BREAKBONE BOOKS · BRK B1

THE SQUARE STATE

THE CLASSROOM EDITION. THREE CHAPTERS AND AN INQUIRY SHEET, FREE FOR QUEENSLAND SCHOOLS.

Chapter 4. Rock Around the Clock. Brisbane Stadium, 1956.

Chapter 15. Revoked. Brisbane, 1979.

Chapter 25. Livid. Brisbane, 1989.

The Square State is a history of Brisbane's young people from 1846 to 2026, and of the rules that sent them home, by Iggy Bitburg. This edition may be copied and shared free for classroom use. Every quotation and figure carries a note, and the notes resolve to the reference list at the back. Contact breakbonezine@gmail.com · breakbone.pages.dev · @breakbonemagazine

Who got to gather here, and until when?

KEY INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the people who ran Brisbane control where and when young people gathered between 1956 and 1989, and how did young people respond?

THE SOURCES

Three chapters of The Square State. Chapter 4, Brisbane Stadium, 1956. Chapter 15, the licences of 1979. Chapter 25, Brisbane in 1989. Every quotation and figure carries a numbered note, and every note resolves to the reference list at the back, so each claim can be checked against the newspaper, court report, student paper or history it came from.

1. MAP IT

For each chapter, build a table with five columns. The date. The place. Who held the authority (police, a court, the Licensing Commission, a university, a newspaper). The rule or action. What the young people did next.

2. READ THE CHANGE IN A NEWSPAPER

Chapter 4 quotes the Courier-Mail's front page of Thursday 22 November 1956 ('Police arrested eight teenagers') and its editorial the next day ('perhaps too serious'). What changed between the two days? Suggest two reasons a paper might shift its tone in twenty-four hours.

3. WEIGH TWO WITNESSES

Chapter 15 sets the Deputy Commissioner's 'full-scale riot' beside Lindy Woodward's report in Semper of plainclothes police walking through a crowd to one man. Who was each writer speaking to, and what did each want the reader to believe? Which details could you test, and how?

4. FOLLOW THE LICENCE

In chapter 15 the Queen's Hotel loses its entertainment licence, and the halls have 'no bar licence to lose'. List every licence in the chapter and who granted or took it. Why might a licence be a more effective control than an arrest?

5. READ THE LIST

In chapter 25 the Licensing Branch takes records from Rocking Horse Records on 14 February 1989. Read the list of what was taken. What does the list suggest about how the law was applied, and to whom?

6. CHECK A SOURCE YOURSELF

Choose one quotation from a newspaper in any chapter. Find the original on Trove (trove.nla.gov.au) using the date in the note. Does the chapter quote it accurately? What does the chapter leave out, and does the omission change the meaning?

7. MAKE HISTORY

Ask someone in your family or street about a gathering they went to before 2000, a dance, a gig, a show, a march. Record the date, the place, who paid, and who decided when it ended. Write it up in 300 words. If they agree, send it to breakbonezine@gmail.com with the subject 'Were you here?'. Stories sent with permission may appear in the book.

THE SQUARE STATE · CHAPTER 4

Rock Around the Clock

BRISBANE STADIUM, 1956

On Tuesday 20 November 1956 the Courier-Mail carried an advertisement for a Rock 'n' Roll Festival at Brisbane Stadium the next night, eight o'clock, and it answered a question somebody in town had been asking. Despite rumours, it said, the show was definitely on.[1] The bill was Brisbane's own. Ron Gowans and his Rockets, Bobby Page, Barry Erickson, who was 'Mr. Rock 'n' Roll', Ron Mathers, Basil Green on piano, Tommy O'Connor on drums, and Lovely Fran Griffith, 'Queen of the Rock 'n' Roll'. At the top, flown up from Melbourne for a farewell performance, was Frankie Thornton, billed as America's foremost exponent of the music. General admission was five shillings. Ringside was seven and six.[23]

Valerie K. was eighteen and worked in a newsagency, and her boss took her. They sat high up at the back, on the wooden planks.[4] Raymond Evans puts the crowd that night at three thousand.[5]

The Stadium stood on the corner of Albert and Charlotte Streets, and it was built for boxing. A ring sat in the middle and timber bleachers climbed away from it on every side. A high wire fence topped with barbed wire ran between the cheap seats and the dear ones, put there so fight crowds could not throw bottles into the ring.[6] The aisles between the bleachers were for getting to your seat. All night police walked them, stopping anybody who tried to dance.[7]

■

The year had been working up to that fence.

In March more than five thousand people went out to Eagle Farm in the wet to meet the American singer Johnnie Ray. They broke the terminal windows and climbed onto its curved igloo roofs to see him, and when they broke the barriers and pushed for the tarmac, police cordons struck out with canes and drove them back with their shoulders.[8] Ray's two shows at the Stadium that week cost fifteen shillings general, nineteen on the terrace and thirty-nine ringside.[9] The paper asked a medical columnist, a church youth director, a psychologist and one teenager what the airport meant. The adults talked about hysteria, discipline and a country with no national idea. The teenager was Robyn Brown, seventeen, a typist studying at night for her Senior, who had brought her school copy of Macbeth and got Ray to sign it. She did not think it was a mystery. 'Teenagers like to be taken notice of. Johnnie does that. He flatters them.'[1011]

The film came before the music. Late in 1955 Keith Cronau, a young teenager, sat in the Metro in Albert Street at a Sneak Hollywood Preview, which meant nobody had been told what film they were about to see. It was Blackboard Jungle. When Rock Around the Clock came over the opening titles the cinema roared and couples jumped out of their seats to jive in the aisles. One boy kept going back, a dozen times and more, for the song over the credits, until a grown man in the row behind cuffed him for bopping and told him to sit still.[12]

By September the papers were running the cinema riots of England. The Argus in Melbourne gave a page-two banner to rock and roll rioters in Essex.[13] On 12 October the Courier-Mail announced that the music would come to Brisbane officially the next Monday, when the drummer Tommy O'Connor,

Brisbane's Mr. Bop, opened with his Rock-its at St Francis Hall in Elizabeth Street.[14] Rock Around the Clock, the film, opened at the Tivoli on 18 October and was still running in its third week in November. Police patrolled the aisles there too, and saw nothing they called serious.[15][16]

