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Industry-Based Popular Music Education: India, College Rock Festivals, and Real-World Learning

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Abstract

Until recently, opportunities for formal music education in India were few. Music education at large universities concentrated exclusively on Indian classical music. Western popular music was largely the domain of Bollywood. With the rise of the Indian middle-classes in the 1990s, more Indian families began sending their children to school to study a range of disciplines. These students joined rock bands and major Indian colleges began to host rock festivals for student rock bands. Today, nearly every significant rock band in India originated in these festivals. Our research investigates the development, cultural significance, and educational importance of college rock festivals. Interviews were undertaken with established and emerging independent musicians, educators, and music industry professionals. Given the importance of learning within the informal communities of universities and college rock festivals, we adopted a communities of practice theoretical framework informed by grounded theory methodology. We find that, despite the emergence of popular music education in India, college rock festivals continue to educate young Indian musicians on technique, performance, songwriting, and music business.

Keywords: popular music education, andragogy, real-life learning, communities of practice, rock festivals, music business

The Western music industry has become vastly more competitive in recent years. There are more musicians, more bands and ensembles, more record labels (with less funding), more streaming services, more festivals, and more venues all vying for the consumer dollar. Paradoxically, it seems the more competitive the music industry becomes, the more attractive it

is to work in. Educational institutions have responded by increasing offerings in popular music performance, songwriting, and music industry. The costs of this music education are borne by governments or by relatively wealthy parents. However, the picture is rather different in developing countries. The music industry of economically emergent nations is more fraught, less developed, and more insecure than in the West (Dumlavwalla 2019; Olugbenga 2017; Fink et al. 2016; Arli et al. 2015; Mascus 2001). Given this, popular music education is often regarded as a risky investment by parents of aspiring musicians. They may steer them towards engineering, business, and other more sustainable and lucrative career choices.

The Indian popular music scene falls into this tradition. Music in India, like the land itself, is a complex, teeming, vast salad bowl of different traditions and influences. Bonny Wade (1999) once said that India is such a vast and teeming country that, for any statement one makes of it, the opposite will be true in another part of the country. The music of India includes such disparate traditions as the Carnatic and Hindustani classical traditions, the wildly popular music of Bollywood, wedding music, brass band music, Hindi EDM, Sufi rock, and Western-influenced rock to make a short list. The music industry, such as it is, focuses primarily on the music of Bollywood and music in the Indian classical traditions. The Indian singer/songwriter rock tradition, the sector most analogous to the Western music industry, is perhaps only thirty years old. At the time that this tradition was emerging, India did not possess the same industry scaffolding. What record labels there were focused on the music of Bollywood. Other traditions were underground “cassette cultures” (Manuel 2001). At the start of the 1990s, there were few established popular music record labels, no industry press, and no music colleges that catered to the Western rock traditions. And yet an underground scene started to gain traction in the first years of the decade. Small venues began to open. Festivals both large and small began to evolve. Bands began to play and record. However, with no established music industry or a resultant popular music education sector, musicians were often left to work out the industry on their own.

Further challenges for this emerging industry are also implicated by a culture that has not developed a bar or nightclub tradition. By comparison, in the West, live music has largely been associated with alcohol and nightlife. Indeed venues and those using music often lack a basic understanding of the music industry. An Indian restaurateur said:

Good Lord. It is my job to sell food! Am I going to spend my time negotiating music license fees, finding out which track belongs to whom and checking the legality of these people asking for money? I do not give a rat's ass about who is supposed to be paid, whether performers, composers, authors, publishers or music labels. It is beyond my comprehension and hey, when I bought your CDs and cassettes, I made a one-time payment that covered everyone, isn't it? I would rather not play music than deal with this nonsense! (Churamani 2019)

A music professional/educator based in Tamil Nadu (in the South of India) explained this lack of support many musicians in the West take for granted:

A large part stems from a social stigma against the club scene in India, it is viewed as something unacceptable for many, especially youth, to attend. Due to this there are great restrictions in many states on alcohol licenses and late licenses for nightlife. Also, many college age students would not think of "going for a night out" as something to do. Many colleges have strict curfews and monitoring of students' activities. The laws on these things do differ state to state. For example, Maharashtra (Mumbai) just raised its legal drinking age to 25, matching Punjab and Delhi.

