



Words: Nick Lord

Schools of Rock

Photo courtesy of JMC Academy



The popularity of tertiary music education is skyrocketing in Australia as the industry pushes for new entrants to hold basic levels of qualification in all positions. In this special report, **HEAVY** highlights the courses and where they're offered.

So you wanna work in music? We get it. You've thought of nothing else since purchasing your first CD and windmilling your air guitar until the wee hours. You dream of nothing but headlining Monsters of Rock, already tell everyone you know you're "going on tour soon" and meticulously sculpt every aspect of your image right down to the bootlaces, just to make sure you'll look the part if, and when, that dream job presents itself. Alas, the keyword 'rockstar' doesn't return too many search results in online job listings these days.

Perhaps you can land a job as a roadie, a merch assistant or even an instrument tech. What a cool gig that'd be. You can follow your favourite bands, see all their shows for free, rub shoulders with rockstars, go drinking with the fans, and basically just experience the life of a touring musician, all without having to learn an instrument. But a lifetime of heavy lifting, fast food, 12-hour bus rides and cramped hotel rooms might not be everyone's cup of tea. The work can be back-breaking, the pay ain't that great and most of those stories you hear about roadies scoring with groupies are, well, stories – this ain't the '80s anymore, kid.

All is not lost, however. Despite the

manic downsizing in recent years that has led to the closures of a giant number of record labels and CD retailers – and forced more than a few musicians to ditch their dreams and get real jobs – music remains a giant industry that employs thousands of people, particularly on the live front. Flowing just below the surface of the stage is a thick vein of jobs that'll get you closer to the action than you ever dreamed. If lugging road cases isn't your thing, it might be time to get some skills together, and what better way to give you the chance to do something you really love than by going back to school?

In Australia alone, there are over 100 different tertiary courses dedicated to some aspect of the music industry. Almost every university in the country offers some form of music-related education to its students, as do a wide array of TAFEs and private colleges.

By far, the most popular field of study is the cover-all course in 'music', generally available as a Bachelor of Arts (music) or as a stand-alone Bachelor of Music but also available in Certificate II, Certificate III, Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels at some 60 tertiary institutions across the country – and that's just counting undergraduate options.

The field is vast and entrants into music

courses can now feast upon a smorgasbord of units without even having to tackle an instrument. A quick read of just one particular course description shows the breadth of directions students can take. There's music history, music technology, instrument studies, music industry studies, music arrangement, song writing, artistic judgement, stagecraft, business principles, arranging for horns, arranging for strings, music in visual contexts, improvisation and rhythmic studies, copyright agreements, arranging for large ensembles, world music, composition, creative music technology, ethnomusicology, musicology and performance.

Whew, it's enough to make your head spin, and that isn't even all of it. Such profundity highlights just how popular music has become as a field of study – hell, in New South Wales alone, students can take a straight-up 'music' course at 19 different universities, TAFEs and colleges. Queensland and Victoria aren't far behind either.

Note that this isn't taking into account the number of courses offered in sound production and audio engineering, another field that is also booming. Covering everything from audio and acoustic theory to advanced recording techniques, audio

production courses are currently available in qualifications ranging from Cert II to Bachelor at over 30 institutions Australia-wide.

Lance Krize is the head VET coordinator and live sound lecturer at SAE, a private college founded in Australia in 1976 that now boasts 55 campuses worldwide. In his seven years as a head lecturer with the school, he's seen a remarkable rise in enrolments.

"It's amazing how many students we're getting," he says excitedly. "Numbers have gone up immensely [since he started] – they've tripled, maybe more – and courses have exploded also. It's no longer just a school of audio engineering. There are all different kinds of audio courses and music-related business courses, as well as all the gaming and film courses we now offer."

Krize believes the rising enrolment number is really a reflection on the state of the industry.

"People are realising that it's not like the old days when you can just go out there and learn from scratch by bugging people; you have to go out with an education now," he explains. "Just having a qualification behind you means you're better off from the start. You'll still work your way up the ranks, but it doesn't take as long."

To Krize, the benefits of training are plainly obvious, and any costs are offset by increased employability and better job conditions for graduates.

"First off, you'll make a lot more money much quicker if you're properly trained. When you don't know what you're doing, bands don't really want to hire you."

