, need to make things better.

ELMUs, which sought to promote live music and find new audiences, challenged the prevailing practices of event production. They became major players in the music festival business, even more so when measured by economic indicators.

Regionally and nationally, they had a strong cultural impact through their contributions to raising awareness of local and provincial music.

The activities of the live music associations in Seinäjoki became an integral part of the local and cross-border South-Ostrobothnian music culture (see Figure 1). These associations still play a crucial role in transforming promotional practices related to popular music. Their influence on the province's music culture can be detected in their active work in organizing music courses, teaching activities, rehearsal premises and event opportunities for bands. From the associations of eager idealists, professional organizations were developed, with their activities nevertheless still largely built on volunteer work, although today professionalism and volunteering are less clearly distinguishable, especially in the organization of musical performances (see Cloonan 2012).

The most prominent mode of operation among Seinäjoki's live music associations is the Provinssirock festival operated by *Seinäjoen Elävän Musiikin Yhdistys SELMU* ("The Live Music Association of Seinäjoki", established in 1992) and predated by *Vaasan Läänin Kehittyvän Musiikin Yhdistys KEMU* ("The Vaasa Province Association for Developing Music", 1978–1993). They both stand as proof of how the cultural associations founded initially for local and province level needs expanded into becoming actors for regional, national and international music scenes and other cultural fields (see Figure 2).

This article examines the various forms of live music activities supported by the associations and their effects, the associations' relationships with the surrounding stakeholders and how these relationships have changed over the years (see Frith 2010). The topic is studied from an ethnomusicological starting point, in which music culture is approached via its practices. An important aspect in general, and especially in this case, is the perception that cultural actors have of their own activities. The research questions are: 1) How did ELMU activities in Seinäjoki affect the local live music scene and music culture? 2) How was the general ELMU ideology manifested in the practices of live music from the 1970s to the present? 3) How was the symbiotic relationship between the ELMUs and the political and cultural institutions built and developed? 4) How did political-administrative structures shape the ELMU's activities? And finally, 5) what developments helped KEMU and its successor SELMU become transregionally influential cultural actors that combined local and nationwide expertise?

A historical mapping of the Provinssirock festival was carried out in the publication *Provinssirock: Ihmisten juhla* ("The People's Party"). It documents the cultural and economic significance of the event locally, regionally and nationally (Tuulari 2000). In addition, this case study utilizes *Soundi* music magazine issues from 1980 to 1991. Its articles gave various local live music activities publicity to cross-border and nationwide associations, thus constructing an image of both the Provinssirock festival and the city of Seinäjoki. The zeitgeist is clearly reflected in the magazine's articles, which helped to contextualize changes in the festival's culture; the presence of police authority and the audience's use of alcohol were clearly making headlines, unlike in today's news reports. *Soundi* magazine articles of the 2000s primarily contained reviews of individual artists' performances, leaving the festival event itself unnoticed. In addition to this, the archives of the national daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* are used as research material.

Contextual source material included in the research consists of interviews with dance hall musicians, music makers and ancillary industry representatives in Southern Ostrobothnia (Kurkela and Kemppe 2005). The interviews helped to map out how individuals active in the live music associations influenced the local music

scene. With other research material Kurkela's and Kempis' (2005) book contributes to knowledge about the people and event-related histories of regional and provincial-level live music.

Live Music Research

The guiding principle of the live music associations was to create opportunities for musicians to perform their music for the audiences who wanted to enjoy it. Apart from merely adding to the number of live performances, the associations also had qualitative goals: their members were motivated to play, sing, dance and listen to non-mainstream music. The associations' concern for the state of Finnish music culture led to concrete steps toward improving the situation, which included providing rehearsal premises for orchestras, organizing various types of pedagogical actions such as band schools for the youngsters, releasing records and disseminating information about various popular cultural phenomena. Because of this, live music associations began to interact with a number of stakeholders, including provincial art councils, municipal and city officials, media representatives and business partners. Their activities were visible in the surrounding communities, causing positive, negative or entirely indifferent reactions toward the associations.

Ethnomusicological theory can be used to shed light on various aspects of ELMU organizations. In this case study, the theoretical starting point is to take into account of how music culture consists of ideas, activities, institutions and material objects in general; in short, everything that is related to music (Titon 2009: 4). This could be seen as parallel to the ecological approach to live music research paying special attention to issues of materiality, ideology and sustainability (Behr et al. 2016).

Frith (2010) has conceptualized live music research and the systems it depicts. His categorizations make it possible to understand the relationships between the promoters of live music events and their local-societal contexts. He also discusses a number of factors that must be taken into account when contemplating these relationships.

First, it is necessary to make a distinction between live and recorded music and to look at the historical changes in this relationship. Radio, newspapers and other media, and their transformations, should also be included. In practice, the focus is on how live music becomes publicized and how it can be communicated within a media environment at a given time. For Provinssirock, these changes have been significant. KEMU's own publications, local print media festival reports and commentaries during the 1970s were followed by the press releases of rock magazines and by publicly-funded, nationwide *Yleisradio's* ("Finnish Broadcasting Company, FBC") and local commercial radio stations founded in the mid-1980s. In addition, KEMU established good relations with the personnel of FBC's regional office in Seinäjoki.

