



Cultural Transmission and Emotional Resonance in Live Music Experiences: A Critical Narrative Review

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Abstract. Through an interdisciplinary literature review, this article explores how live music can promote cultural heritage, identity formation and cross-cultural communication through the process of emotional resonance. At the same time, the review critically examines how industry structure, institutional power and economic inequality in the field of live music shape these processes.

Keywords: Live Music; Emotional Resonance; Cultural Transmission; Collective Identity; Music Industry;

1 Introduction

Live music provides a unique form of cultural and emotional experience, which cannot be fully replicated through recording or digital media [1]. Its coexistence and concrete characteristics enable the audience and performers to share a time-limited multi-sensory environment in which attention, action and emotion are mixed together. Such an environment is a powerful place for the formation and strengthening of collective identity, because individuals instantly experience that they are part of a larger society as a whole [2][3]. The often-observed phenomenon of strong emotional synchronisation is expressed in the form of rhythmic synchronisation, mutual excitement or collective release, which highlights the unique research value of live music experience in the field of contemporary culture and media [4]. These characteristics show that live music is an important place to study how culture and emotions form together in situ. However, there is still a gap between existing academic research in different disciplines, which makes it difficult to clarify how these dynamics interact.

In the field of the music industry, cultural communication and emotional resonance, as key mechanisms, play a decisive role in the communication of meaning, values and social relations in music activities [5][6]. Cultural heritage is achieved through performance, which encodes and spread symbolic stories, style characteristics and identity marks among different generations and different communities [3][7]. At the same time, emotional resonance can promote audience participation, strengthen the relationship between artists and fans, and help maintain the sustainable development of the live

music industry [8]. However, relevant studies often explore these mechanisms in isolation, and there are few comprehensive frameworks that can capture the way cultural and emotional processes are mutually reinforced in real situations [9][10].

In response to this gap, this review explores how the live music environment promotes the intertwining process of cultural heritage and emotional resonance. It takes into account the comprehensive influence of situational factors, personal characteristics such as identity and previous fan participation, and a variety of music presentation methods, including music festivals, stadium tours, and small concerts [11]. Accordingly, this review pursues three questions: (1) how do cultural heritage and emotional resonance work together in the situation of live music; (2) how is the emotional resonance in live music transformed into cultural identity, collective belonging or cross-cultural influence; (3) how might these perspectives be integrated within a broader cultural and industry-oriented framework.

In order to answer these questions, this review adopts the method of a scoping review, aiming to describe the breadth of existing academic work in the fields of musicology, sociology, psychology and cultural research. This method can systematically identify how different research directions conceptualize cultural heritage and emotional resonance, and the conditions under which these processes intersect in the live music setting. Through repeated search strategies, the research is screened, organised and synthesised to reveal patterns, theoretical convergences and persistent gaps. In this way, the review lays the foundation for a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural, emotional and industry-related dynamics that support the live music experience.

2 Methodology

This study adopts the method of a scoping review to systematically map the breadth of existing research on cultural heritage and emotional resonance in live music contexts. Comprehensive searches have been carried out in major databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar. Search terms are organised into three conceptual clusters: live music situation: "live music concert", "music festival", "performance", "co-existence", "audience experience"; cultural process: "cultural inheritance", "cultural heritage", "identity formation", "cultural significance", "symbolic practice"; emotional processes: "emotional resonance", "emotional synchronisation", "collective emotion", "emotional engagement". Boolean operator (AND/OR) were used to combine these clusters and use truncation was applied where appropriate. The search scope was limited to English peer-reviewed publications published since 1990, reflecting the period when live music research emerged as a more independent academic field. The preliminary search yielded approximately 450 to 500 records, and the search results were imported into a reference management tool and screened in two stages. First, the relevance of titles and abstracts was reviewed. Secondly, the full text of eligible studies was evaluated according to the inclusion criteria. Ambiguities were resolved through repeated reading and discussion.

3 Key Characteristics of Live Music Experiences

The definition of the live music experience lies not only in the presence of music performances, but also in the interaction of a series of complex sensory, social and cultural factors, which together shape the audience's perception. In essence, this kind of experience involves the co-presence of performers, the audience, and the surrounding environment, thus creating an immediacy and unpredictability that distinguishes live performances from mediated listening [12][13]. This immediacy enhances the perceived importance of musical action, emotional expression and collective response, thus forming a more physical, emotional and social form of participation, but these characteristics are not universally experienced by all listeners, and not all listeners pay equal attention to them [11]. Therefore, it should not be assumed that there is an essential difference between live music and recorded music, rather, it is necessary to explore how social and cultural expectations and genre-specific norms affect the audience's perception of "real" emotional engagement.

