# Music to My Ears: A Comparative Analysis of Music Venues in Three Cities

## Introduction

The music scene is an ever-changing industry that is subject to popularity trends. While radio stations may only play the most current songs from the most popular bands, the live music scene is not as fickle. A music venue, where music is played live, is a long standing industry where musicians may ply their craft in the hopes that the audience will experience their vision of music down to the depths of their souls. While music is powerful and evocative, music alone cannot enable a venue to be successful in their goal of achieving and maintaining a high level of popularity. Music venues come and go as trends change over the years. The purpose of this project is to compare 10 music venues from three different cities in an effort to provide aspiring musicians (and their management teams) with background data of the live music industry in cities that are commonly known to be music centers.

## Methodology

The analysis included three cities, Portland, New York City and Los Angeles. The selected cities were chosen due to the fact that they are all known to be music powerhouses, where domestic and international bands routinely entertain their fans. The three cities also have a variety of smaller venues from which bands may choose to play. For the purposes of this project, all venues chosen have maximum capacities of 1,500 or less.

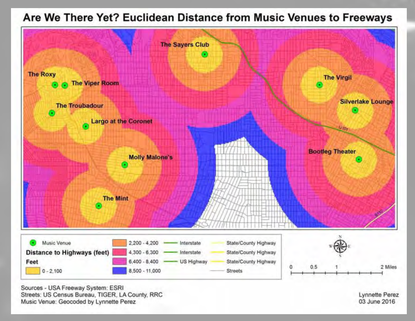
The first step taken was interviewing various musicians and musician management teams. The interview answers were averaged, and the most common, geographically pertinent, answer was used to determine what kind of spatial analysis to generate. Additionally, the interviews were used as a means to focus on only 10 venues per city, as musicians were asked what their top five favorite venues were to perform in in each city. Once the 10 venues were selected, it was necessary to geocode all of them in order to process the spatial analysis.

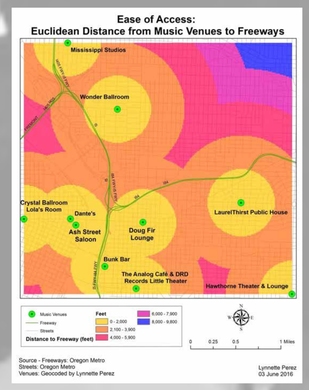
Demographic statistics were also employed during the research. Data utilized included Census Tract data from the three cities, specifically city streets and freeways or highways. Using this data, maps were made that show neighborhood demographics in relation to the venues. The Euclidean distance tool was used to generate maps that illustrate the ease of access, or lack thereof, for musicians and fans alike to arrive at the venue., as a common concern voiced by many of the musicians was that it was important to them to be able to easily find the venue, and that they preferred the venues be near freeways, highways, or main thoroughfare roads. Neighborhood demographics were also used to show median age, median household income, and the level of diversity present in the neighborhoods where the music venues are located.

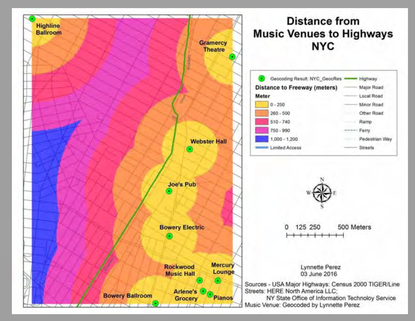
## Results

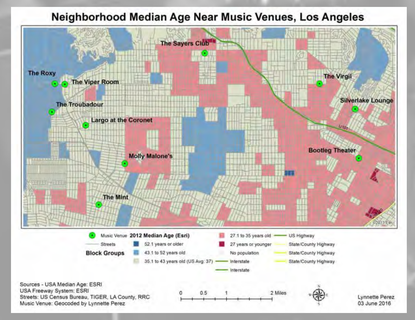
The Euclidean distance tool was used to generate maps that illustrate the ease of access, or lack thereof, for musicians and fans alike to arrive at the venue., as a common concern voiced by many of the musicians was that it was important to them to be able to easily find the venue, and that they preferred the venues be near freeways, highways, or main thoroughfare roads. The selected venues in all three cities are within 2 miles of said freeways and arterial roads.

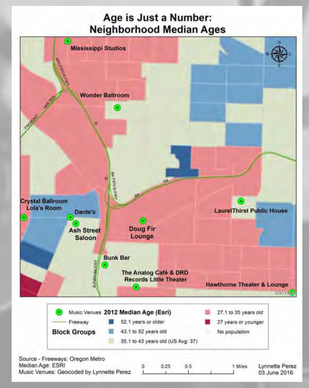
***Los Angeles, CA*** | ***Portland, OR*** | ***New York City, NY***