Second, the research challenges are established by the many kinds of live performance that exist. These can be categorized according to many criteria, such as 'amateur or professional' or 'public or private', which all require different scholarly approaches. These categories are also involved in various kinds of economic arrangements, such as commercial, state-subsidized or corporately sponsored arrangements – or, possibly, all of these (Frith 2010). Among the various KEMU activities, these all overlapped. The financial support of the municipality enabled the organization of events, or at least the covering of possible financial losses. At the same time, the relationship was symbiotic, as the profits of the live

music events contributed considerably to the Seinäjoki region's cultural, youth and business activities.

Third, the examination of live music can take into account the roles of both regional and central government, since they more significantly affect live than recorded music. On one hand, live music events are regulated and licensed; on the other, it is possible for the state to promote music activities by, for example, supporting a certain type of music through investing in its rehearsal premises and venues. These forms of support are related not only to issues around arts and tourist policies. They also involve youth and multicultural policies (Frith 2010). In the 1980s, license practices, such as notices of public events (*huvilupa*), were regarded as cumbersome by both event organizers and licensing and enforcing authorities. Licensed alcohol sales and disturbances also caused headaches for festival organizers and police alike.

Fourth, it is important to take into account the obvious, material fact that music has to happen somewhere; live music needs a place to be performed. These places and their possible transformations are essential elements for the socio-historical research of live music. A music venue can be a bar, a farmer's field or a stadium. Therefore, musical performance spaces also include the technological, architectural and ideological accounts of what people consider to be a good sound, good performance, good listening experience or, in general, an overall good night out (Frith 2010). In Seinäjoki, Provinssirock is connected to the area of Törnävänsaari. However, the association's music venues included numerous restaurants, clubs and various showrooms. These places were also important for planning live music events and other activities. The KEMU members recalled the association's office and even the organizers' kitchens as important places where ideas were worked out and decisions were made.

Fifth, it should be noted that, from the viewpoint of the promoter the power balance of the live music business is different from that of the recording industry. The role of the promoter is to cope with the riptide of performers, managers, agents, venues, regulators, record companies and artists. According to Frith, the promotional business "is a mess of contradictions — a contract-based business without contracts, an exploitative business based on face-to-face goodwill, a highly regulated business which often seems close to chaotic (and criminal), contradictions which remain even with the recent rise of a new sort of live music corporate oligopoly" (Frith 2010: 3). In Provinssirock's history, there are plenty of examples of philanthropic activities as well as the ability to solve the most problematic cases, though there is certainly much evidence of self-sacrifice. As an example, establishing international contacts and signing performance agreements required a different kind of activity in the pre-digital age than they do today.

Live Music Associations

Discussions about the role of rock music in society were part of a process of profound change and diversification in the Finnish music field. The first rock festival, called Ruisrock (1970), took place in Turku and, in conjunction with the *Popmuusikot ry* ("Popmusicians' Association"), organized a seminar on the subject. The founding member, musician and ethnomusicologist Mr. Ilpo Saastamoinen (2006: 232) presented his "58 Golden Pieces of Advice When Debating Against Representatives of Classical Music". This title and its provocative accompanying statements were documentaries of their time, reflecting the polarized discussions

between popular and classical music advocates. The discussion was fuelled by the demands of founding a state-run pop and jazz academy, which was heavily criticized by some classical musicians and composers. Additionally, grants awarded by foundations for popular music were extraordinarily scarce in mid-1970s Finland (Laukka 2013: 99). Furthermore, under-aged musicians and audience members had no place to perform or to listen to music.

The foundation for live music associations was influenced by the socio-cultural changes of the 1970s. These set the stage for live music events and musical life in general. The organization of dance events and music performances had decreased in part due to the economic recession of the 1970s and, toward the end of the decade, record sales also decreased. This was, however, alleviated by the record releases of a number of new small-scale companies that increased the total sales. Small dance venues were closed down at an accelerated rate; according to estimates, up to two-thirds of dance venues had stopped operations by the end of the decade. The pace of this trend was quickened by the popularity of disco music, which did not require live music professionals to perform (Jalkanen and Kurkela 2003: 590).

The ideological and political climate of the time was further accelerated by live music associations. Rock musicians born in the early sixties and starting their careers in the late-1970s found little interest in the left-wing political activities or values of the time. The rising popularity of punk rock underlined a DIY ethos that was at odds with the previous generation's political organizations. At the same time, the ELMU movement was established by people who had cut their teeth in the left-wing student politics of the 1970s. These individuals understood organizational practices and had the ability to negotiate with the authorities and make effective use of publicity. Existing contacts also helped to reach international partners, particularly in the Soviet Union, when things came to the forefront. Former left-wing musicians, activists and promoters and the founders of live music associations were actually the same people. The tail-end of the 1970s can thus be interpreted as the last attempt to organize rock music as a means of social change (Jalkanen and Kurkela 2003: 594; Turtiainen 2012: 24). To some extent, the development of ELMUs paralleled the so-called *Kontaknätet* ('Contact Net') in neighbouring Sweden, which continued the left-wing music movement's cultural activities in the 1970s. These became inspired by punk and new wave, and gradually transformed into festival-promoting music associations (Bjällesjö 2018: 5–6).