Collective synchronisation and coordination behaviour are closely related to emotional resonance and shared identity [4][9], but this research direction often relies on a psychological models that regards synchronisation as inherently positive or socially cohesive. However, from a sociological point of view, participation may be uneven, performative, and even forced – being influenced by social norms, fan expectations, or the power relationship between performers and the audience. Mutual emotional contagion may enhance the sense of belonging, but it may also lead to people's pressure to follow the crowd or exacerbate the phenomenon of exclusivity within the audience group [2][14].

In addition, the cultural attachment of live music has been widely recognized [15][16], but relevant studies sometimes idealize this connection, ignoring how identity, cultural heritage and fan cultures are intertwined with business interests, brand strategies and the global music industry. Performers may indeed use cultural symbols to evoke resonance, but these actions may contain selective forms of expression, thereby concealing complexity or catering to identity characteristics with market value. This raises the important question of whether live music is a place for cultural continuation, cultural negotiation or cultural commodification, and for whom.

Scholars should not regard live music as an intrinsically transformative or collective medium, but should study the social, economic and ideological conditions that enable certain experiences while constraining others. This critical position provides a more detailed basis for analysing the intertwining of emotional resonance and cultural heritage in the live performance environment.

4 Mechanisms and Factors of Emotional Resonance

Emotional resonance in live music is formed by the interaction of perception, social and cultural mechanisms, which go beyond the scope of individual psychological response. Classical theories in music psychology believes that emotional response is gen-

erated through processes such as emotional contagion, situational memory, rhythm synchronisation and aesthetic evaluation [9][10]. These mechanisms reveal the micro-level processes through which music triggers emotions, including physiological synchronisation, activation of personal experience associations, and sensitivity to expression clues. However, although these frameworks improve the understanding of individual processes, they often ignore the relational and situational dimensions in live performances, in which emotions are not just a personal state, but a phenomenon of social negotiation.

In real situations, a core mechanism is collective synchronisation, that is, the body is in harmony with music and each other in rhythm and time. This phenomenon is related to the enhanced sense of unity, excitement and common identity [4]. However, synchronisation itself is not a neutral or equally accessible to all. Participation in collective synchronisation will be influenced by familiarity with musical practices, comfort in the crowd, and cultural norms related to movement and expression. Therefore, there may be significant differences in collective resonance between different population groups, subcultures or previous levels of fan loyalty, which challenges the assumption that synchronisation will naturally lead to group cohesion. For example, first time participants at certain festivals often report feeling "out of place" within highly standardized dress requirements and participation ceremonies, which complicates the assumption that on-site activities necessarily promote inclusion and belonging.

Another important factor concerns pre-existing identity investments particularly those cultivated through fan identity, subcultural affiliation or personal musical experience. These inputs can enhance emotional resonance by shaping expectations, interpreting the framework and the emotional meaning of performers or tracks [8][15]. However, these attachment relationships also raise the question of how emotional resonance is intentionally amplified through industrial practices such as branding, narrative building and emotional labour. Rather than viewing resonance as a spontaneous response, it is therefore necessary to consider how it is strategically created or mediated in the contemporary music economy.

Emotional resonance must be understood in a broader system of cultural meaning. The emotions caused by live music can rarely be completely separated from social narratives, they may strengthen cultural memory, express political emotions or strengthen the sense of belonging to the group [17]. However, these processes are not always beneficial. Emotional resonance may also naturalise the dominant identity, obscure power relations or facilitates the commercial appropriation of cultural expression.

5 Linking Emotional Resonance and Cultural Transmission

Emotional resonance in live music environment is not merely an individual's emotional response, it also acts as a channel for the construction of cultural meaning and the dissemination of shared values, symbols and identities. Scholars in the fields of anthropology and cultural sociology have long believed that collective emotions, especially those generated in ritualized or performance environments help strengthen group cohesion and embed cultural narratives into physical experience [18]. Live music, characterised

by immediacy, sensory intensity and joint audience, is a typical representative of such an environment. Through the coordination of rhythm, the participation of vocal music or the emotional synchronisation generated by the joint action of the group, participants can temporarily be in a shared cultural imagination, where symbols and stories are not only conveyed, but also embodied [19].