This paper considers how musicians develop their music industry knowledge and performance skills without the scaffolding of either formal popular music education or an established popular music industry, locating the college festival as a significant part of the independent music scene. Our informant continues to explain:

The college fest is seen as a safe environment that occurs within a learning environment that is trusted by Indian families, and so these events have grown majorly into large scale festivals.

We find that people learn about music industry through direct engagement with it, particularly through performance at commercial and college rock festivals.

Authors Kelman and Cashman have been studying the popular music scene of India since 2013. On our travels we have interviewed dozens of music educators, industry personnel, and practitioners. These interviews form the data for our continuing research project into the Indian popular music scene. Although the focus of this paper is Indian college festivals, this research has implications for informal popular music festivals in other geographic locations where learners eschew the traditional university-based music education system and learn from each other through a community of practice.

College Rock and Indian Education

India is a land of universities. In the 2018 All India Survey On Higher Education (AISHE) report, there were 903 accredited universities throughout India, a figure dwarfed by the number of colleges (39,050) and standalone institutions (10,011) (AISHE 2018). Many of these institutions offer programs in traditional Indian music from offering bachelor degrees right through to doctoral degrees. Despite these offerings, the fine arts (in which music resides) graduate relatively small numbers of students (8,926 in 2018) in contrast with social science (172,921), information technology (158,108), management (123,189), and law (72,486), (AISHE 2018). Further, no universities or colleges offer programs in contemporary music, leaving this discipline to standalone institutions. These music colleges are a fairly recent phenomenon. Some, such as the Global Music Institute in Delhi (founded in 2011), The True School of Music in Mumbai (founded 2013), and Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music (SAM) in Tamil Nadu (founded 2010) are affiliated with Western institutions and offer some form of accreditation. Others, such as the One World College of Music in Delhi, remain unaccredited except for affiliations with Western examining bodies such as Trinity college and AZCAM and classical Indian music boards such as the AMEC and PRSSV. Throughout urban India, individual teachers maintain teaching practices, sometimes addressing contemporary music as well as rock. Sometimes entrepreneurs will open teaching practices and employ teachers to teach on their behalf.

There are some common features and challenges in these early stages of Indian popular music education, mostly due to the nascent stage of the

sector and the difficulty of operating a Western music college in a developing economy. Three common areas of difficulty are balancing manageable fees with operational viability, the lack of tertiary-qualified music professionals in India, and the accreditation of degree programs. They have not been in existence long enough to have a major impact upon the Indian music industry. Most emerging and professional Indian pop and rock musicians that we interviewed have not studied music formally, they have learned through a more informal, peer-learning approach during their time at college while studying other disciplines. Despite their lack of formal offerings in rock music, Indian tertiary institutions, like their counterparts in the West, have always been hotbeds of student rock bands and amateur performance.

Indian universities have long held arts festivals that have a rock music component. In 1971, a rock festival modeled on Woodstock, Sneha Yatra (Love Journey) was held in Maharashtra. The festival:

...had around 4,000 attendees and featured rock bands alongside Indian classical musicians, including Amjad Ali Khan, all of whom performed for free. A journalist for the *Junior Statesmen* named Mirra wrote of the crowd present, “They came mainly for the atmosphere—three days to be just what you feel like with thousands of others like yourself.” At that time, anyone who listened to rock or psychedelic music was still looked at as an anti-social element. (Mint 2015)

A band competition hosted by Simla cigarettes was run between 1967 and 1972. However, the market for Western bands was minimal and the music regarded as anti-Indian, Western-style rock that fell outside the social permissible entertainment. Throughout the 1980s, universities and colleges held arts festivals with a broad focus. With Manmohan Singh’s liberalizing economic reforms in the early 1990s, India commenced a sustained period of economic growth. This gave rise to an increasingly significant Western-influenced Indian middle-class. Two musical phenomena emerged from the growth of the middle class. On one level, this Western-leaning group, with greater disposable income sought Western music to consume. This middle class also began to send their children to universities in large numbers for education, swelling university numbers. This

increased number of university students with exposure to Western music saw increased numbers of bands emerging. To address the issues of limited performance opportunities and venues, from the mid-1990s universities began to organize college festivals specifically focused on Western-style rock. Bands playing in these festivals were populated by students studying parent-approved degree programs in engineering or finance or whatever. A street press arose, personified in the music magazine *Rock Street Journal* which launched in 1993 and which inaugurated the commercial “Great Indian Rock Festival”. Overall this was a huge boost to Indian rock music.