An ELMU was founded by musicians and music enthusiasts in Helsinki on 17 May 1978. The aim of the association was to increase opportunities for live music and to "improve the quality of Finnish music". The project was founded by a left-wing music organization called *Ohjelmakeskus* ("The Programme Centre"). Ideologically, the ELMU continued the activities of already-established popular music associations which were founded earlier in the 1970s to organize concerts, jam sessions, music camps and rehearsal premises for bands. In addition, ELMU sought to bring together different musicians and audiences. After six months, the association had 5,000 members. Its music policy goals included the promotion of busking, abandoning the entertainment tax (*huvivero*) and providing rehearsal premises for music groups. This 'entertainment tax' was levied on public plays and entertainment in Finland including, for example, concerts, dances, theaters and movies between 1915 and 1981.

Despite its goals, ELMU was not entirely a musicians' organization, although in the early days they did perform at its events as voluntary workers, which greatly contributed to revitalizing the jam session scene. Also, prior to the ELMU's formation, dance promoters and concert hall owners had demanded the elimination

of the entertainment tax. Music listeners under eighteen years of age were taken into consideration through the organization of special events for them in Helsinki (Bruun et al. 1998: 222, 244–245, 263).

In the autumn of 1978, music associations were established around the country, which led to the establishment of the *Elävän musiikin liitto* (“Live Music Union”) in 1979. Major music events and festivals were set up specifically to find the province’s talented musicians. The left-wing activists behind ELMUs were also active in various areas, such as organizing various types of solidarity events and offering venues for young players and bands to perform at, although this could be interpreted as a way of establishing a political connection with the younger generation. Hardly any performers found the left-wing rhetoric satisfying, with its slogans such as “hitting the establishment over the head with rock and roll” (Bruun et al. 1998: 273–274).

Helsinki area musicians, especially those experimenting with fusion music, soon felt that ELMU had not kept its promise as it moved toward more straightforward rock. The situation was problematic since the association tried to fulfil the needs of those who preferred dancing and whose attitudes toward music were perhaps less analytical than those of the experimental musicians. As a counterweight to this line-shifting, the *Improvisoidun Musiikin Yhdistys IMU* (“Improvised Music Association”) was established. Finally, these diverse grassroots activities were given presidential recognition in 1986 when President Mauno Koivisto’s greetings were delivered to an ELMU Independence Day celebration (Bruun et al. 1998: 281, 383; Imu 2013).

KEMU and Provinssirock Festival

In 1978, an event called *Rock Piknik* (Rock Picnic) was organized by local music enthusiasts in Seinäjoki. With no financial backing, the event attracted an audience of 600 people. Encouraged partly by this experience, *Vaasan Läänin Kehittyvän Musiikin Yhdistys* (“The Vaasa Province Association for Developing Music”) was founded, with its name suggesting that the association would cover not only Seinäjoki, but also the whole province. In the politicized atmosphere of the 1970s, the founders of the association recruited active members from political parties, such as the National Coalition Party, the Social Democratic Party and Liberals and from regional newspaper *Ilkka*. The live music association was set up in Seinäjoki on 2 June 1979, only a few months after the first ELMU meeting was organised in the Helsinki metropolitan area (Kurkela and Kemppe 2005: 256–261; Tuulari 2000: 7–8). The Finnish Broadcasting Company supported the activity indirectly by allowing the association to use the company’s premises and later broadcasting music programmes of demo tapes from emerging music groups (Kurkela and Kemppe 2005: 273). The map below (Figure 1) depicts the geographical terrain across which these relationships played out.

According to the first action programme, the activities were planned to be organized in Seinäjoki, which was considered the centre of the “strong musical province” (Tuulari 2000: 8). The area of operation was manifested in the association’s goals, which included the setting up of a pop festival with bands from Seinäjoki, Vaasa Province and beyond, from the whole of Finland. One of the “well-known bands”, it was suggested, should represent “the highest development stage of international rock music” (Tuulari 2000: 8).



FIGURE 1. Map of Finland (WV 2019)

This outspoken musico-ideological statement was represented also in the association’s name. In that respect, it followed the lines of other ELMUs with a slightly ambiguous ambition of improving the quality of music.

Live music can be understood as a living cultural practice that is embedded in a surrounding material culture (Behr et al. 2016). This held true in Seinäjoki, too, although the actual transformation of material culture and cultural practices were initiated by dissatisfaction with national and especially local live music culture.

According to the association’s announcement, it was founded by musicians and music consumers who were disappointed by the music scene in Seinäjoki. The aim was to organize concerts, club evenings and other live music events with all possible means to enhance the quality, quantity and heterogeneity of music in Vaasa Province. The association was “open-minded to all kinds of music” but succeeded in blocking out part of the popular music of its time by stating it would not become a “Baccara or John Travolta Fan Club” (Tuulari 2000: 10). Despite these comments being based on vaguely-defined aesthetic principles, the music policy definition was generally quite broad: all other acts were welcomed, excluding the fan club activities that were intertwined with commercial music business.

Ideology is encountered in the ideas and activities of everyday life. These can be defined as values and assumptions that reify and legitimate their objects to

perpetuate and perhaps challenge existing social relations. In the context of music, these include live music events, formal and informal music education systems and the regulatory and promotional roles of the state (Frith 2010; Green 2006: 5, 14).