The Stadium had already held one festival, on Wednesday 7 November, six big bands and ten vocalists, five shillings general and seven and six ringside. It passed without trouble, and so nobody wrote it up.[17][18]

■

Near the end of the second festival, couples stood up in the bleachers to jive, and the police went for them in the aisles.[19] Most sat down. Desmond Duke, a labourer of twenty-one, stayed up. When a constable told him the manager had ordered the dancing stopped, he answered for everybody around him, as the court later heard it. 'You cops won't stop us or the manager either. This is our night.'[20]

Police dragged Duke towards an exit. One of the constables holding him told the others to let him go, because more couples were getting up to dance and the crowd was getting out of hand.[21] Somebody pulled electrical conduit off the walls. Part of the bleachers caught fire, and the police said later that a gang had lit it on purpose. Valerie remembered people scattering from a fire close to where she sat.[22][23]

The police cleared the Stadium at about half past ten. Several hundred of the crowd did not go home. They kept dancing in the road and moved up Albert Street towards Queen Street, and all the traffic between the Stadium and the corner stopped. Police lost their caps and had their uniforms torn. A youth smashed a bottle on a police car. A policeman was hit on the head with a stone.[24] The arrests ran from 10.37 until midnight.[25] Police swung handcuffs at heads.[26] Valerie's boss got her out of the middle of it, and she did not want to go. 'I remember I was excited and frightened and exhilarated by the music and didn't want to leave!'[27]

■

The Melbourne Olympics opened that Thursday afternoon, and the Courier-Mail put the Stadium beside them on page one. 'Police arrested eight teenagers when Brisbane's first rock 'n' roll riot stopped traffic in Albert Street, City, last night.'[28] The afternoon Telegraph had the prosecutor in its headline, 'Police Will Not Let Youths Run City'.[29] The Central Queensland Herald, filing from Brisbane for Rockhampton, counted ten arrests.[30] The Courier-Mail's figure was the one the court used. Out of three thousand, eight were charged.

The eight went before Mr Taylor in the Police Court that Thursday, and the Courier-Mail printed every name, with an age and a trade. William John McLune, twenty, woodworker. Charles Henry Jones, eighteen, coal miner, of Ipswich. Desmond Duke, twenty-one, labourer. Michael Charles Warren, seventeen, clerk, of Salisbury. Daniel Michael O'Connor, twenty-one, meat worker, of Cannon Hill. Noel Evan James, seventeen, clerk. Mary McMillan Clarke, seventeen, calculator operator, of Clayfield. Monica Smith, otherwise Frances Martin, nineteen, cake packer.[31] Page one had called them all teenagers. Three of them were twenty or twenty-one, and every one of them had a job to be at on Friday morning.

Detective Sub-Inspector Mahony prosecuted. He told the court the police had been caught unprepared on the Wednesday and would be ready if it happened again, and that a gang of hoodlums had set the bleachers alight on purpose and pulled the wiring off the walls.[32] McLune pleaded guilty to assaulting a detective sergeant, obscene language and resisting a constable. The prosecutor said he had thrown himself down on the footpath when they arrested him. McLune said he knew nothing about the law and could not afford a lawyer, but the prosecutor was not telling the truth. He had been talking to one of the other men arrested in the street when a constable pushed him and hit him on the head with handcuffs, and he had been looking for his wife when another constable arrested him for language. He was fined thirteen pounds or a month in jail, with fourteen days to pay.[3334]

Jones had jumped on the back of a detective who was arresting somebody else. He was fined ten pounds and given a month to find it.[35] Duke pleaded not guilty to five charges, two of assault, one of resisting, and one for destroying two police caps worth one pound nineteen and threepence. Mr Taylor asked him whether he wanted bail. Duke shook his head and walked down to the Watchhouse cells.[36] Warren pleaded not guilty and went out on forty pounds bail on his own bond. O'Connor and James did not come and lost a pound of bail each. Mary Clarke lost a pound and Monica Smith two.[37] Several of the eight told Evans, decades later, that they had been beaten in the watchhouse.[38]

Not everybody in the Stadium saw a riot. Des Wallace, who was there, thought the word was wrong. He remembered nearly as many police cars as people, and twenty or thirty in the trouble at most, half of them police. Allan Campbell went with his father, kept his programme for more than forty years and remembered no disturbance at all.[39]

■

By Friday the Courier-Mail had changed its tone. Its editorial was headed Showing Off. Most of the rock and rollers had been teenagers, it said, and they had behaved like silly children. 'The police took a serious view of their conduct, perhaps too serious.' A sharp lecture, the paper thought, would have sent most of them home ashamed.[40]

The letters came in for a week. Old Timer of Red Hill, writing as a taxpayer, wanted the birch rod brought back for delinquents and their parents' wages garnisheed. A parent in Mayne who signed as Perplexed had let a daughter go to the festival with a young student, and she had come home upset. Some of the crowd had needed restraint, the parent wrote, though not the bashing the police handed out. In its next breath the letter asked for rock and roll to be banned from radio, screen and the press.[41] Lyle R. Parker of Nudgee had been inside, and he said that plenty of decent boys and girls there were disgusted by the way the police handled it. 'Most of the young ones rebelled against the way some girls were treated by officials.'[42]

Michael Warren came back to court on 29 November with a barrister, O. J. North. He was charged with disorderly behaviour in Albert Street, with wilfully damaging Constable J. K. Mahony's wristwatch, and with insulting words to Detective R. K. Edwards, which the paper printed as 'get out you mug copper'. Only the disorderly charge was heard. North told the court the City Council had suspended the seventeen-year-old clerk until it was settled. He asked the constable whether the police had set out that night to clean up bodgies. Mahony said no. He denied hitting Warren in the solar plexus at the watchhouse and knocking him to the ground. By his appearance, the constable

said, he would not have typed the youth as a bodgie at all.[43] The next day the magistrate discharged Warren.[44]

Duke's case came on in December. He told the court he had been walking back to his seat from the toilet when the police took hold of him, and he denied being a bodgie as well.[45] He also told the court what he had said to them in the aisle.