The college rock festivals, in the meantime, became so successful and so overwhelmed by amateur bands that many festival organizers began to impose additional requirements. The first was that bands must have a record album and many bands consequently began recording vanity albums of limited circulation, but enough to satisfy the requirements. Then organizers added the requirement that those albums must include original music, which contributed to the rise of an Indian songwriting tradition. The importance of these festivals cannot be overstated.

Campus festivals have been pivotal to the formation of rock bands and their survival during the nineties, when Independence Rock was the biggest event on the gig calendar and when the idea of a music festival was entirely implausible for both bands and their audience. Almost two decades on, campus festivals continue to hold a significant place in an Indian band’s career graph. Says Yohan Marshall, vocalist of Mumbai-based jam band The Family Cheese, “If you want people to know you in a city, the best thing to do is to play a college festival.” (Miranda 2014)

It is a testament to the importance of these festivals that almost all of our informants, whether professional or developing, emerged from the college rock festival circuit rather than by attending local tertiary music institutions. These festivals are where these musicians learned about the industry, about playing in public, and about audience development. Resultantly, there are several interacting and overlapping communities, individual bands, groups of friends, universities, college rock festivals, and

the wider industry in general, where aspiring musicians learn about music performance and music industry.

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Music education in the high school years in India is not career-oriented. It exhibits a low awareness of genres, lack of facilities, a student-teacher based pedagogical approach, and a general underestimation of student-capabilities. Higher education traditional music programs are based on a guru-shishya (master-apprentice) model of teaching, quite contrary to how popular musicians have learned in the West. It is also significant to note that there are no formal music business courses within higher education in India—courses that would possibly demonstrate to Indian families potential career pathways in music (Britto 2019). Given that the Indian popular musicians we have interviewed report learning within the informal communities of universities, college rock festivals, and fellow-musicians, we have adopted a communities of practice theoretical framework informed by grounded theory data collection and analysis tools to explore how people learn about popular music practice and industry in India.

Communities of practice (CoP) as coined by Wenger (1998) are groups of individuals with shared interests who, through interacting with one another, learn how to do what it is they do in a better and more meaningful way. We find this model particularly relevant to the learning of popular music industry and practice in India given the lack of formal opportunities and that “learning is essentially a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing” (p. 5). Learning is a function of activity, context, and the culture in which learning is “situated” (Lave and Wenger 1991). Situated learning theory often refers to the idea of a “community of practice” as an informal, pervasive and integral part of our daily lives. CoP theory asserts that learning takes place when individuals within communities negotiate and renegotiate meaning. In this way, CoPs have the potential to expand and extend learning experiences and outcomes for both the individual and the community.

In order to understand college rock and the college festival as learning environments, we use Wenger’s (1998) three broad stages of CoPs. These musical CoPs begin as places where people share interests and develop their competence together (*engaging*); and, eventually, they then move towards connecting to the broader social systems of which they are

a part (*imagining*); and, eventually, they coordinate or align their achievements to apply their learning in a way that demonstrates its impacts or effects (*aligning*). Adopting a CoP framework acknowledges learning as emergent, heuristic, and the result of lived experience through participation in the industry and the world.

We have used a grounded theory analytical approach in order to help both the researcher and reader understand the meaning or nature of experience. Grounded theory, and its mantra of “everything is data” permits us to engage with substantive exploration of these novel communities of practice of which little is known and traditional data sources may be scanty (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Our grounded theory approach also recognizes the contextual elements that make the college festival phenomenon a learning environment different from others, and affords us the opportunity to engage with learning theories together with our shared vision for effective teaching and learning from the perspective of a professional musician. Between the two of us, we have conducted over thirty semi-structured interviews with both emerging and established musicians in India. Grounded theory analysis of this data generates greater understanding of the participants’ points of view with the opportunity for us to probe and expand the participants’ responses (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. We do not identify the participants due to ethical consideration and requests from some participants. After transcription, we applied the grounded theory approaches of Strauss and Corbin to the data set to produce a set of codes that apply to the broader CoP concepts of engaging, imagining, and aligning.