KEMU funded its activities by establishing membership fees and concert and club admission fees. This action was directed at a rather large audience, regardless of age or music preference, as the performers included traditional Finnish folk musicians, heavy metal bands and classical musicians. KEMU organized concerts and music tutoring for children and teenagers, charting local artists and recording the local bands' music. Live rock music lessons for children were also organized at schools (Tuulari 2000: 11–12; Kurkela and Kemppe 2005: 265).

The rapid introduction of several pricey activities led to economic difficulties for KEMU in 1979. The costs were partly covered by a general operating grant from the city of Seinäjoki. *Provinssi* began to gain publicity in national rock magazines, although the first report in *Soundi* magazine barely covered the festival or music *per se*. The Gonzo-style article mainly reported the intoxication-filled travels of nationally renowned rock musicians (Blom 1979: 30–31; Tuulari 2000: 12).

KEMU's *Lakeuden kutsu* newspaper became the association's mouthpiece. It took a strong stance on "today's traditionalists" and criticized the Ostrobothnian "cultural hegemony" that found rock music hard to digest. *Schottisches* and polkas were seemingly accepted genres, although attitudes turned negative when rock groups performed "potentially contemporary dance music" (Tuulari 2000: 18). The paper's editorial work was based on the ideology of the punk era of the late 1970s and the DIY attitude of small magazines. If there was a need to make one's voice heard, this need was fulfilled by founding a punk magazine or making a record.

Like other ELMUs, KEMU heavily criticized the entertainment tax policy. As a result, rural police authorities had become experts in entertainment events; their competence also extended to programme content. The policy led to somewhat arbitrary taxation practices; theatres, operas, ballets and puppet theatres were excluded from taxation, unlike dance music. This was also the case in Seinäjoki, where the entertainment tax was imposed by the chief law enforcement officer of the county. KEMU's attempt to avoid the entertainment tax led to quite personal, if appropriate, characterizations of different music genres in their notices of public events claiming that "Blues music is often considered mournful and the audience seldom wants to dance to it". The entertainment tax was abolished in 1980 (Kahila and Kahila 2006: 48; Tuulari 2000: 12, 20).

Deregulation of entertainment tax policy made organizing live music events easier. However, this did not abolish the arbitrary actions of the law enforcement officials against the expanding festival scene. Because of this, "spatially and temporally specific" (Behr et al. 2016: 6) live music events and festivals became especially vulnerable.

The Expanding Festival Scene of the 1980s

The rise of the so-called *suomirock* genre (a mix of Finnish schlager and Anglo-American rock) and the new wave was represented in *Provinssi*'s roster in the 1980s. Moving into the 1990s a heterogenous range of popular music styles (within a broad mainstream) was represented by a diverse group of artists of international standing, such as New Order, Jonathan Richman, David Byrne, Ry Cooder and The Cardigans to name a few (Provinssi 1997).

In 1980 the two-page report in *Soundi* magazine paid attention to the list of 40 performers, and also to their relatively limited playing times. The lack of police presence was interpreted as a manifestation of the mutual trust between them and the audience (Mikkola 1980: 15–17; Tuulari 2000: 21–24). The festival personnel were also praised, which in the future would contribute to the positive image of this festival in national media.

The transformation of the festival scene in the 1980s and 1990s seems to have been a transnational phenomenon. Festivals became a “subcultural stronghold” of the music enthusiasts as they developed into broader events with more stakeholders involved (Bjällesjö 2018: 11).

Two years later the festival was commented on in *Soundi* magazine as an event at which “the police did not interfere with the use of alcohol”, and that this should not be endangered by stupid behaviour. The use of alcohol and the police were repeatedly of interest, as the following year’s festival news again considered police intervention to be worth mentioning (Junna 1985: 19–20; Tuulari 2000: 28; Wallenius 1983: 28–29; 1984: 10–13).

The KEMU assets were balanced, though future activities caused a tug-of-war among those in the association. Some of the board members suggested that the festival should be closed down and some suggested that new modes of operation should be developed. In general, KEMU’s activities from 1979 to 1985 were considered to be driven by the association’s board and volunteer workers; the executive director introduced the agenda, after which the government decided on Provinssirock’s programmes and other activities (Tuulari 2000: 49–50).

The festival expanded and its budget increased from the previous year’s FIM (Finnish markka) 600,000 to FIM 1.8 million. To guarantee the advance payments of the performers, several KEMU activists were forced to deposit not only their own but also their parents’ houses (Tuulari 2000: 53). This illustrates another layer to the power balance of the live music business and how ELMUs grassroots activists related to it. National and global stakeholders’ monetary requirements were fulfilled by individuals, who were willing to take the financial risk personally.

1986 Provinssirock became the first rock festival to be televised live, with FBC broadcasting programmes over the following three months. With the sale of 40,000 tickets, Provinssirock also became the second largest festival in the Nordic countries. A well-functioning organization and friendly staff were noted in *Soundi Magazine’s* festival report (Junna 1986: 10–11; Tuulari 2000: 53–58).

In the 1980s, media exposure was crucial for any rock festival in Finland due to the scarcity of journalistic music media for popular music. During the early years of the decade rock music was broadcast for only a few hours per week on nationwide public service radio station until deregulation and reregulation of the media led to the founding of local and commercial radio stations (Uimonen 2017).