Speaking about his own live sound course, Krize is adamant that students learn the exact skills they need to put self-taught mixers to shame.

"A soundman can make or break a show – if you're lousy, people will go away thinking it was a lousy show even if the band was fantastic; if you're good, people can come away thinking it was a great show even if the band was ordinary," he says, adding that education is also a way to speed up the knowledge process, crucial in a society now obsessed with immediacy of information: "School gives you the knowledge you want so much quicker than if you were to go and do it yourself. When you get out into the world, you know what you're doing right off the bat."

Glenn Ferguson is head of audio engineering and sound production at Australia's JMC Academy, another private college that offers degrees and diplomas in music, audio engineering and entertainment business management, as well as game design and film/TV production. He agrees emphatically that education saves students time and money when getting themselves established in their chosen fields, stating that the old way was the long way around.

"Once upon a time, if you got a job as an assistant engineer or a runner, you'd spend the first year making coffee and lunches," he says. "After that, you might have been lucky enough to become a tape operator for another year or so."

Ferguson believes the boom in courses reflects a changing industry in which employers now expect job seekers to satisfy certain competency standards before they even begin.

"Nowadays engineers don't have time to teach people so it's not really possible to learn on the job like before," he says. "They [employers] expect you walk in and be able to work the patch bay and set up mics straight away, for example."

In this sense, Ferguson believes the schools are doing the industry a favour by not only preparing new entrants, but also by vetting potential workers, sifting out the undesirables ahead of time and, thus, minimising risks for employers.

"I guess if anyone did try to walk into a job in this day and age, employers would say they've already got their pick of graduates so why would they employ you? They're looking for people dedicated enough to put in the time and effort to learn their craft in advance," he says. "Plus, really, they use us [the schools] as a filter – we get to observe students to see if they're reliable and if they have a good attitude. Rather than putting ads into a newspaper and getting random applications, they [employers] just contact us directly because we send reliable workers who are already trained, have the right personality and can work as part of a team."

There's a common gripe in audio engineering for bands that there are too many students and not enough jobs, and that the rise of DIY recording has led to a sharp decline in the number of bands who are recording albums in studios.

Ferguson agrees that the landscape has changed as far as bands are concerned but stresses that there is more audio work than ever before as long as students cast a wider net.

"More stuff is being recorded now than ever before, but it's just more efficient nowadays. Big studios are suffering because you don't need a great big console to do overdub work, which means there are more opportunities for up-and-comers to eat into that market, especially when \$10,000 will buy you a studio able to handle jingles, voiceovers and post production work," he says, adding that a career in audio is about so much more than recording bands.

"Sure, all the students come in thinking it's about rock music but there are so many other options than recording the next Karnivool album. Plenty of students end up going into acoustic design, designing rooms or measuring traffic noise on infrastructure projects and making a very good living – it's not all pop songs and jingles."

Shifting direction and moving away from audio production, another rapidly growing field of study is that of music business and management, which is again available in a variety of different qualification levels (from Cert IV to Bachelor) at over 20 institutions nationwide. Twenty doesn't sound like many, but it's important to remember that all of the students studying the aforementioned 'music' courses are not counted in this yetare still unlocking similar course content. For the purpose of comparison, 'music business' in this article refers to dedicated music business courses only, of which there are no music performance or music theory components. ▶▶

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SCHOOLS OF ROCK

Music business and management draws in hundreds of aspiring music lawyers, accountants, promoters and band managers each year to study themes such as international touring, copyright and publishing, tour and performance management, contract negotiation, music distribution management, artist management, occupational health and safety, and how to secure funding. Sales of recorded music might have reduced to a trickle, thanks to the omnipotent immediacy of illegal music downloads, but live music is thriving as artists move to arrest the income shortfall created by the loss of album revenue, which is a likely reason for the popularity of a field that deals largely in touring contracts and artist management.

“It’s not like the old days when you can just go out there and learn from scratch by bugging people; you have to go out with an education now.”

Live music and touring isn’t only about rock bands, as highlighted by the slew of courses appearing under the banner of live production, theatre and events. One only needs to flip through the weekly entertainment guide to see just how many theatre shows and musicals are running on any given weekend, collectively employing thousands. Students in this field study audio visual systems, event management, lighting, live production, multimedia, sound production, stage management, theatre technology and much more, and might hope to gain employment in large-scale musical and theatrical productions.