College Rock Festivals as Music Education Enablers

All three CoP concepts create relations of belonging that expand our identity through space and time in different ways. Most of what we do involves a combination of all three, though more emphasis on one or the other gives a distinct quality to our actions and their meanings. When students first encounter the college music environment, perhaps improve their instrumental technique, perhaps join a band, we consider this to be *engaging* with the community of practice of college rock music. When they perform in college rock festivals and begin a professional journey of performing for and engaging with audiences, dealing with fan development, learning the technical aspects of music, and encountering the judgement of festival judges, industry, and fans, we describe this as the *imagin-*

ing section of their industry journey. This develops further as they *align* their performance with the demands of the wider Indian music industry. They begin to utilize their industry connections made at college rock festivals. They develop sponsorship deals and apply branding. One of our informants described this startup process as:

A bunch of friends just get together, or they get to know about each other. It's usually how this works, or at least at my college. It was like, they have auditions at the start of the year, where people come to showcase their abilities be it music, art, dance...and for me, I took part as a soloist, and a couple of my friends played guitar and bass. And that's how I got to know them. And in my final years, some juniors really caught my eye, so I asked him, "Dude do you wanna make a band, and start writing some music and start competing," and they were like, "Yeah I'm down with that." Before that, I'd met my friend Joe, through another friend, and he's from a different college, and we all met, and started hanging out together, and we put all our influences together to make a band, and out of the nineteen competitions in my final year we won seventeen.

A professional musician in Delhi started out as he:

...went to Delhi University of Commerce and the Arts, and started meeting a lot of like-minded people who were into music. They were playing in local bands and circuits, so there we all formed a band, and that was a band that got me into the professional music circuit.

We do not regard the three concepts of CoP theory as a linear temporal progression, whereby one occurs when the previous is finished. Students do not "graduate" to college rock festivals from being musicians working in a band at a university. These areas are neither discrete nor progressive and can be engaged with in different orders. Many bands that have reached the stage of pursuing successful music careers in the music industry still return to play in college festivals.

Engaging: The College Music Environment as a Community of Practice

The college music environment, the bands, the collective learning, develops through the formation of the actual communities of practice, which is essentially about learning through engaging with people. Such a community of practice is comprised of a group of individuals who engage in a social network based on shared core values and knowledge in order to pursue a joint enterprise (Wenger 1998). At Indian universities, aspiring musicians create CoPs by engaging with other like-minded students. One of these enterprises, and the object of this paper, is the collective learning that takes place within the CoP. In the case of the college musical environment, community participants may learn instruments together, learn how to play in ensemble, collectively discover songwriting, and establish patterns of music industry behavior. Notably in this early stage of CoP development, people come together and establish norms and relationships. Learning is thus informal and peer-to-peer. A musician observed that:

A lot of young musicians in college keep asking me, “How do you do it?” so whatever help I can offer them, I always do. All of my friends—we do that. It’s like a really tight community here.

This mutual engagement defines the community as it draws on what participants do and what participants know, as well as on their ability to connect meaningfully with what they do not know and do not do; that is, to the contributions and knowledge of others (Wenger 1998). One of our informants noted that:

There are some people who are self-taught, and others who had some extra-curricular lessons when they were young. I’m self-taught. I couldn’t play guitar for shit, but I taught myself how to play, and learned from my friends as well. Joel taught me a lot of things. He’d gone for guitar classes and things. Then I’d teach him singing, whatever I know. And we’d grow together.

In the college musical environment, the processes of learning from the community involve such industry matters as developing repertoire,

rules, tools, artifacts, documents, and identity formation. Everyone appears to learn from everyone else. One of our informants remembered:

...composing songs when I was a college student, subjects [that were] quite localized to the events happening at the time, things like college life, exams, friends, relationships.'Cause of the boredom and disinterests, I was always drifting towards learning music or trying to find an outlet of some sort of way to express myself.

The bounded character of engaging in CoPs has both strengths and weaknesses. CoPs form through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, and deep knowledge can be accumulated among the individuals and the collective. However, while a strong boundary formed around the CoP can indicate learning and cohesion and a critical competence, this can also make CoPs become hostage to their history; that is, they can become insular, defensive, closed in, and oriented only to their own focus.