'Let me go. Stop. I've done nothing!'[46]

NOTES

1. Courier-Mail, 1956k

2. Courier-Mail, 1956k

3. Gaunt, 2025; Courier-Mail, 1956k

4. Valerie K., as cited in Evans, 1997b, p. 113

5. Evans, 1997b, p. 113; Courier-Mail, 1956l; Central Queensland Herald, 1956, p. 4

6. Evans, 1997b, p. 117

7. Valerie K., as cited in Evans, 1997b, p. 113

8. Courier-Mail, 1956g

9. Courier-Mail, 1956, March 5, as transcribed in Rock 'n' roll in Brisbane town

10. Courier-Mail, 1956g

11. Courier-Mail, 1956h

12. Evans, 1997b, p. 107

13. The Argus, 1956, p. 2; Courier-Mail, 1956v

14. Courier-Mail, 1956t

15. Courier-Mail, 1956j

16. Courier-Mail, 1957h

17. Courier-Mail, 1956, November 1, as transcribed in Rock 'n' roll in Brisbane town

18. Evans, 1997b, p. 113

19. Evans, 1997b, p. 113

20. Courier-Mail, 1956c, as cited in Walden, 2003, p. 116

21. Evans, 1997b, p. 113

22. Courier-Mail, 1956l; Evans, 1997b, p. 113

23. Valerie K., as cited in Evans, 1997b, p. 113

24. Courier-Mail, 1956l

25. Telegraph, 1956, November 22, p. 5

26. Evans, 1997b, p. 114

27. Valerie K., as cited in Evans, 1997b, p. 113

28. Courier-Mail, 1956l

29. Telegraph, 1956, November 22, p. 5

30. Central Queensland Herald, 1956, p. 4

31. Courier-Mail, 1956m

32. Courier-Mail, 1956m

33. Courier-Mail, 1956m

34. Telegraph, 1956, November 22, p. 5

35. Courier-Mail, 1956m

36. Courier-Mail, 1956m

37. Courier-Mail, 1956m

38. Evans, 1997b, p. 114

39. Walden, 2003, pp. 116 to 117

40. Courier-Mail, 1956m

41. Courier-Mail, 1956o

42. Courier-Mail, 1956r

43. Courier-Mail, 1956s

44. Courier-Mail, 1956b

45. Courier-Mail, 1956c, as cited in Walden, 2003, p. 116

46. Evans, 1997b, p. 113

Revoked

BRISBANE, 1979

On Tuesday 27 February 1979 the Stranglers played the beer garden of the Queen's Hotel in Creek Street, and V2, the painted singer the police had taken out of the AHEPA Hall the August before, pushed down to the front and spat at the bass player, Jean-Jacques Burnel, who happened to do karate.[1] Bill Riner of 4ZZZ was taping the set, and the tape caught the band stopping dead and starting again. 'Burnel just stepped off the stage and whacked V2 over the head with his bass.'[2]

A block away the Exchange was open for the people who came out of the Queen's still wanting more. The Leftovers and Razar played there that night, and when the Stranglers finished, about five hundred people walked over and paid two or three dollars to get in.[3] On summer nights like that the local bands went on at eleven or midnight, tired before they started, and Warren Lamond, the Leftovers' singer, stood with his back to the crowd and screamed into the drum kit, out of tune and out of sense, and the crowd loved him for it.[4] David Darling booked both pubs. He liked them a block apart, because on a big night 'all you did was walk up and down the street'.[5]

The Stranglers went home and released Nuclear Device (The Wizard of Aus), a song about Bjelke-Petersen's police.[6]

■

Sixteen days after the Stranglers, on Thursday 15 March, the news reached the station.[7] The Licensing Commission had revoked the temporary entertainment licence the Queen's renewed every three months. It gave two reasons. Residents at Kangaroo Point, across the river, had complained about the noise, and the pub had 'limited seating'. A beer garden that held eight hundred on a Wednesday night lost its bands partly for want of chairs.[8] Darling had watched it packed every week until that March, when, as he put it, the government did everything it could to close it.[9]

The manager, Andrew Maguire, lost money every week without the rock crowd and let more than forty casual staff go.[10] On the Monday he applied for an annual entertainment licence, promising a ten thousand dollar overhaul and all the seats the Commission could want. The Commission refused before the week was out. The AMP Society had bought the hotel and its site just before the closure anyway, and by late March it had lodged plans to redevelop. Two months later the Queen's was demolished, beer garden and all.[11]

Darling still had a contract with Richard Clapton for a night at the Queen's, and a signed contract had to be paid whether the gig went ahead or not. The cheapest way out was to hold it somewhere else. They decided to 'chuck it in Cloudland to save our arses without paying for something that never went ahead'.[12]

■

With the Queen's gone, Friday night in Brisbane came with conditions, and Time Off printed them beside every name in its Living Guide. In the issue of 3 May every name was a hotel. General

Jackson's, at the Crest in King George Square, wanted three dollars, smart dress and no jeans, from half past six until one in the morning. The J.G. disco at the Majestic on George Street took a dollar, and the Lord George, on the corner of Mary and George, took two.[13] The Moon Bar Disco at the Belfast charged nothing and still let no one under eighteen inside. Down the coast at Southport, Sacha's Disco at the Pacific Hotel charged two dollars for males only, so the women went in free.[14] A kid of seventeen could read the whole guide and get into none of it.