In 1987 the use of alcohol, once again, was a matter of interest. Rock journalists noted that people causing disturbances were thankfully left outside of the festival area (Junna and Ojala 1987: 18–19). However, Provinssirock was on a collision course with law enforcement officials. The chief law enforcement officer of one of the counties commented in a local newspaper that because of the use of alcohol the event had become considered no longer manageable and therefore its desirability was questioned (Tuulari 2000: 62). Although the size of the audience had been limited, the police still reacted by prohibiting the sale of beer during the festival weekends in Seinäjoki from 1988 to 1990 to reduce the possibility of disturbances. The temporary ban on the sale of beer was abolished in 1991 due to increased drunk driving incidents as beer was being fetched from outside of the city

by car (Tuulari 2000: 94). The alleged problem remained unsolved and was even made more severe by local regulation.

Disturbances during the festival were relatively minor compared to other KEMU activities in 1987 such as educational and recording studio activities, now governed by the KEMU foundation (Tuulari 2000: 63). Festival revenues were directed to those in need; a total of FIM 120.000 was donated toward humanitarian aid for the Helsinki AIDS Support Centre, the ANC (African National Congress), SWAPO and fighting famine in Mozambique (Tuulari 2000: 61). If there was any political ideology or hidden agenda in KEMU's activities it can be discerned through the fact that recipients of its donations were, broadly, left-wing. Another step forward was taken when the first agreements between Finland and the Soviet Union for visiting rock groups were signed (Tuulari 2000: 64).

In 1989–1990, a contact with the International Live Music Conference led to a collaboration. There was a debate about reducing the length of the festival programme and the number of audience members but this actually led to the opposite happening when co-operative work with WOMAD began. The festival's organization and its roster expanded, which, in the media, was considered a positive phenomenon and an indication of KEMU's pioneering spirit. The FBC broadcast from the festivals live and compiled a TV series called *Maailmanmusiikkia* (World Music). Additionally, the WOMAD co-operation enhanced pedagogical activities in the areas of dance, sports, music and visual arts, which was well-suited to KEMU's core activities in culture promotion. (Tuulari 2000: 74–76, 79–80, Kurkela and Kemppe 2005: 271).

Drawing from rock magazines' reports, times had changed for the better and the atmosphere had perhaps become more tolerant, as journalists were mainly interested in the musical performances instead of paying attention to the number of police in the festival area. The alliance of rock music and WOMAD was praised as were the festival's diverse music performances, but it was also suggested that the festival should hire an "enlightened dictator" instead of relying on working groups that were "too democratic" (Jortikka, Niemi and Uusikartano 1990: 14–15; Uusikartano 1988: 16–18; Uusikartano and Niemi 1989: 24–28).

ELMU's actions had become increasingly global and entangled with international music industry and stakeholders' actions. Nevertheless, the association still operated on a local level to keep its promise on issues of sustainability by improving and resourcing a local music ecology (see Behr et al. 2016). The grassroots actions were further nurtured when, in 1990, The Institute of Rhythm Music for popular music education and research was founded by KEMU, the city of Seinäjoki and several of Vaasa Province's cultural institutions and active individuals (Tuulari 2000: 95).

Bankruptcy and Live Music Association of Seinäjoki SELMU

The Provinssirock-based economy turned out to be a kiss of death, although few could have predicted the effects of the recession beforehand. A major decision that KEMU made in 1990 was to separate WOMAD from Provinssirock. This decision was based on the need to reorganize the expenditure structure of the events as well as the challenges in combining the diverse programmes. The board also discussed reducing the festival's size due to the global political situation (the Gulf War), the economic downturn and similar downturns elsewhere in Europe. The Vaasa Province Tax Office filed for KEMU's bankruptcy in early 1993. A primary factor

that affected KEMU's economy was WOMAD, though WOMAD companies went bankrupt in the UK as well (Jortikka 1991: 16–20; Kotirinta 1990; STT 1993; Tuulari 2000: 98, 111).

The Live Music Association of Seinäjoki SELMU rebuilt Provinssirock with the help of the city, a bank loan of FIM 300,000, and the input of experienced festival workers. The festival was further professionalized during the next decade. It established connections with festivals in Central Europe, Sweden and Estonia, reorganized its programme planning, and created an imaginary person to whom the programme would be targeted – thus paralleling the format radio practices of the mid-1990s such as the BBC's use in the UK of an imaginary couple called 'Dave and Sue' as 'virtual' listeners about whom programmers could think when planning their outputs and schedules (Kelner 2008; Uimonen 2010:11). The lively discursive culture of the associations, however, did not work well with professional festival organizations which required quick decision-making (Kotirinta 1993; Provinssi 1997; Tuulari 2000; Uimonen 2017; Yourope 2018).

Live musical events, and especially music festivals, involve "negotiation with people who are *not* part of a shared ideological construct" (Behr et al. 2016). A somewhat extreme challenge was faced in 1998, when a group of Pentecostals reacted to the announcement of headliner Black Sabbath and specifically vocalist Ozzy Osbourne and his alleged connections to Satan-worshipping. The action was presumably motivated by church arsons of the 1990s in Norway by black metal fans. The demonstrators erected wooden crosses, guarded local churches and tried to force themselves into Osbourne's hotel, requiring additional security measures from the organizers (Koivio and Ristimäki 2012; Sillanmäki 2018).