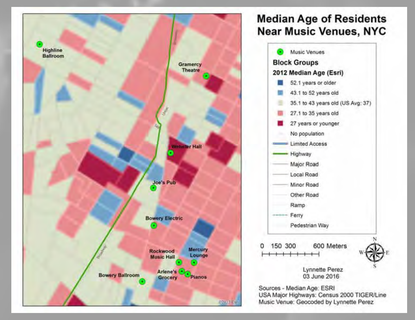


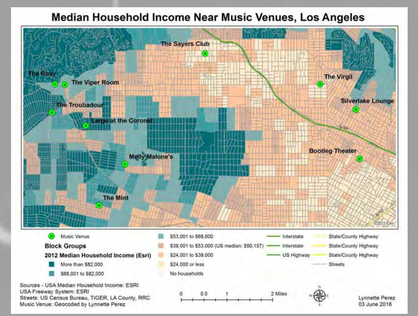



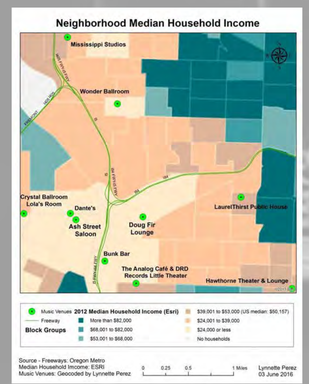



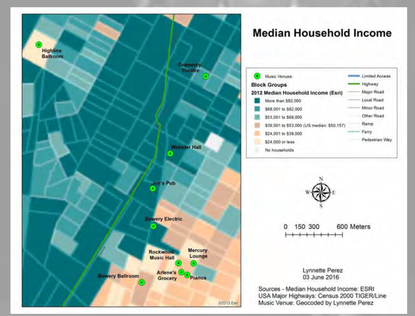



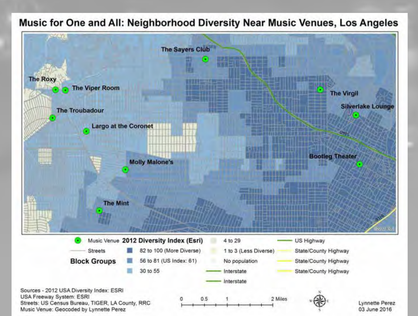



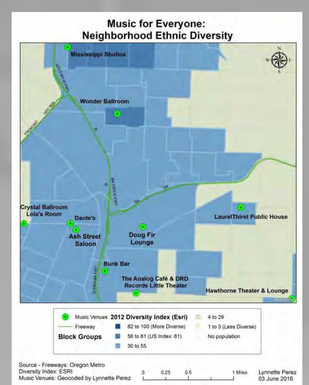





## Results continued…

The demographic comparison (diversity, median age and median household income) show that each city has its own unique trends concerning the musicians' preferred venues. When comparing the median ages of neighborhood residents, the trends were similar in that the majority of the venues were in "young" neighborhoods. In Los Angeles, 6 of the 10 neighborhoods had a median age range of 27-35, and the remaining 4 where bordering communities with ranges of 27-35 and 35.1-43. In New York City, 6 of the neighborhoods were averaged at 27.1-35, 1 area's residents had an average age of 27 years old or younger, and 3 communities of 35.1-43. In Portland, half of the venue neighborhoods had a median age range of 35.1-43, 4 neighborhoods came it at 27.1-35, and the last one bordered the ranges of 35.1-43 and 43.1-52. Overall, Los Angeles and New York City venues were mostly in the younger neighborhoods.

The next analysis run was that of median household income. According to the maps generated, Los Angeles had the most venues in more affluent neighborhoods, with 6 of them being in or bordering areas where the median income is $53,001 or more. Portland's music venues tend to be located in less affluent areas. There are only 2 venues located in neighborhoods with a median income of $39,001-$53,000. The remaining 8 are in areas that average $39,000 or less. Lastly, New York City's venues are fairly evenly dispersed. There are 4 in neighborhoods that average between $68,001 to more than $82001; 1 is located in a middle range neighborhood ($39,001-$53,000) and the remaining 5 are in lower income areas that have median household incomes of less than $39,000.

The last analysis processed was one of neighborhood diversity. This set of maps demonstrates that Portland has a different trend than Los Angeles and New York City. The neighborhoods where the study venues are located tend to rank below the national average levels for diversity. Both Los Angeles and New York City have at least half of the selected venues located in highly diverse areas.

## Limitations

While demographic and distance analysis can aid in deciphering city and neighborhood trends in the music industry, there is a limitation that has a large impact upon any comprehensive analysis. The limitation is that the data does not represent statistics about the music venues, such as the guests or fans that visit venues outside of their own neighborhoods. Further research would be required in order to assess such a limitation. Such research could include interviews or surveys of fans and using the data in an attempt to gain more of an anthropological assessment of the music venues.

## References


Cohen, S. 2012. Bubbles, Tracks, Borders and Lines: Mapping Music and Urban Landscape. Journal of the Royal Musical Association, vol. 137, no. 1, pp. 135-70.

Roberts, L (ed). 2012. Mapping Cultures: Place, Practice, Performance. Palgrave Macmillan Publishing.

Taylor, S., Arrowsmith, C. and Cook, N. 2014. A Band on Every Corner: Using Historical GIS to Describe Changes in the Sydney and Melbourne Live Music Scene. CEUR Workshop Proceddings, 1307.



**Acknowledgments**: Geoffrey Duh, Sarah Taylor and Steven Michaels



Portland State UNIVERSITY

**Research and Analysis by Lynnette Perez**