CoPs cannot be considered in isolation from the wider communities in which they are located, and so our discussion moves to consider how CoPs continue to grow and evolve through the balancing act of developing deep competence at the core and straddling the risky unknown at the periphery or boundary of the CoP. It is these disturbances or discontinuities that perturb the CoP and thus spur the history of practice onward.

Imagining: The College Festival as Extending Learning

At college, once musicians have formed and engaged in CoPs, learned the basics of performing rock, their instruments, and how to play with each other, they tend to move toward popular music performance. The most obvious and accessible of these are the college rock festivals. As members interact, they negotiate new meanings and learn from one another. Learning musicians share their competence with others at the same time, developing their own competence.

We describe the learning experiences of the college rock festival as engaging with learning from other CoPs. Engaging is the first crucial step in the CoP stages of development as it gives students control of their own learning, which becomes the enterprise of the community. Imagining gives a sense of possible trajectories, and it is here that the college festival circuit

provides a learning ground that extends beyond the boundaries of CoPs and transcends engagement. Imagination according to Wenger (1998) enables us to recognize our own experience as reflecting broader patterns, connections, and configurations, and to push the CoP to conceive new developments, explore alternatives, and envision possible futures (178).

A college rock festival is a loose and reflective learning experience, but it also possesses a defined and organized operating procedure. One of our informants described the stages of a college rock festival:

You had a band. If you wanted to play live, you had to first make a name for yourself. How you made that name for yourself was college competitions. That was sort of your stepping-stone. You had to play like three/four college festivals and make it to the finals. They have these preliminary competitions which are all-nighters where you got fifteen minutes to get on stage, set up your shit, play your set, and get off. And there'd be like twenty bands in one night on the rostrum. It would start at like eleven o'clock at night and go on till like seven am, in this one small auditorium on a college campus. By the end of the night they'd select five winners which would compete in the finals. Then there would be one final winner and the finals would be in front of an audience of say like seven thousand people, which was in the open-air theatre. That was one of the largest shows you could play. They were a large venue with like massive sound for like five or seven thousand people, it was a different experience which you never really got to do unless you were a big band or you got to play in the Great Indian Rock Festival.

Imagination is evident in the way that students recognize the transition from school to university. One informant observes, "It is college where most young people shine the most. Because there's a lot of opportunities for them, they can dream big." Another of our informants also describes possible futures and trajectories:

In my first year, I was just trying to work out how this works. A lot of huge bands like F16s and all, they've made

it quite big. They're signed to Universal. They have two million streams on Spotify. They're quite big in India, and a lot of huge acts in India, most of them start from college

The process of being on stage in a performance setting encourages the development of real-life learning. However, by performing initially in heats, perhaps in the very early hours of the morning, the risks of failure are managed. These practical industry skills include:

- Rapid Setup and Sound Check (“We try to get our sound right on stage. It’s very hard for bands because we get really limited time to do our sound check. It’s like performance time of twenty to thirty minutes with a setup time of ten minutes. In ten minutes you can’t do a lot of things, so we try to make the most of it right, like during rehearsals we’ll make our own tricks, to make ourselves sound better”)
- Audience Development (“No one streams our music, so our chance of getting, of building, an audience is to capitalize on our live show”)
- Event Management (“Organizing committees have to start from ground zero. They’re just students and they don’t know how it works. They just do their own research and start from the ground up. They’ll have to do everything within three to four months”)
- Sponsorship and Branding (“You get to play instantly for a few hundred to even thousands of people sometimes. From a brand’s perspective, investing in a college fest is going to help them reach the young audience directly and position itself as a ‘cool’ brand that’s associated with the youth. A few popular brands that are regularly associated with college fests are Pepsi, Coke (Coke Studio), Red Bull (Red Bull tour bus), One Plus, VH1, Vodafone, Monster, etc. They keep investing on college fests year after year and that shows they are able to achieve the numbers”)

Despite the small and defined nature of the college rock festival, the opportunity exists to perform to larger crowds. An informant noted that one can play instantly for hundreds and even thousands of people and earn reasonable money—he observed that the rewards can be as high as ₹2.5 lakhs (₹ is the symbol for Indian Rupees; “lakh” = 100,000; thus ₹250,000 is equal to approximately US\$3,500).

I have been playing at college fests across the country right from when I was an engineering student, for about eleven years now. College fests are a great platform for young and upcoming bands to showcase their music, and performing for a larger crowd definitely helps you shape up your performance and helps you grow as a performer. Playing as a band from college is like a starting point for many full-time music professionals like me.

