Scotland's music scene is the envy of the world. When I was touring the world with Belle & Sebastian, one of the questions most often asked by journalists was, "Why is there so much good music coming from Scotland? What is so special about Glasgow?"

We would always quip that it was the rain. Other than going to the pub, forming a band was pretty much the only thing you could do.

But really, I believe, the reasons for a thriving music scene in Glasgow are:

1. The concentration of young people brought there to study in one of its many universities and colleges.

2. The success of other bands from the area, attracting people interested in music to relocate. I was one of them, I studied at Glasgow primarily because my favourite band, Teenage Fanclub, were from there.

3. The fact that you can see so much live music at iconic venues such as the Barrowlands. It was where I saw the Pixies, the Pogues, Bjork, Blur, Sonic Youth.

4. The proliferation of grassroots live music venues. In the mid 1990's it was venues like the 13th Note, King Tut's, Nice'n'Sleazy. These days you can add venues like Barfly, Stereo and the Hug and Pint. These are the places where bands are formed, play their first gigs, exchange ideas, even fall in love.

5. The proliferation of affordable and decent rehearsal rooms, such as Berkley. These are all the more obvious reasons, but one that is less cited is:

6. The proliferation of quality night clubs and DJ's. As many bands were formed in club nights at the Sub Club, the Art School and other student unions as at any of the music venues I've already mentioned. Musical tastes were formed, and people came together at club nights like Divine, Goodfoot and Optimo.

Without grassroots music venues in Scotland, as one report has already mentioned, there would be music scene. No amount of Conservatoire training or Creative Scotland funding can replace cutting your teeth playing these venues.

Now I'm going to show my age. If you walked into the basement of the 13th Note in Glassford Street in 1995, you would meet Alex Kapranos (who would later form
Franz Ferdinand) at the door, taking the ticket money for the Kazoo Club that he organised. On the bill would be Mogwai and the Delgados. At the bar would be members of Teenage Fanclub and the Pastels, checking out the new bands. Belle & Sebastian played their first gigs there. It was like a social club for the socially awkward, but it was where these bands were formed. I am out of touch with the scene these days, but I have no doubt that exactly the same thing is happening to this day, at places like the Hug and Pint and the Old Hairdressers.

Why is any of this important? Other than the obvious economic benefits, Music is the epicentre of Scotland's culture. It brings people together, it brings people here to live and to work. It makes Scotland an interesting and vibrant place to be. This is why I support Agent of Change.

Mick Cooke

Biography

Mick Cooke is a composer for film and television. He was a member of Scottish indie band Belle & Sebastian for fifteen years. He lives and works in Glasgow, and owes his living to having played a good many of Scotland's music venues over the years.