The halls had no bar licence to lose. A Friday advertisement on the back page of Brisbane Devotee offered Baroona Hall on 31 August, with the Abel Label Stable, the Riptides and the Go-Betweens, and AHEPA Hall a week later, on 7 September, with Scrap Metal and Razar.[15]

Some people built a place in between. That summer Sally's Late Night Coffee Lounge had opened in an old timber and hardware warehouse at 170 Ipswich Road, Woolloongabba, and stayed open until four in the morning.[16] Sylvan Vargo heard the joke going round the beer gardens at closing time. 'Hey, where you going after the pub?' 'Sally!'[17] One of the owners did landscaping by day and ran the lounge by night, and he told Vargo the worst of the double shift was being the friendly host one minute and the bouncer the next. His rules fitted on a napkin, support the snack bar, leave other people alone, and take any fight down a back lane in the Valley. He called the place 'not a big moneyspinner but a public service'.[18] By September Sally's opened Wednesday to Sunday, with two bands each weekend night, supper in the price and grog bring your own.[19]

In the city the Explorers Club, at 17 Charlotte Street opposite the Pancake Manor, opened on Tuesday and Saturday nights for three dollars, or two for members. Its advertisement led with one word in capitals, LICENSED.[20]

■

Before any of that, the Leftovers had played their first paid nightclub booking at Romeo's in the Valley, a gay club, where they filled two songs while the men in the revue changed costume.[21] Ed Wreckage had gay friends who were open with the band and nowhere else, and a roadie who wore dresses and drew trouble for it from strangers.[22]

On Saturday 24 March 1979, nine days after the Queen's lost its licence, Xero, the Hard Ons, the Ak-47s and the Fuji Angels played Paddington Hall, in the Foresters building on Latrobe Terrace. The poster called the night Rock Against Poofta Bashing, and it was a gay liberation dance.[23] Noelle Ledwith was inside, and a fortnight later Time Off ran her report under a standfirst that put her two crowds in one line, 'An eyewitness account of police harrassment of punk homosexuals in Brisbane on 24.3.'[24]

The hall had no licence for anyone to take away. The dance was going well by ten, when the first police arrived. By a quarter to eleven about a dozen police vehicles stood outside, wagons and unmarked cars, a lot of them parked illegally, while officers waited on the footpath across the road and a few drifted towards the entrance. After eleven the word went round the dancers that they all had to leave or the police would come in and end it. Ledwith went out to the footpath to wait for her friends, and a policeman holding a two foot metal torch told her to move on. The police tired of waiting. Some of them pushed into the hall kicking furniture over and shoving people, while the ones at the back pushed the crowd forward and the ones at the front blocked the way out. She watched at least one small, harmless punk dragged off under arrest, and then she went home sick.[25]

■

In April Calvin Noack wrote a theory up for Time Off. A National Party politician with a grudge against 4ZZZ, the story went, had gone through the station's books, seen it living week to week, and moved to cut off its best source of money. The station had been talking to the York Hotel, on the edge of the city, about a new home. The talks ended when the York was refused an entertainment licence for 'inadequate facilities'.[26] That month Peter Miller's preview had sent readers to the York, which everybody called The Chop, for Dave Warner from the Suburbs on Saturday 7 April and Wednesday 11 April.[27]

The grudge was a story. The money was real. The Queen's had raised an estimated ten thousand dollars for the station in eleven months.[28] Thirty years on, Darling blamed the premier. 'Being the Joh Bjelke-Petersen period you were never going to win when you ran a venue that had a rabble of people that turned up every week and got pissed and listened to live music.'[29] Ten years after that he blamed the trade as well, because pubs changed hands all over the country and new owners never wanted the bands. The Riptides did their own sums. Two months without the Queen's cost them fifteen hundred dollars, and it was part of why they packed up for Sydney.[30]

■

On Friday 15 June 4ZZZ put on a night called the Great Brain Robbery at a hall in West End, with the Leftovers, Razar and a young band up from Melbourne, the Models.[31] Andrew Stafford names it the Colossus Hall. Wreckage called it the Greek hall, and Darling was promoting.[32] The Leftovers had a new line-up, with Wreckage moved to guitar and Greg Wackley from Razar on drums.[33]

They opened with No Complaints. A man in a lumberjacket walked up to the stage, and when Lamond let fly with his first swear word the man, a plainclothes officer, picked the singer up and tried to carry him out. Wackley came over the top of his kit after them, some of the crowd went with him, and in a couple of minutes, by Marty Burke's telling, the police at the entrance had worked out that their man was in trouble.[34] The paddy wagons were already backed up to the entrance. The Leftovers got through about three songs.[35]

Stafford counts twenty-five arrested. Wreckage put it at thirty or more, and said one of them was a policeman's son.[36] Decades later, going through the posters from those years with Gary Warner for the State Library, John Willsteed was asked whether one particular poster was the night the police came with the dogs. The answer covered the whole pile. 'They're all nights that the cops came with the dogs.'[37]

The Models went straight to Darling, told him this really was punk city, asked what punk band he had next, and when they heard it was Razar, asked to go on before them, so they could play and get out of town.[38] By Wreckage's count it was the last night the Leftovers played.[39]

In January 1978, after the raid on Hamilton Hall, Clinton Walker had printed in his fanzine Pulp a line he heard one of the police say. 'We'll stop any punk rock in Brisbane.'[40] Forty years on Wreckage still measured those nights against a football crowd, which could wreck whatever it liked and be left alone, while a band's crowd in a hall on a Saturday was there to be booted.[41]

■

Festival Hall cost too much to hire, so 4ZZZ went up the hill at Bowen Hills to Cloudland.[42] The old dance hall had come out of its own licensing fight ahead. By February 1979 a thirty thousand dollar renovation of the parts kept for weddings was nearly finished, with new wallpaper, mirror tiles, carpet, seats for 250 diners and, in the Panorama, 'a mahogany bar for its newly-returned liquor licence'.[43] It got its licence back a few weeks before the Commission shut the garden in Creek Street.

The owner sliced up the week. Wednesday was a big band for the dance hall regulars, Thursday and Friday a disco in the Panorama, and Saturday night was 4ZZZ's, with its Joint Efforts in the main hall.[44] At one of the first, Razar opened for the Angels in front of a thousand pub rock fans who had come for the headliners, and Marty Burke won them by taking a life size cut-out of John Travolta from the disco down the corridor and throwing it into the crowd, which tore it apart.[45] Stafford has the Travolta made of masonite, fed to the crowd during Stamp Out Disco, with the pieces thrown back at the band.[46] Years later a man came up to Burke and asked if he remembered the night with the Angels, because he had kept a souvenir. 'Yeah! I've got the kneecap!'[47]

On Friday 6 July Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons, who had nearly become the Queen's house band, played a Joint Effort on the hill instead, and Time Off reported the sprung timber swaying under the dancing, jumping, raging bodies.[48] Asked whether he had calmed down on stage, Joe Camilleri said that depended on how many bottles of Baileys he drank.[49] A founder of the station remembered the boards years later, in a hall where his parents' generation had met at balls, and three thousand people pogoing on them until the boards did the jumping for you.[50]

