Listening to music can be a highly rewarding activity. It’s one of the most pleasurable activities with which people engage. One researcher believes humans are subconsciously affected by music just as birds are affected by bird-song.1

“Music is one of the most powerful neurobiological tools we have to change our mood, mindset, and behaviour.” Christopher Bergland.

With 20,000 new Australian businesses starting each year and online transactions soaring, your business’ music selection is the leading way to deliver an inexpensive and effective point of difference to your competitors and an instrument to influence your customer’s ‘subconscious’ in a positive way.

For Australian businesses to better control the customer experience and increase sales, careful audio design will maximise the persuasive techniques of music.

Some of the world’s brightest researchers have been uncovering the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of music psychology. Here, we have gathered examples from Australia, the USA, the UK, Finland, Sweden, Serbia, The Netherlands and Canada.

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1 The Neuroscience of Music, Mindset, and Motivation in Psychology Today, 29 December 2012 by Christopher Bergland, quoting Nina Kraus, Neuroscientist and Professor of Neurobiology at Northwestern University, Illinois.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Music Options</th>
<th>Live Performance</th>
<th>Background Music Service Providers</th>
<th>Digital Players (eg iPhones, iPods) and Streaming Services</th>
<th>CDs</th>
<th>Radio</th>
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<td>+</td>
<td>Atmospherics, customers' shared experience</td>
<td>Account manager customises playlist to suit your business</td>
<td>Near-endless choice of music</td>
<td>You control the playlist</td>
<td>No contract with radio station required</td>
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<td>Unique opportunity to engage your customers and staff in selecting the music</td>
<td>Little maintenance from you</td>
<td>You can 'curate' playlists for your customers</td>
<td>Low technology – everyone can use a CD player</td>
<td>Low technology – everyone can use a radio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social &amp; mainstream media opportunities</td>
<td>Generally most expensive option</td>
<td>Ongoing cost – equivalent to the cost of a new CD every couple of months</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Live performers bring their own fan base</td>
<td>Contract obligations</td>
<td>Someone may have to curate the playlist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lift quiet trading periods</td>
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<td>Potential for damage &amp; theft of CDs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lift quiet areas of the venue</td>
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<td>Even with a stacker CD player, you need to manually change CDs</td>
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<td>Attract segments of your clientele</td>
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<td>May lead to high rotation of a small CD library creating a poor environment for staff</td>
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<td>Word of mouth marketing</td>
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<td>Space may restrict choice of performer</td>
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<td>Local noise limits may have to be assessed</td>
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<td>Need to curate live music and recorded music together - live music performed in 'sets'</td>
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There may be further licensing considerations:

- from a Streaming Service provider. You may need additional permission from the supplier. Almost all businesses that provide publicly available digital music streaming and download services strictly limit their service to personal and domestic use. Permission to play this music outside these settings needs to be granted from APRA for public performance and AMCOS for reproduction. Only radio-wave transmission of music does not require this reproduction licence.
- other music rights organisations, such as the Phonographic Performance Company of Australia (PPCA) and the Australian Recording Industry Association (ARIA). Please contact these organisations directly to assess your individual business requirements.
FOUR TRUTHS

1. Playing specific types of music makes customers stay longer or shop/dine quickly and move on.

From the home of fast food, a researcher in Kentucky, USA, found that slower music in supermarkets was associated with a slower shopping pace and increased gross sales. When he conducted research again four years later, this time in an ‘upscale’ restaurant, diners ate more quickly when fast music was playing. On the nights where slow music was playing, customers spent significantly more time in the restaurant and more money on alcoholic beverages.

2. Playing the ‘right’ music lifts your brand perception and customer’s patience levels.

British researchers showed that businesses playing music that ‘fitted their brand identity’ are 96 per cent more likely to be recalled by customers than those playing music that was.at odds with their brand, or no music at all.

Some 78 per cent of Brits who liked hearing music being played in waiting rooms feel it made them ‘more patient’.

3. Letting employees play the music they select themselves makes for happier employees.

Finnish researchers used an MRI to study how the brain processes different aspects of music, such as rhythm, tonality and timbre. They discovered that listening to music activates areas responsible for movement, emotions and creativity.

4. Playing correctly licensed music matters to your customers.

Think ‘global fair trade’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘organic’ movements. Swedish research showed only 11 per cent of people felt it of ‘no importance’ that musicians get paid for music that is played in a business they visit. That leaves 89 per cent who are more attuned to you when you secure and promote your licence.

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PLUS FITNESS

Plus Fitness is an award-winning, Australian-owned, 24/7 franchised gym network with some 180 outlets. Amy Doorey, GM: “There is one truth to providing the ‘right’ music to work out to... and that is there is no ‘right’ music. We encourage our franchisees to experiment with their playlists, the volume, tracks and the time of day certain music is played. They know their clientele best. Background music creates an instant atmosphere and we even get requests for songs from clients and incorporate that into the service we offer.”