Stakeholders were also in a state of transformation, causing both proactive and reactive arrangements. One-person enterprises and small promoter offices were gradually transformed into major domestic and international agencies with their competition affecting festival bookings. Profest Ltd. was founded in 1999 to produce festivals alongside SELMU with responsibilities for taking care of the tasks sometimes too strenuous for association-type organizations, such as managing business-to-business deals and sponsorships (Tuulari 2000: 190–194, 197).

In 2014, yet another major partnership was formed: major German festival organizer and promoter FKP Scorpio Konzertproduktionen GmbH joined forces with the Finnish Fullstream Agency, with its founder becoming a shareholder and CEO of FKP Sweden AB. With SELMU's 35 percent share and Fullstream's 65 percent share Scorpio also became one of the organizers of the festival, named *Provinssi*, since 2015. The trademark "Provinssi" is owned by SELMU (Lippu 2014; Rumpunen 2018).

Collaboration with Scorpio has changed the festival organization on three levels: booking international artists is easier; exchange of information in developing the festival in collaboration with other festivals belonging to the same group is a smoother process, and securing the financial resources of Provinssi is also now easier as part of a bigger group compared to earlier years. In 2018, the number of three-day festival visitors was 76.000 (Rumpunen 2018).

Since 2015 each Provinssi has attracted from 1100–1200 voluntary workers from all over Finland. The festival has contributed to local music culture by signing yearly contracts with SELMU employees, thus enabling the organization of live music gigs throughout the year in Seinäjoki (Rumpunen 2018). Figure 2 sums up the Seinäjoki festivals and organizers since 1978. Inspired by the nationwide ELMU movement of the late 1970s Kemu was established in 1979. The first Provinssirock, which was preceded by Rock Piknik, was organized the same year. After KEMU's bankruptcy SELMU took over and also took responsibility of the

festival in 1993. Profest Ltd. was established to produce the festival in the late 1990s. FKP Scorpio and Fullsteam became shareholders, and the festival was renamed “Provinssi” in 2015. This demonstrates that the sustainability of local music culture was, and still is, supported by maintaining live music venues and organizing live music events.

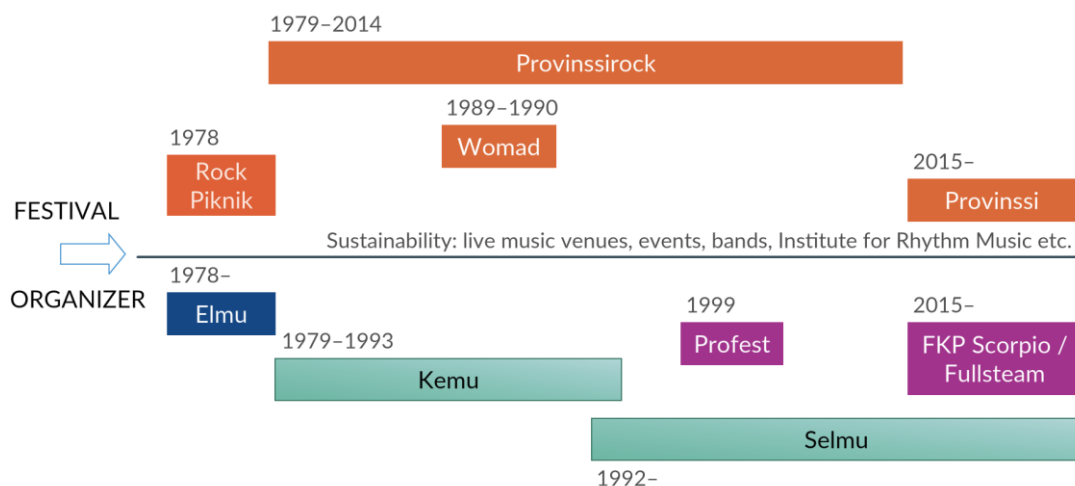


FIGURE 2. Provinssirock timeline 1979–2019.

Festival Promotion and Live Music Associations

Live music associations were a crossbreed of an allegedly anarchic punk attitude and highly organized activities amalgamating the left-wing legacy of activism with punk rock’s DIY ethos. Idealistic attitudes were combined with practical reasoning evidenced in actions such as registering associations for improving the possibilities of applying for grants. To some extent this paralleled the Swedish *Kontaknätet* networks of idealistic cultural associations, especially music associations, whose aim was to be an alternative to the established and commercial range of cultural activities, and these also gradually evolved into becoming music festival promoters. Local authorities, associations and voluntary workers were involved in festival production. Gradually, economies arose around the music scene causing conflicting perspectives and objectives that resemble the developments in Finland (Bjällesjö 2018: 7–10).

As stated above, in the context of a live music ecology, festivals can be understood as a living cultural practice. Ideologically, ELMU’s activism was initiated in a cultural environment that predominantly supported traditional music events. The emerging nationwide countercultural trends and disappointment with the music scene ignited the grassroots actions and founding of the organization. Local music’s sustainability was embedded in the organizations’ activities from the beginning, which led to the establishing of The Institute of Rhythm Music for fostering local music culture, which is still active today and continues the early ELMU ideals through education, training and organizing live music events.