Bridget van Tinteren went to Joint Effort No. 12 for the September Time Off. From the street the 'huge dome, lit up with coloured lights and standing on top of the biggest, closest hill to the city' was 'a real eye catcher'. Inside, 'when 2,000 or 3,000 ragers start bopping and pogoing the whole hall bounces madly'.[51] The Sports headlined. The Aliens from Adelaide went on ahead of the local band, the Humans, which puzzled her, because the Brisbane support usually played to an empty hall before the crowd arrived. About forty volunteers ran the bar for nothing. A rumour went round that Steve Cummings had drunk a whole bottle of brandy before he went on, and she bet he was not the only one in the building. The price was printed plainly. 'Usually three bands play for $4 or $3 if you're a Triple Zed subscriber.' She had one reason for the size of the crowds, that 4ZZZ was 'whetting an appetite for which Brisbane youths are starving'.[52]

The money stayed thin. Of the first five Cloudland Joint Efforts, three made money and two lost it.[53]

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On Saturday 17 November Graham Parker and the Rumour played Joint Effort 18, and the station's editors counted more than four and a half thousand people, the biggest crowd Cloudland had held since it was built.[54] Anne Jones wrote the night up and made it 4,300. When the hall let out, the crowd went down into Bowen Hills still hot, and she reported the result. 'A dazed drunk crowd released from the heat and excitement proceeded to commit atrocious acts on the streets of Brisbane. The most heinous of which were apparently several cases of fornication on the front lawns of our good, noble, well-clipped citizens.'[55]

A couple of days later the station's licensee for the next Joint Effort found a note pushed in at his house. 'Pending a full investigation, the licence of all discos at Cloudland is cancelled.' A Joint Effort

was never a disco, and the Commission did not care what it was called. ‘Although Triple Zed begged and pleaded, no licence appeared, and not many people appeared either.’[56]

A week after Parker, on 24 November, the Members from England played Joint Effort 19 to about eleven hundred people. ‘And a lot of those were police.’ The bars sold soft drink in eight flavours. Anyone who slipped outside for a drink was arrested there, because drinking near a dance hall was an offence, and backstage the police arrested a couple of the Members for drinking too.[57] The station’s count was fifteen arrests on alcohol charges and two sniffer dogs.[58] Through that summer, Lergessner writes, most punk nights on the hill had sniffer dogs in the audience, police planted in the crowd and bouncers looking the punks and skinheads over at the entrance.[59] For the last encore the Members came back with the Hitmen and some friends for a song Jones reckoned had been written for the night, ‘Joh Bjelke, we want our liberty!’[60] After the show the bands kept going at their hotel until somebody rang the police, and the Members were at the airport earlier than they had planned.[61]

■

Across town Baroona Hall had reopened as the Caxton Hall. Jones, who had run dances there, described it for the New Musical Express that November as a ‘big empty box’ with a raised stage at one end and a bar at the other.[62] On Friday 30 November the Sharks headlined, with Jones on bass at the bottom of the bill in the Toesuckers, and late in the night the crowd spilled out onto Caxton Street in the heat.[63] Jones counted about seven police cars. The crowd yelled ‘Fucking pigs!’ at them. ‘And then the police started laying into the crowd and it was on for young and old.’[64]

She was with two young men. One ran past her with an officer after him on foot and a police car behind the officer, and when she caught up he was being beaten. The other walked over to help. ‘Excuse me, officer, you can’t do that!’ ‘He got walloped as well, they both get arrested, and I’m sitting on the footpath in my taffeta petticoat watching the whole thing.’[65]

On 11 December the Courier-Mail printed the police version of what was probably that night. Deputy Commissioner Varn McDonald said his men had broken up a ‘full-scale riot’ that took more than twenty police cars, CIB units among them, under bottles thrown from the building.[66] Lindy Woodward, writing in Semper the next May, had about fifty people waiting outside when plainclothes police got out of an unmarked car, walked through them to one particular man and set on him, and when the crowd objected the police started pushing and throwing punches.[67] Clinton Walker called it ‘one of the worst ever battles between police and punks’ and counted twelve arrested.[68] The magistrate would not believe a word Jones said, and her friend was convicted. He spent years getting the conviction quashed, and then he sued the police, and won.[69]

■

On 13 December the Courier-Mail reported that 4ZZZ’s liquor licence for Cloudland had been revoked over complaints about a recent concert, most likely Graham Parker’s.[70] The December Radio Times told subscribers the promotions department had ‘gone into recess’ and would be back in February, when things livened up.[71]

Darling did not wait for February. At the end of the year he and Peter Williamson walked out of the station to go into business for themselves as the Piranha Brothers, a name off Williamson’s favourite

Monty Python sketch.[72] He knew what the people they left thought of it. ‘We were Benedict Arnold. We’re traders.’[73]

NOTES

1. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

2. Riner, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

3. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:07:27 to 1:08:50

4. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:07:27 to 1:08:50

5. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:07:27 to 1:08:50; Darling, 2020

6. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

7. Vuleta, 2010, p. 37

8. Vuleta, 2010, p. 37

9. Vuleta, 2010, p. 37; Darling, 2020

10. Courier-Mail, 1979c, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 37

11. Courier-Mail, 1979c, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 37

12. Darling, 2010, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 45

13. Time Off, 1979c, p. 27

14. Time Off, 1979b, p. 32

15. Brisbane Devotee, 1979a, scan p. 4

16. Vargo, 1979, p. 52

17. Vargo, 1979, p. 52

18. Vargo, 1979, p. 53

19. Time Off, 1979d, p. 38

20. Time Off, 1979d, p. 31

21. Clark, 2024, Queensland 1974–1981 chapter

22. Clark, 2024, ‘Queensland’, ‘Brisbane’

23. Rock Against Poofta Bashing, 1979

24. Ledwith, 1979, p. 50

25. Ledwith, 1979, p. 50

26. Noack, 1979, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, pp. 37 to 38

27. Miller, 1979, p. 38

28. Vuleta, 2010, p. 38

29. Darling, 2010, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 38

30. Darling, 2020; Courier-Mail, 1979d, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 37

31. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

32. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5; Wreckage, 2019b, 1:08:50 to 1:09:13

33. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

34. Burke, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

35. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:08:50 to 1:09:13

36. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

37. State Library of Queensland, n.d.-a, 0:24:50 to 0:25:30 [CONFIRM: the date of this item has not yet been found]

38. Burke, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

39. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:08:50 to 1:09:13

40. Walker, 2021a, p. 46

41. Wreckage, 2019b, 1:04:25 to 1:04:48

42. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 8

43. Lergessner, 2013, p. 360

44. Vuleta, 2010, p. 46

45. Vuleta, 2010, p. 46

46. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

47. Burke, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 5

48. van Illa, 1979, p. 52

49. van Illa, 1979, p. 53

50. 4ZZZ, n.d.-a, 0:15:42 to 0:16:12 [CONFIRM: the date of this item has not yet been found]

51. van Tinteren, 1979, p. 23

52. van Tinteren, 1979, p. 23

53. Radio Times, 1979a, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 47

54. Radio Times, 1979b, p. 2

55. Jones, 1979a, p. 5

56. Jones, 1979a, p. 5

57. Jones, 1979a, p. 5

58. Radio Times, 1979b, p. 2

59. Lergessner, 2013

60. Jones, 1979a, p. 5

61. Radio Times, 1979b, p. 2

62. Jones, 1979b, p. 32, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, pp. 20 to 21

63. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 8

64. Jones, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 8

65. Jones, as cited in Stafford, 2024b, ch. 8

66. Courier-Mail, 1979a, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 23

67. Woodward, 1980, p. 21, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 23

68. Walker, 2021a, plate caption, the Leftovers at Baroona Hall

69. Stafford, 2024b, ch. 8

70. Courier-Mail, 1979b, as cited in Vuleta, 2010, p. 47

71. Radio Times, 1979b, p. 2

72. Darling, 2020

73. Darling, 2020

Livid

BRISBANE, 1989

On the night of Thursday 19 January 1989 hundreds of people sat in the radio station under the union building at the University of Queensland and waited for somebody to come and put them out. The union council had ratified its notices to quit a week earlier and told its president to enforce them by that date, and a public meeting of 400 had planned a rally and an occupation for the deadline. Nobody came. This time the union kept the police and the security guards out of it, and in its own pages of Semper the executive printed the result of a company search instead, which found that Media Facilities and Creative Broadcasters, the two companies that owned the station, had not lodged a return in three years.[1]

The station had been told in December that it had four weeks. Paul Butler and Nik Douglas wrote it up in Radio Times, the second notice arriving on Thursday 22 December with no excuses left, and Spenceley's answer for the station was 'We'll see you in court'. The union now said 4ZZZ owed it $300,000. The magazine said the only debt between them was a mortgage debenture of $63,000.[2]

The raid had made the station rich, for a station. Over $30,000 came in during the first few weeks after it, from listeners, from shops and businesses, from the media and from other organisations, and the promotions co-ordinator, Amanda Curtis, told a Courier-Mail reporter that Triple Zed meant to buy a house within ten kilometres of its transmitter.[3] The registrar, Doug Porter, put his own view in a file note. The station, he wrote, 'has not been a comfortable tenant and creates occasional problems for the union and the university through irresponsible actions and sometimes through its broadcasts'.[4] On 23 January the university called both sides to a meeting and took the matter off the union. The solicitors settled on a leaving date of 8 July, twenty-five weeks later than the union had wanted.[5]

■

Two days after the deadline nobody enforced, on Saturday 21 January, the campus put on a festival.[6]

Peter Walsh was nineteen and a student.[7] He and the artist Natalie Jeremijenko had thought it up as Brisbane's answer to Expo, a one-day bill of Brisbane bands who had left town because nobody here would give them an audience, brought home to play to the town they left. Walsh's starting position was simple, 'We had no money, we had no idea how to organise it, and we had no idea how to get in contact with bands'. Money turned out to be the easy part. Walsh walked into a credit union and asked for $4,000 to buy a car, and Jeremijenko walked in the next day and asked for $4,000 to buy a car, and the $8,000 went on tickets and posters. 'We were so into the idea of meeting the Go-Betweens that we didn't give a fuck!'[8] They called it Livid, which was how a lot of young people in Brisbane felt about the state they lived in.[9]

Walsh handed out 50,000 flyers himself. About 2,000 people came.[10] On the bill were the Go-Betweens, Chris Bailey of the Saints, the Ups and Downs and Died Pretty.[11] The Go-Betweens had been got through their manager, Roger Grierson, whose favourite pub in Sydney happened to employ a friend of Walsh's, and Robert Forster and Grant McLennan had first met at this university,

more than ten years earlier. Forster walked on ‘dressed in a bright orange flared bodysuit’. The band played ‘Karen’, which they almost never did, broke into Patti Smith’s ‘Gloria’ halfway through it, dropped that while Forster lay on his back on the stage reciting poetry, went back into ‘Gloria’ and then back into ‘Karen’. Walsh had one line for it afterwards, ‘And to me, it was the greatest thing I’d ever seen’.[12]

■

On the morning of Tuesday 14 February a plain-clothes officer from the Licensing Branch walked into Rocking Horse Records at 158 Adelaide Street and asked the owner, Warwick Vere, for anything rude, anything that might do for a ‘wild Valentine’s Day party’.[13] A couple of hours later four uniformed police came back with a warrant and took, by Vere’s count, over $500 worth of albums.[14] They took the Hard-Ons’ Dickcheese. They took Do The Shag, an instrumental by the Champs from the early sixties. They took a stack of Dead Kennedys and they took Guns N’ Roses’ Appetite For Destruction, which was on sale in most of the big chain stores in town.[15]

Vere was charged under the Vagrants, Gaming and Other Offences Act with selling obscene material. The complaint had come from a Pentecostal preacher, John Pasterkamp, who had already torn a copy of the Dead Kennedys EP In God We Trust, Inc. in half for the television news. The detective on the job told Vere later that the police had not really wanted to do it, ‘But because it was going to be an election issue, they weren’t about to give me any latitude’.[16]