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4 The Effect of Musical Style on Restaurant Customers’ Spending. Adrian C North, Amber Shilcock, and David J Hargreaves, School of Psychology, University of Leicester, 2002.

5 VisionCritical research, April 2012 of 1,000 UK businesses. Entertainment Media Research, 2009 on 2,000 UK consumers and 2010 on 400 small retailers, hairdressers, offices and factories.

6 Listening to music lights up the whole brain, in NeuroImage, 5 December 2011. Suomen Akatemia/Academy of Finland.

7 The importance of music for business. STIM, SAMI and Heartbeats International.
BACKGROUND MUSIC: MUSIC IN THE WORKPLACE

We are in a new era of listening to music in offices, with listening activity common for around a third of the working week. A study of 295 UK office workers listening to their own music in their office stated not only did they feel in a more positive mood and less distracted from the activity, they also felt inspired, better able to concentrate, distracted from boredom, relieved of stress and better able to manage their personal space. Did you know that the annual cost to Australian employers for stress-related work absences is $30 billion? Encouraging music at work could create new ground in promoting wellbeing in the workplace.

“We also use music to solve problems, to look at our situation in a different light, to energise us or to relax us, and often to avoid or distract – all well-known strategies for managing or regulating emotions.” Nikki Rickard, Associate Professor of Psychology, Monash University.

BACKGROUND MUSIC: MUSIC FOR OUR HEALTH

When we listen to pleasurable music, the “pleasure chemical” dopamine is released in a key part of the brain’s reward system. Music is just like other rewarding stimuli, food and sex. During anticipation of the ‘peak’ in the music, dopamine is released and we experience chills and other signs that our body’s autonomic nervous system is being aroused.

“Listening to music engages large scale neural networks across the entire brain.”

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. A Cardiology Professor in Serbia found that combination of physical activity while listening to one’s favorite music improved ‘endothelial’ or heart function exponentially. Even listening to music without exercise saw a 19 per cent improvement in heart patients. “The vascular health benefits of music may be due to endorphins or ‘endorphin like compounds’ released from the brain when we hear music we like. There is no ‘ideal’ music for everybody and patients should choose music which increases positive emotions and makes them happy or relaxed.” Listening to the music you love actually increases nitric oxide production, which aids in heart function.

QANTAS

“For a company like Qantas, which is quite iconic, the music is actually really important to us, not just externally, but internally in the office environment, where you also want to feel uplifted. There’s an amazing connection that music gives people, an emotional connection... that allows us to be a little creative with what we do in the workplace. Music brings out emotion that’s linked with experience.”

Jo Boundy, Chief Marketing Officer.

GEOFF THOMAS DENTAL

In an industry where anxiety is scientifically measured by a Dental Fear Scale, this Sydney dentist’s music and visual arts strategy works wonders to keep clients barely needing a top-up of happy gas. “At our practice, the calming effect of music begins when they are in the waiting room and once inside the suite, music masks the equipment noise and helps to relax and distract,” Geoff said. But it’s more than playing the same tracks to all people, Geoff’s website tempts clients to “soundtrack their visit.” “Clients can select their playlist at reception, we have about 20 choices for our clients (and more if they ask), so when they enter the suite the more familiar tracks also help to soothe fears,” Geoff said.

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8 Individual music listening in workplace settings: An exploratory survey of offices in the UK in Musicae Scientiae, March 2011 vol. 15 no. 1 p 107-129. Anneli B. Hooke, University of Sheffield, UK.
9 Safe Work Australia study March, 2012.
10 Chills and thrills: why some people love music – and others don’t, The Conversation, 7 March, 2014, Nikki Rickard, Associate Professor of Psychology, Monash University.
12 Listening to favourite music improves endothelial function in patients with coronary artery disease, at European Society of Cardiology Congress 2013. Professor Marina Deljanin Ilic, Serbia.
BACKGROUND MUSIC: MUSIC WHEN WE SHOP (AND HAVE OUR HAIR STYLED)

A group of Australian researchers found that for a retailer selling female youth fashion, a combination of loud music and the scent of vanilla worked in tandem to bring about more pleasure and a measurable increase in customer spend and satisfaction. What this research clearly shows is that the music choice needs to fit the store.

Researchers in Canada found that almost two in three supermarket shoppers liked to hear music while they shopped. More than one in five admitted the music made them shop slower and stay longer. Are you one of the third of the population who admit to singing and dancing in the supermarket, or the third who admits to staying just a little longer to hear the end of a favourite track?

Some 84 per cent of hairdressers in the UK say playing music makes the salon’s atmosphere more welcoming or exciting and 60 per cent of UK hairdressers agree that playing music increases the likelihood of customers returning.