More and more studies show that emotional resonance can promote cultural heritage transmission. It strengthens cultural memory, because experiences with strong emotional colours can enhance memories and deepen the perception of cultural symbols [20]. In concerts or festivals, narratives about heritage, identity or social struggle can be amplified through emotional performances, allowing the audience to internalize these narratives at the cognitive level. Emotional resonance can also foster cross-cultural communication, especially when the audience has a strong reaction to unfamiliar musical styles or performance forms. This response may pave the way for cross-cultural understanding, although the process is not always neutral or symmetrical.

However, it is crucial that the relationship between emotional resonance and cultural heritages is not inherently liberating or universally positive. Emotional power may also maintain exclusive identity, copy stereotypes, or commercialize cultural expression to seek commercial benefits. Global festival touring activities often focus on emotional wonders and underestimate the background understanding of local cultural elements, which only leads to superficial cross-cultural consumption, not meaningful communication [21]. Therefore, although emotional resonance can promote richer cultural participation, it must be interpreted in a broader political, economic and institutional structure that shapes who has the right to spread the culture and on what conditions.

taken together, these dynamics highlight the complex interaction between emotion and culture in the live music experience. Live music provides a physical and collective environment for the emergence of emotions. Emotional resonance transforms these experiences into shared cultural meanings. While industry dynamics regulate the process of amplification, standardization or marginalization of these emotions and meanings. These elements do not form a linear causal chain, but form a recursive system. Under unequal structural conditions, emotions and cultural processes reinforce each other.

6 Conclusion

This review explores how emotional resonance plays a role in the live music environment, and how its interaction with processes such as cultural heritage, collective identity formation and cross-cultural communication. Through the comprehensive research results in the fields of musicology, sociology, psychology and cultural research, the review points out that the live music experience is shaped by a series of situational factors, such as spatial design, audience interaction and performance aesthetics, and is also influenced by factors such as personal history, identity positioning, subcultural affiliation and previous fan participation. In these different situations, emotional resonance is not only an emotional response, but also a powerful mechanism through which it transmits, negotiates and reconceives cultural memories, values and collective narratives.

This review emphasises the need to establish a theoretical model, which should not regard emotions and culture as independent fields, but as an interdependent process. The existing framework often focusses on either emotional mechanisms or cultural structures. A comprehensive perspective focusing on how emotional practice is embedded in the institutional and political environment will be able to explain in more detail how live music produces cultural significance. In addition, it is necessary to take a more critical look at power relations, especially to clarify who has the right to spread culture and how industry logic shapes emotional experiences.

For cultural institutions, festival organisers and music industry practitioners, these insights highlight the importance of designing on-site activities that can promote emotional connection and cultural depth. Such strategies may include programming that integrate cultural narratives, supportive collaborative initiatives that promote equitable cross-cultural exchange, or adopting forms that can enhance community participation rather than passive consumption.

Many existing research have focussed on Western performance contexts and commercial models, which has led to gaps in understanding how emotional resonance works in non-Western occasions. Future research can start from vertical design, track the changes of emotional and cultural effects over time, carry out ethnographic research that emphasises marginalised or transnational communities, and adopt interdisciplinary research methods that integrate physiology, phenomenology and sociocultural approaches. As digital media continue to reshape live performance through hybrid concerts and participatory technologies, further research is needed to examine how the boundaries of the live experience are reshaped and what it means for cultural communication.

Overall, this review further puts forward the view that emotional resonance in live music should not only be understood as an inherent psychological reaction, but should also be regarded as a process characterised by cultural creativity and structural mediation. By placing emotions within the framework of cultural memory, industry logic and power relations, this review highlights how live music becomes a key site that affects the interaction of emotions, identity and inequality. This view not only distinguishes this study from existing emotion-centered research, but also points towards a fruitful direction for future research: to explore how cultural significance is shaped, disseminated and contested in the contemporary live music economy by expanding the analysis of emotional resonance as an intermediary mechanism. This article does not solely rely on the psychological frameworks to study emotions. On the contrary, it integrates emotions into the context of cultural memory, industrial logic and power structures. This represents its most unique and significant contribution in terms of originality.

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