Even if (as most of them must) they fail to win, the community around college rock festivals is supportive. One of the informants noted:

In Andhra, although we didn't win because it was a rock competition and our set was electronic, the way they accepted and encouraged us goes to show how open they are to even supporting independent acts like us.

New relationships can create a ripple of new opportunities, awaken new interests that can spark a renegotiation of enterprise and provide an experience that opens our eyes to a new way of looking at the world. For example, one of our informants explained, “I met a few interesting people that really changed the way I was thinking.” Another informant commented on how the experiences changed their songwriting, “Yes, it helps us understand genre so much more, and also understanding the point of connection between the audience and the music can help us in our music production to produce such moments in our song.”

Exposure to other CoPs allows members to bring that experience back into their own communities thus changing the way their community defines competence and deepening their own experience. One informant commented generally on bands playing at the festivals: “When they go for these competitions, they sort of analyze their performance and the others

and find out their weak spots, their strengths and for the next fest, work on things that are lacking.” Another successful young artist recalled, “We learn from our mistakes, like every time we make a mistake on stage or offstage, we learn something like that’s kind of made us better.”

Boundary work acknowledges that CoPs are situated within a wider social system. Being at the boundaries of our communities involves flirting with mystery and can encourage members to extend themselves beyond their own competence. They can be sources of opportunities as well as potential difficulties. For example, if the competencies of the core (old) and the boundary (unknown) match or are too close, there can be a lack of learning, and if the distance between core and boundary practices is too great, that is, if the difference between competence and experience is too disconnected, learning is also unlikely to occur. College festivals provide bands with new knowledge and perspectives which can spur their own CoP in new directions, helping them to become less insular, defensive, and closed. One informant describes a new skill he learned and deemed to be significant:

I think first of all you should be very open to ideas from others. I think that is a skill that is lacking in India in general, we have an attitude that keeps coming through a lot, you’re not open to critics which I think is a skill to have. To be open to critics. You are making your own music, but only an outsider can tell you whether it’s good or not, you can think it’s good but at the end of the day your crowd speaks to you and if your crowd think this is right, this is wrong, if you don’t take the wrongs then you’ll never get everything right. So that is a very important skill to have.

Building networks is an important feature of Imagining in CoPs. Relying solely on close ties developed through Engagement in CoPs limits access to new resources, new knowledge, new perspectives, and potential opportunities. However, networking does present risks around building trust, as individuals and collectives do not know what lies beyond their boundaries or within indirect or weak ties (Granovetter 1978). For our informants, reaching out beyond their own CoPs was a significant aspect of their learning:

The organizing committees, they are engineers, or arts students, or science students, just normal college-going people, whatever help they can get, they will. Like they'll ask their fellow musicians in their own cities and they'll get some help as to how to approach all these bands or acts, and they'll get it done, even if they don't know how it all works."

Aspirant musicians taking part in the industrial aligning process of the college rock festival participants learned to network, sometimes making long-term friends and collaborators. Another of our informants involved in event organization noted that, "The college festival is quite useful in terms of networking and just building awareness about different possibilities. It sure worked for someone like me because I come from a family where no one is into music." While bands form their own CoP, engagement with others upsets the "safety net" of the group and pushes community members forward. By encountering and considering new ideas, new ways of doing things, and new modes of practice, community members will either improve their own practice, or, by discarding irrelevant information, understand more why they do things in a certain way.

The benefits of accessing knowledge and experiences outside of their own CoP gives rise to a collective competence that begins to align with industry standards and expectations. By exposing their individual CoPs to an intense, competitive environment, by watching other bands, and by interacting with them, students generate learning about genres, the realities of live performance, and different ways of songwriting. This often gives them the impetus to try something new. By overlapping with other CoPs, they push themselves forward.

Aligning: Moving Into the Wider Music Industry

If imagining at college rock festivals allows performers to reach beyond their community boundaries, alignment within the wider music industry grounds community members and ensures that learning is effective. It aligns local activities with other processes so that they can be effective beyond their own engagement. Alignment is about CoPs connecting their efforts with the broader social system in which the music industry operates. For example, there is a focus and direction in Indian college rock bands to realize higher goals, perform more regularly, play bigger gigs,

and the like, thus raising the stakes for participation and accountability. The Indian music industry with its broad systems of styles and discourses is accessible through the coordination and alignment of CoP action.