The symbiotic relationships shaping ELMU activities, transforming live music and especially music festival culture, need to be contextualized within the overall technological, economic and regulatory changes of the music industry and the

visibility of popular music in society in general. The establishment of live music associations was linked to wider cultural change and grassroots activism represented by magazines and recordings, experimental theatres and Finland's first independent local radio stations. Slowly deregulating the music industries and globalization later led to the conglomeration of live music events and major partnerships familiar from other music industries, also changing the festival production culture in Seinäjoki.

For the new generation, the grassroots and translocal activities of ELMUs appeared attractive when compared to more conservative local actors. In Seinäjoki, ELMU did not consider itself to be operating solely in the city. Rather, it saw itself as servicing the live music scene, most visibly within rock culture. By definition, Finnish rock culture and *suomirock* are at the same time national and global, combining Russian minor melodies with Anglo-American rhythmic texture. However, this does not change the fact that the associations were tied to Seinäjoki both physically and mentally, as the image of Provinssirock was strongly related to the province and the city of Seinäjoki.

In ELMUs there was no comprehensive, clearly-defined political ideology, although some of the board members had gained experience through working in political organizations and youth movements. This knowledge of decision making at a municipal and provincial level, negotiation skills and associated skills in co-operating with political organizations contributed administratively to achieving the association's goals.

Instead of being politically ideological, ELMU's translocal actions were musically ideological. The prerequisite for the existence of a music ideology is an understanding of what seems to be and, especially, what does not seem to be ideologically proper music. In the early days, the active members were, somewhat surprisingly, leaning not towards popular music aesthetics, but rather on the aesthetics of classical music in which the music's development is perceived as having an intrinsic value distinct from that of commercial popular music. At the practical level, however, the association was operating outside of the established mainstream culture. It worked at the local and provincial levels and acted as a model for setting up a number of other live music associations with lasting effects for regional, and national, live music culture.

Acknowledgements

This article is written as part of the SENSOTRA project, which is financed by European Research Council (694893).

References

Bibliography

- Bjällesjö, J., 2018. Swedish Music-Festival Scene. *M&STE - elektronisk tidskrift för konferensen music & samhälle*, Nr. 4 [Online journal of conference on music and society]. <https://journals.lub.lu.se/mste/article/view/17323>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- Blom, J. A., 1979: Provinssi-Rock: Rokki loppuu kuin Seinäjokeen [Rock ends in Seinäjoki. Report on Provinssi-Rock]. *Soundi*, June.

- Behr, A., Brennan, M., Cloonan, M., Frith, S. and Webster, E., 2016, 'Live concert performance: An ecological approach' *Rock Music Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 5-23. DOI: 10.1080/19401159.2015.1125633.
- Bruun, S. et. al., 1998. *Jee, jee, jee: suomalaisen rockin historia* [Yeah, yeah, yeah. History of Finnish Rock]. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Cloonan, M., 2012. Live Music as Ideology. In *Situating popular musics: IASPM 16th International Conference Proceedings*, pp. 77-88. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/42361823.pdf>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- Frith, S., 2010. Analysing Live Music in the UK: Findings One Year into a Three-Year Research Project. *IASPM@Journal*, Vol.10, Issue 1. DOI:10.5429/2079-3871(2010)v1i1.3en
- Green, L., 2006. Ideology. In B. Horner and T. Swiss eds., *Key Terms in Popular Music and Culture*. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Jalkanen, P. and Kurkela, V., 2003. *Suomen musiikin historia. Populaarimusiikki* [History of Finnish Music. Popular music]. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Jortikka, J., 1991. Väki pysyy poissa [The crowd stays away]. *Soundi*, July.
- Jortikka, J., Niemi J. and Uusikartano, J., 1990. Hurmaava, värikäs, pyörteinen, uljas ja märkä äänispiraali [Charming, colourful, whirling and wet sound spiral]. *Soundi*, July.
- Junna, M., 1985. Provinssin äänet [Sounds of Province]. *Soundi*, July.
- Junna, M., 1986. Festivaalikesä -86 [Festival summer -86]. *Soundi*, July.
- Junna, M. and Ojala, P., 1987. Kesä alkoi Seinäjoelta [Summer began in Seinäjoki]. *Soundi*, July.
- Kahila, H. and Kahila, P., 2006. *Kun Suomi sanoi: Saanko luvan* [When Finland asked: Would you like to dance]. Jyväskylä: Gummerus.
- Kelner, M., 2008. "Heard the same song three times today? Blame the craze for 'testing' tunes'", *The Guardian*, 19 May. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2008/may/19/radio.bbc1>. Accessed 23 May 2019.
- Koivio E. and Ristimäki, T., 2012. *Ozzy tuulettaa. Black Sabbath Provinssirockissa. Selmu. Jalanjälki elävän musiikin kulttuurissa* [Ozzy is mooning. Black Sabbath in Provinssirock. Selmu. Footprint in live music culture]. Seinäjoki: Selmu.
- Kotirinta, P. 1990. MIKSI? Maailmanmusiikki ja Provinssirock erotetaan? [Why World Music and Provinssirock are separated?] *Helsingin Sanomat*, 12 December. <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000003034221.html>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- Kotirinta, P., 1993. Uusi yhdistys jatkaa festivaalin järjestämistä Seinäjoella. Kemun konkurssi ei kaada Provinssirockia [New association takes over the organising of the Seinäjoki festival. Kemu's bankruptcy will not bring down Provinssirock]. *Helsingin Sanomat*. 2 February. <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000003210248.html>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- Kurkela, V. and Kemppe, T. 2005. *Soittaja pärjää aina. Eteläpohjalaiset muusikot muistelevat* [Players always get along. Rememberings by South-Ostrobothnian Musicians]. Tampere: Pilot-kustannus.
- Laukka, P., 2013. *Kekkoslovakian kuninkaat. Hurriganes 1970-luvun suomalaisen kulttuurin tuotteena, tekijänä ja nostalgiana* [The Kings of Kekkoslovakia – Hurriganes as the product, agent and nostalgia of the Finnish culture of the

