

Manchester produces indie music fans just by being Manchester

October 2 2019

Musical taste and fans' status within their subcultures are shaped by where they live as they engage in experiences specific to particular geographical areas.

Researchers from Lancaster University, the University of Manchester and the University of Liverpool investigated how indie [music](#) fans in Manchester see links between the music and the [city](#) itself as key to their [musical tastes](#).

The team interviewed 26 Manchester-based members of the indie music scene, aged between 25 and 52, and the research—published in *Sociology* journal—reveals the strength of the connection between their musical tastes and Manchester.

The city has long been associated with the various musical styles within the indie music genre, with the key focus historically being on white, working class and male guitar bands linked with small, independent record labels and stores.

However, the interviewees defined indie music around their experiences in specific places such as cafes, live music venues, clubs and neighbourhoods, and how place-specific experiences were central to the development of their passion for the music.

Among the interviewees, one spoke of her amazement at passing by Morrissey's childhood home, even 20 years after moving to Manchester.

Another said The Smiths 'only could have been from Manchester', while a third spoke of how they had moved back to Manchester 'because I missed the music scene too much'.

"Manchester is a hub of unique indie character and ambience. Indie music fans in the city have built up their presence in the scene via their music experiences there," said co-author Dr. Alex Skandalis, of Lancaster University Management School. "Much of this is dependent on where they live, where they have watched and listened to bands and what venues are accessible to them.

"This reveals that place is central to the shaping of investment in one particular musical field over another, and in Manchester there is a vivid indie music scene that both allows and encourages an interest to develop and attracts people from outside who follow the scene."

Co-author Dr. Emma Banister, of The University of Manchester, added: "The music itself is embedded in the city of Manchester. Those members of the indie scene we interviewed spoke of the importance of the city and its venues in shaping their appreciation for the music—they met people within the music scene there, and the network of places informs the formation of their musical tastes. They closely associate the music with specific venues and there is an ever-lasting association of indie culture with small, underground venues, stemming from the background of the genre in the post-punk era."

The interviewees variously described Manchester as a 'poetic city' and referred to the 'sense of community' there around the indie [scene](#). The research showed the importance of experience in the various indie venues in shaping their musical tastes, with mention of 'obscure indie gigs' with bands who come to the city 'because there's all the indie hipster kids here'.

"An individual's place within the social sphere, dependent on their economic and [social position](#), is often seen as shaping their interest in certain genres of music or culture," added co-author Dr. John Byrom, of The University of Liverpool. "But it is so much more than that, and where a person lives has a large role in their ability to build associations and experience with a specific field such as Indie music."

More information: Alexandros Skandalis et al, Musical Taste and the Creation of Place-Dependent Capital: Manchester and the Indie Music Field, *Sociology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1177/0038038519860399](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519860399)

Provided by Lancaster University

Citation: Manchester produces indie music fans just by being Manchester (2019, October 2) retrieved 1 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-10-manchester-indie-music-fans.html>

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