The next night, Wednesday 15 February, REM played Festival Hall with the Go-Betweens supporting.[17] The Go-Betweens dedicated ‘The Clarke Sisters’ to the staff of Rocking Horse. Michael Stipe ended the night singing the Velvet Underground’s ‘After Hours’ over and over and over again, until the crowd gave up waiting for him to stop and went home.[18]

Jello Biafra of the Dead Kennedys told Gavin Sawford of Time Off that if raids like that one helped ‘galvanise people to vote out the present administration, then by all means let’s see some more raids’.[19] Vere rang Warner and the other record companies with one message, ‘Well, this is your fight, as well as my fight’. The record companies paid towards his defence, and so did the public.[20]

The case came up in May before the magistrate Don Fardon, who had just convicted the comedian Rodney Rude over the language in his act. The prosecuting sergeant, Geoff Cartner, opened by playing the court a tape of Give Me Convenience Or Give Me Death and told the magistrate he would only need to hear the first side. ‘I’m very grateful,’ Fardon said. Guns N’ Roses had dropped out of the case by then, which left two Dead Kennedys songs, ‘Too Drunk to Fuck’ and ‘I Kill Children’. Fardon listened to the first one and described it in his judgment as a few words repeated over and over, ending in what he took for the sound of vomiting.[21] Vere’s side had gone to the cinema to prepare, ‘We went to see the Academy Award-winning movie of the year, which was Rain Man’, and counted the word seventeen times in the one film.[22] Convict Rocking Horse, Vere argued, and Rain Man had to go too. Fardon dismissed the charges, ‘In this community today, I think the word itself has well and truly ceased to shock or alarm even the tenderest of feelings if it is used with some circumspection’. Pasterkamp’s torn copy of In God We Trust, Inc. went up above the counter at Rocking Horse, mounted on a coat of arms and signed by Jello Biafra.[23]

■

First semester began in late February, and Semper called what came with it the biggest media blitz in the university's history, the television full of student violence and the campus covered in posters.[24] On 20 February the station's co-ordinator, Gordon Fletcher, had asked the registrar to let 4ZZZ hold one last Market Day on campus. The university took four days to refuse, and the Market Day went to the Wests Rugby Union oval at Toowong on 11 March.[25]

A law student called Jane Lye did the paperwork. On Thursday 23 February a petition from 2,200 students, asking for a referendum to remove the union executive, was handed to the president, Victoria Brazil, while 400 students stood in the union building and watched. The constitution needed 1,800 signatures. Semper pointed out that only 1,600 students had voted the executive in. Brazil said she had received the petition and had not accepted it, and told the Courier-Mail that after a quick look she had found the name of a friend from medicine who had never signed, so the petition was fraudulent.[26] She claimed the silent support of the 15,000 students who had not voted at all, 'It's not trendy to be idealistic ... It's trendy to get out on the stock market to get money for that BMW'.[27]

On 2 March, Semper reported, 600 students marched on the union building to demand a count, and occupied it when Brazil did not turn up. At half past nine that night word came through that the cable carrying 4ZZZ's transmission had been cut on purpose. The next afternoon about fifty of Brazil's supporters forced their way back in and retook the office, and by four o'clock thirty police had the building blockaded with 300 students outside it. On 8 March more than 1,500 students, by the Courier-Mail's count, crammed the main refectory and voted for the executive to resign.[28]

On 7 March the fight reached Parliament House. The leader of the Liberal Party, the member for Sherwood, told the Legislative Assembly the station was an embarrassment to the university, said its building could fetch $50,000 a year on the open market, accused its supporters of misconduct and complained that it broadcast programmes for gay listeners.[29]

Over Easter the students took the union building again, and the writer John Birmingham moved in. A couple of hundred of them were banging on Brazil's office when a long stringy bloke called Bill Ferguson looked up at the ceiling, which was all tiles, and said they could push up into the cavity and come down on the other side. Birmingham went through first, 'The next thing I remember was Bill pouring through the roof like a liquid metal terminator'. The bouncers inside turned round to look at the ceiling, lost the entrance, and hundreds of people poured in behind them. For a couple of weeks the occupiers brought in a television, hired videos and threw a party every night. 'Everybody was full of piss and bad manners and savage righteousness.'[30]

In Sydney, Radio Skid Row had been thrown out of its own home at Sydney University, and on 7 April it shared a benefit with Triple Zed at the Paddington RSL Club, on a poster drawn by Matt Mawson. Painters and Dockers headlined over the Ups and Downs, the Sparklers, Tall Tales and True, Falling Joys and the Black Assassins, and every band played for nothing. Liz Willis remembered the former Zedder Larry Ponting 'carrying literally bags of money away from the door to safety!' The night made about $10,000.[31]

In the middle of May the petition went to the Supreme Court. Justice Paul de Jersey accepted the signatures, threw the petition out on its wording and wrote the sentence he wanted the students to use instead. Within days a second petition had more than 3,000 names on it. On 14 July 1989 the executive resigned. The editorship of Semper went to a crew calling themselves the Doug Porter All

Stars, after the registrar and the comedy trio the Doug Anthony All Stars, and Birmingham wrote for them as Harrison Biscuit.[32] In September 4,500 students voted in the union election, the most Semper had ever counted, and Jane Lye, standing for Reform, became president.[33]

■

The station left anyway. On its last night under the Rec Building it threw itself an eviction party, and Anita Earl said what the party did, 'We were taking sledgehammers to Studio Three and smashing double brick walls'. When the windows were out somebody left the sledgehammer leaning on what was left of the brickwork. The Courier-Mail ran Brazil on its front page, looking through the hole, with her verdict on her tenants, 'I'm glad they have gone'.[34] The next morning police were on the steps of both Anitas asking about the damage. The second of them, Anita Greenhill, had been a listener in December, had heard the first emergency broadcast, come down to the station and stayed to run its office.