ADELAIDE’S FINEST SUPERMARKETS

“Pianos were made for supermarkets,” says Paul Mabarrack of Adelaide’s Finest Supermarkets, “Because they have that undeniable market feel.” A roster of some 20 community-based and professional pianists are now a regular fixture of the two suburban stores performing for an impressive 30 hours a week. The idea evolved from collaboration with a musician who conducted store visits, experimented with piano, piano accordion, violin and guitar performances and allowed the musical performances to evolve. Paul’s idea has reaped dividends with store managers declaring customers no longer ‘snatch and go’ and actually like being in store. Paul says, “It’s not a publicity stunt. What we’re about is creating a long term good vibe, a different feel. Customers come in with the music playing and they feel different, they change their demeanour.”

MUSIC WHEN WE DINE

An inner Sydney African-themed restaurant played host to a team of researchers for several weeks, as they tested the effects of five musical styles (including no music at all) on some 300 diners. If there was an absence of music or easy listening music playing, diners were prepared to spend less – although the diners were Gen X and Gen Y diners, so easy listening was clearly a ‘music misfit.’ For these diners, classical, jazz and popular background music made them prepared to spend more on their main meal. There was clearly a relationship between diners’ perceptions of the restaurant and their perception of the music. The more subjects perceived the music as being up-market, the more the restaurant was also perceived as up-market.

More than two thirds of Canadians say the atmosphere created by music impacts their decision to return to or recommend a restaurant to others. Canadians like to hear a number of music styles when eating in a restaurant.

Some Canadians (28 per cent) say they would have a negative reaction to being in a restaurant without music at all: feeling awkward (51 per cent) and unlikely to return (43 per cent).

The majority of Canadians say hearing music and seeing live music in a restaurant makes them more likely to enjoy their food and drink (78 per cent and 75 per cent) as well as stay in a restaurant longer (70 per cent and 75 per cent).

Some 57 per cent of UK managers/business owners surveyed agreed that their own choice of restaurant is influenced by the music played.
MUSIC WHEN WE BANK
(AND BOOK A HOLIDAY)

A study on a UK bank showed a direct influence on the way customers perceived the atmosphere of this type of ‘commercial environment’ as either dynamic, inspirational or fun. The researchers suggested commercial environments could alter their ‘musical atmosphere’ to deliberately attract a customer profile, one that readily ‘buys into’ your store image, to increase patronage and per capita spend, brand loyalty, responsiveness to promotions and reduced sensitivity to price, all because of the music cues you’ve implemented. 16

People get into ‘holiday mode’ early. Some 51 per cent of customers in UK travel agents that play music agree that they spend more time browsing. 17

5 CHURCH STREET, BELLINGEN

“We wanted coming to 5 Church Street to be like you’re sitting in your lounge room,” said Paul Cauchi, Owner. 5 Church Street has staged no less than 104 live music shows in 15 months, 100 of those ticketed by phone or over the counter at the thriving café. “Word gets around and we’ve been lucky to attract big names recently such as Katie Noonan and Megan Washington - whose two shows sold out in four minutes! We’ve established a strong reputation for hosting intimate live performances. Our vision is to support independent artists and original music. Of course, one of the points of having live music is to increase patronage, but it also fits in with our crystal-clear vision year round. We’re a music venue and a café and our commitment is to entertaining our local community.”

MUSIC TO BE ENTERTAINED –
LIVE AND FEATURED MUSIC

The live music industry is an industry of huge scale - $1.2 billion in revenue/commercial benefits, millions of patrons served by 65,000 employees, 49 million venue-based live music attendances each year at thousands of live music venues across Australia. 21 When surveyed, venues said they hosted live music to attract patrons and most had been hosting live music for over a decade because of this successful strategy. Others added that live music invigorated other parts of their business, such as food and beverage, increased profits overall and created a unique ambiance and ‘home of live music’ brand identity. 22

Some 73 per cent of UK bars, pubs and clubs surveyed recently agreed that playing music increases their sales or results. 23

“Music can also help us connect to others. Even if we don’t get a buzz from the music normally, when we listen with others, the enhanced social connectivity can be highly satisfying. A 2012 study showed that individuals who listened to music with close friends or their partners showed significantly stronger autonomic responses than those who listened alone.” 24

A survey of 1,500 Canadian customers and 270 Canadian businesses showed younger Canadians are more likely to agree they have gone to a bar/restaurant for the music they play. Millennials (aged 18-34) are more likely to say they would have a negative reaction to being in a restaurant without music. 25

22 Economic contribution of the venue-based live music industry in Australia. 2010. APRA and Ernst & Young.
23 VisionCritical research, April 2012 of 1,000 UK businesses. Entertainment Media Research, 2009 on 2,000 UK consumers and 2010 on 400 small retailers, hairdressers, offices and factories.
24 Chills and thrills: why some people love music – and others don’t. The Conversation, 7 March, 2014, Nikki Rickard, Associate Professor of Psychology, Monash University.