- 1970s]. Acta Universitatis Lappeensis 256. Rovaniemi: Lapin yliopistokustannus.
- Lippu, A–M., 2014. Iso festivaalijärjestäjä osti Fullsteam Agencyn – Provinssirockille luvassa lisäpotkua [Fullsteam Agency purchased by a major festival organiser. A boost promised for Provinssirock]. *Rumba*. <https://www.rumba.fi/uutiset/iso-festarijarjestaja-osti-fullsteamin-provinssirockille-luvassa-lisapotkua/>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- Mikkola, J., 1980. Provinssirock. *Soundi*, June.
- Saastamoinen, I., 2006. Ei oppi ojaan kaada eli 58 kultaista neuvoa popparille väittelyssä klassikkoa vastaan. In J. Lindfors Ed., *Pakko vatkaa. Kirjoituksia populaarimusiikista* [Learn your lessons i.e. 58 golden advice for a pop musician when debating with a classical musician. *You got to move. Writings on popular music*]. Helsinki: WSOY.
- Sillanmäki, L. 2018. Huhut kirkonpolttajista saivat Seinäjoen sekaisin 1990-luvulla – Provinssirockissa esiintynyt Ozzy Osbourne paljasti takapuolensa uskovaisille [Seinäjoki agitated by rumours of church arsonists in the 1990. Ozzy Osbourne revealed his rear end to the religious]. *Seura*, July. <https://seura.fi/asiat/ajankohtaista/huhut-kirkonpolttajista-saivat-seinajoen-sekaisin-1990-luvulla-provinssirockissa-esiintynyt-ozzy-osbourne-paljasti-takapuolensa-uskovaisille/>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.
- STT 1993: Provinssirockin järjestäjä Kemu haettiin konkurssiin [Provinssirock organiser Kemu filed for bankruptcy]. *Helsingin Sanomat* 28. January.
- Titon, J. T., 2009. *Worlds of Music. An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*. Belmont: Schirmer.
- Turtiainen, O., 2012. *Täältä tullaan Venäjä! Rock Suomen ja Neuvostoliiton kulttuurisuhteissa* [Here we come, Russia! Rock music and cultural relationships between Finland and Soviet Union]. MA thesis. Turku: Turun yliopisto, poliittinen historia.
- Tuulari, J., 2000. Provinssirock. Ihmisten juhla [Provinssirock. People's Party]. Seinäjoki: Rytmi-Instituutti.
- Uimonen, H., 2017. Beyond the Playlist. Commercial Radio as Music Culture. *Popular Music* 36 (2): 178–195. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143017000071>
- Uimonen, H., 2010. Towards Streamlined Broadcasting: The Changing Music Cultures of 1990 Finnish Commercial Radio. *IASPM@Journal* vol.1, no.1, pp. 1-15. DOI:10.5429/2079-3871(2010)v1i1.8en
- Uusikartano, J., 1988. Mudasta nousi ruusu [Rose growing out of mud]. *Soundi*, July.
- Uusikartano, J. and Niemi, J., 1989. Provinssi rockasi suvessa ja savessa [Provinssi was rocking in summer and clay]. *Soundi*, July.
- Wallenius, W., 1983. Provinssin pulinat [Provinssi blabberings]. *Soundi*, July.
- Wallenius, W., 1984. Festivaalikesä -84 [Festival summer -84]. *Soundi*, July.

Web Sources

- IMU 2013. Improvisoidun Musiikin Yhdistys IMU r.y. [Improvised Music Association.] *Asiakastieto*.

<https://www.asiakastieto.fi/yritykset/fi/improvisoidun-musiikin-yhdistys-imu-ry/04895876/rekisteritiedot>. Accessed: 5 September 2019.

Provinssi 1997. Provinssi. <https://www.provinssi.fi/v1997>. Accessed: 11 January 2019

WV 2019. *Wikivoyage*. Finland. <https://en.wikivoyage.org/wiki/Finland>. Accessed: 3 September 2019

Yourope. 2018. *Yourope. The European Festival Association*.

<https://www.yourope.org/cms/what-is-yourope/>. Accessed: 11 January 2019.

Interviews

Provinssi Festival Director Sami Rumpunen. 2018. Interviewed by Heikki Uimonen. Seinäjoki, Finland, 18 December.