In July Triple Zed moved into temporary premises at 621 Coronation Drive, Toowong, at street level in the Manchester Unity Building.[35] The studios there were not built yet, so the station went back up the mountain and broadcast from a caravan parked beside its transmitter, while the commercial rent at Toowong kept falling due.[36] Herriman and Andrew Dent fitted the van out behind the old building with the old Studio Two mixer. Stefan Armbruster called it 'an old banger', and getting it up to the tower was the worst of the job, 'there's no road, just an old, washed-out dirt track', and they dragged it in and got it up on blocks. For nearly six months the announcers did their shifts in the bush next to the transmitter hut, with no toilet and almost never a working phone line, and the crew called it the Caravan of Love. Lennon called it 'the best kept secret in Brisbane until the studios were built'. Fletcher called it 'the antithesis of public access'.[37]

One of the Murri Hour broadcasters remembered the station up there in its caravan for more than six months and felt sorry for them, and he thought the Murri Hour might have been one of the big reasons they got the final push.[38] The Brisbane Indigenous Media Association had been incorporated in 1988 and given a community radio licence of its own.[39]

When the station came down off the mountain and started broadcasting from Toowong, the signal was worse, because the Toowong Village shopping centre stood between the low building and the transmitter.[40] It would be 1992 before 4ZZZ owned anywhere, when it bought a former Communist Party building in Fortitude Valley, and broadcast at first from its St Pauls Terrace side while Coronation Press still worked out of the Barry Parade side.[41]

■

The station kept putting nights on. In August Radio Times advertised its Saturday club, Euphoria, house, acid, Skacid and hip house, four dollars or three, and gave itself a grin, 'Hot shit! (yes, we are biased)'. On Thursdays DJ Jane Grigg played house, funk, hip hop and seventies disco at the Alliance Hotel for five dollars.[42] On the next page Paul Butler, who had managed Euphoria, answered the talk that money had gone missing from the club with an open letter denying he had taken any of it, 'I regret writing this letter, but I have no choice'.[43] By December Euphoria was finished and Anita Greenhill was sending readers to Backstage, a new venue for Brisbane bands in a hotel basement.[44]

That October the Leftovers, one of the city's first punk bands, lost their second member in two years. Their original guitarist, Johnny Burnaway, born John Gorman, had died in Sydney in 1988, while his band the Plug Uglies were starting to do well. Warren Lamond, who sang for the Leftovers, had a minor car accident and died in his sleep on 12 October 1989 of a brain haemorrhage.[45] Clinton Walker wrote that most of that band died young.[46]

■

Tony Fitzgerald handed down his report on 3 July 1989, and with barely two months left before an election the Nationals dumped their premier, Mike Ahern, for Russell Cooper.[47] Cooper ran as the guardian of the state's morals and, with the Rocking Horse judgment still fresh, promised to bring 'pornographic' rock music under the censorship laws.[48]

Polling day, Saturday 2 December, was the second Livid, at the RNA Showgrounds in Bowen Hills, where eighteen years before a South African football team had played under police guard. Walsh had advertised a wall of televisions so the crowd could watch the count come in. Five minutes before the gates opened somebody asked him where the televisions were. He drove home and came back with his own twelve-inch portable black and white, 'It must have been a record for the most people watching a portable black and white TV!'[49] The guitarist Kristin Black of the Fugitive Microbes got there in the afternoon and spent it watching band after band she loved, the Bats and TISM among them.[50]

Across town Stefan Armbruster was covering the count for Triple Zed in the station's banana suit, jumping around behind the politicians while the cameras were on them, until some men he took for police told him it was time to go and walked him out.[51]

A year earlier Wayne Goss had asked Triple Zed's listeners to post him a subscription form. That night the Labor Party won 54 seats and Goss won the state.[52] Before Goss had given his victory speech, Walsh got up on the stage at the Showgrounds and told the crowd the Nationals were gone, 'No more fascism!'[53] He was embarrassed by the line later and still stood by it, 'But there was certainly that feeling in the air at the time'. Kristin Black was in the tent when it went up and never forgot it. Andrew Stafford wrote that the roar was 'just about the loudest thing heard all day'.[54]

NOTES

1. Semper Floreat, 1989a, pp. 5 to 6, 25

2. Radio Times, 1988a, p. 5

3. Anderson, 2025c, p. 67

4. Stafford, 2024b, p. 196

5. Semper Floreat, 1989a, p. 6

6. Semper Floreat, 1989a, p. 23

7. Bell, 2013

8. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 206 to 208

9. Vuleta, 2010, p. 24

10. Bell, 2013

11. Semper Floreat, 1989a, p. 23

12. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 206 to 208

13. Stafford, 2025a

14. McLean, 2016

15. Moskovitch, 2015

16. Stafford, 2025a

17. Frontier Touring, 2026; R.E.M. Timeline, 2026

18. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 209 to 210

19. Moskovitch, 2015

20. Stafford, 2025a

21. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 209 to 214

22. Moskovitch, 2015

23. Stafford, 2025a

24. Semper Floreat, 1989b, p. 8

25. Anderson, 2025c, ch. 8; Radical Times, 2025d

26. Semper Floreat, 1989b, p. 8

27. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 198 to 202

28. Semper Floreat, 1989b, p. 8

29. Queensland Legislative Assembly, 1989, pp. 3371–3372

30. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 198 to 202

31. Anderson, 2025c, p. 70

32. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 198 to 203

33. Semper Floreat, 1989c, p. 2

34. Anderson, 2025c, ch. 5

35. Stanwell, 2023

36. Newstead, 2025

37. Anderson, 2025c, p. 74

38. 4ZZZ Radio, n.d., 0:11:45 to 0:12:00 [CONFIRM: the date of this item has not yet been found]

39. State Library of Queensland, 2019

40. Stafford, 2024b

41. State Library of Queensland, 2025; 4ZZZ, 2026l

42. Radio Times, 1989a, p. 12

43. Radio Times, 1989a, p. 13

44. Radio Times, 1989c, p. 13

45. Stafford, 2024b, pp. 110 to 111

46. Walker, 2021a

47. Salisbury, 2019

48. Stafford, 2025a

49. Stafford, 2024b, p. 215

50. 4ZZZ Podcasts, 2020b

51. 4ZZZ Podcasts, 2020b

52. 4ZZZ Podcasts, 2020b

53. Stafford, 2024b, p. 215

54. 4ZZZ Podcasts, 2020b; Stafford, 2024b, Introduction and p. 213

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