College festivals, no matter the size and scope, no matter how prestigious, are ultimately run by students. They are not taught how to stage and manage these events, but rather, they learn through a need to know. As a music business CoP, these students develop their practice over time and gradually move to align their products, tools, resources, processes, and procedures to industry standards. One of our informants who had participated in seventeen college festivals in 2017 alone observed that:

Festivals like IIT Madras, Bangalore, and Bombay, these reputed universities they are reputed for a reason, because everything goes according to plan. Everything is on time. A lot of sponsors want to put in money and fund them.

By coordinating competencies and perspectives, alignment expands the scope of the community's effects on the world and gives their energy some focus and direction. A CoP can exploit this focus and direction to create unique artifacts, and to give the community a sense of what is possible and how it might realize higher goals. The college festival circuit can be lucrative, and through our interviews it was apparent that most bands were strategic about how they spent their prize money to become even more competitive within the broader industry. One opportunistic musician explained how the band redirected its practices, efforts, and energies:

So after we won everything in the first year, we made a whole bunch of, well we made sufficient money. We had a lot of money because we used to save up. So we saved up like ₹2 lakhs [₹200,000/US\$2,850] and then we were like, what's the next move? How are we going to progress from here? At that time in 2011 there weren't bands which were bringing out EPs and recording their material. It's like very rare, like hardly...actually...no independent band did it, so we were like one of the first bands to even come up with this concept.

In doing alignment work, CoPs engage in activities that have consequences beyond their boundaries. In this way, members learn what it takes to become effective in the world (Wenger 1998, 274). To be effective, a learning community becomes self-conscious about appropriating the styles and discourses of what Wenger describes as “constellations” of communities of practice. This type of alignment learning is described below by a professional musician who demonstrated a nuanced approach to professionalism and industry standards:

Performing for college audiences required me to be a bit formal, but it definitely helped me on my stagecraft: how I dress, the way I communicate with the audience, and the kind of material I presented. I took these learning experiences and applied them to performances outside the college environment which immensely helped me out. I guess what came out of the college experience was learning to present myself as an artist, and performing in outside venues gave me the experience needed to realize the lessons.

Another informant described performing in a festival as, “a real learning experience as to how one should present himself or herself.” The informant also went on to explain the importance of “gaining contacts in the industry which helps us in entering the scene more easily.”

Wenger emphasizes the importance of generational encounters, that is, “the mutual negotiation of identities invested in different historical moments” (1998, 275). If “old-timers” (experienced musicians and industry) and “newcomers” (inexperienced musicians and industry) are engaged solely in their own separate practices, then this is a learning opportunity missed. Unfortunately, such segregation is typical of the modern youths’ lived experience. One of our successful, and young, informants described the rate of learning he has experienced as a result of the “generational encounters” college rock festivals afforded him:

We won ₹40,000 (US\$580) at a Loyola college competition in a single night. We started to get a few gigs after that. Eventually people started taking notice and we landed our first festival gig, out of college. People in my college rec-

ommended us to this promoter who hired us for a music festival in Tamil Nadu. It was pretty cool. Then last year, I released a song and won the Best Young Indie Award, hosted by Radio City Freedom. They flew me down and accommodated me. I was still in college then and I was like “woah”. And then I went to Bombay. I got to meet a lot of famous award-winning musicians, and I got to share my experiences with them. That’s where I met this guy from Bangalore who became my manager. His band won best metal act. For the last six months I’ve been playing shows I wouldn’t have dreamt of. Everything is happening so fast. Like, this weekend we’re playing in Hyderabad, as a support act for [Australian guitarist] Plini. He’s one of my favorite guitarists and he’s played everywhere. As a result, people started following me and taking notice.

Alignment requires generational encounters, a mixing of the experienced and the novice. However, the advantages are not one way. A fresh youthful energy and approach can push histories and practice forward. Alignment recognizes that CoPs cannot exist in isolation, but that, “They must use the world around them as a learning resource, and be a learning resource for the world” (275). One young informant discussed key learnings of bad practice that exist in the Indian Western-influenced rock industry, particularly around young musicians agreeing to work for free. This learning can be redirected in CoPs aligning their efforts towards an agreed standard of industry engagement:

I didn’t know the scene and the people took me for granted because I was interested and not seeing money as a first thing. But to artists who are getting into full-time music they should know that money is also important, how equally they want to take their passion to the next level, money is also important and everywhere there is money, it’s up to you to take it or not OR it’s up to you to ask or not. If you feel it won’t be good to ask for money because he’s giving an opportunity here, will it be ok if I go and ask the next time? So if people think this way then that’s hard. Maybe it will take some time to change this.

Another more experienced informant discussed how independent artists can do the alignment work of overlapping practices, in this case law and music, to build a more sustainable industry infrastructure:

There is talk about forming a musicians association, but there are several problems with that. There is far more supply of artists in Delhi than there is demand, which means that belonging to an association may cause problems. Once [a venue owner] finds that this artist belongs to the association, [he] moves onto another artist who does not belong to the association. Thus [he's] avoiding getting tied down by legalities, or even a community moving against you in case [he] defaults. Apart from these issues, there is definitely a way that you can form an association, backed by a few pro bono lawyers, who may be musicians themselves...singer/songwriters who have nurtured their talent although in law school. And so they are ripe for such a bond to be formed with other musicians to come together.

In this sense, CoPs have the power to align and direct their learning for change. Wenger explains this as a kind of “allegiance to a creed, or a movement” where the commitments to unite them often have little to do with personal commonality or differences (1998, 182).

At the beginning of this discussion the three modes of CoPs were highlighted as not operating in a linear progression, but that a community will quite often move back and forth between the modes. In this way, learning in CoPs is most effective because it reflects a way of living in the world. Engaging is necessary for building a joint enterprise and shared vision, Imagining shakes CoPs up and keeps them moving, and Aligning ensures that the imagining is grounded and effective.

Conclusion

Fundamentally, educational opportunities in Indian college rock festivals are a form of that buzzword in modern university education: real-world learning. They are foundation stones of the popular music industry in India. Western music colleges mount performances, do concert practices, teach performance skills or recording skills courses, and lecture on mu-

sic industry. Presumably, students learn from it. However, by non-music Indian colleges engaging aspirant musicians in communities of practice, learning Indian musicians are prepared for the realities of the music industry. By being forced to do it themselves—by networking, by performing, by losing competitions, by going back to the drawing board to get better—students learn by doing. Perhaps they have not had the opportunity to hone their technique to the same standard as Western music college graduates. Perhaps they haven't been able to learn about rock history. Perhaps their equipment is not as up-to-date and their instruments as beautifully made and maintained. Perhaps they haven't had the opportunity to be in an aesthetically beautiful and cutting-edge recording studio. However, they are learning about performing music, pleasing an audience, and working in, and engaging with, their local industry. Western music colleges focus a great deal of effort to create real-world and industry-facing learning experiences. The Indian college music festival movement has achieved similar—and potentially better—results by empowering and encouraging communities of practice to engage with each other, giving them time to come together and imagine the possibilities and align themselves with industry standards. It was also apparent in the data that their learning not only has the power to align with the industry, but contribute to its ongoing development for the better.

This does not mean that music colleges in the West should throw in the towel. There are some things that we do very well. However, we should take every opportunity to improve our educational methods, create better outcomes for our students, and prepare them for an increasingly competitive market. There is much we can learn from the example of the Indian college rock festivals. In many ways these festivals align more closely to an andragogical educational model than Western music conservatories sometimes employ.

The third of Knowles' (1973) adult learning principles, for example, states that adults learn by doing. This describes precisely the approach of the Indian college rock festivals. Everyone, the organizers, the techs, the promoters, the musicians, are doing this and learning how to do it at the same time. The sixth of Knowles' adult learning principles states that adults learn best in an informal situation. Learning within the college-based CoPs is entirely informal with no classes, no curriculum, just musicians motivated to learn. Paulo Freire (1970) argues that adults learn by generating knowledge rather than a banking model of education, where

students wait for professors to drop wisdom into their empty vessels. In the spirit of Freire, learning in CoPs is emergent and acknowledges one's own experience and interests as resources for community learning, therefore potentially avoiding a didactic, colonizing education embedded in political agenda. This model of CoP learning is liberating, and precisely how Indian college rock festivals operate.

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