The theatre sector also receives significant amounts of attention for students in the venue and event management field, which offers a full complement of courses at 23 institutions Australia-wide. Slightly different from standard event management, the emphasis in these courses is on managing music and stage venues, which extends way beyond the Bald Faced Stag in Sydney or the Corner Hotel in Melbourne. If you can’t get a gig mixing for Karnivool, shifting gears a little and targeting the thriving theatre sector could prove lucrative. Who knows? With the right knowledge of venues and events, you might even end up working on Shane Warne the Musical. Sure, laugh now, but a paying gig is a paying gig.

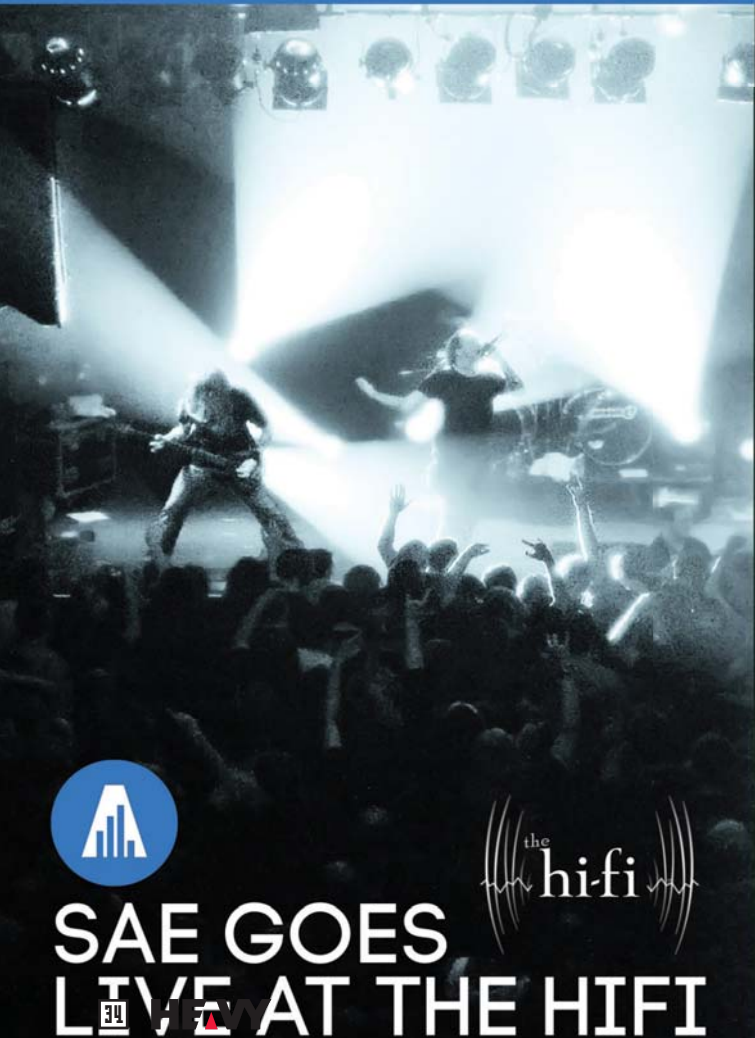
As JMC’s Glenn Ferguson mentioned,

qualifications are crucial to getting a start, but turning those qualifications into paid work is all about casting a wider net. For example, sound and stage students might not have considered just how many opportunities are available at high-school musicals right across the country. Kew High School one day, *The Lion King* the next, right?

Outside the main fields of study discussed here, there are many more music-related courses available for students looking to up-skill in a niche area. Those interested in hands-on work might enjoy the Certificate III in Musical instrument making and repair, for example, available at the Northern College of the Arts and Technology in Preston, Victoria.

Trying to list them all here would be cumbersome and really doesn’t address the aim of this article, which is to highlight that there’s no shortage of courses available to those wanting music-industry careers.

While it’s certainly true that the act of studying a music-related course cannot provide students with any guarantee of employment or income, further education does equip students with the necessary technical knowledge they need to enter the industry and launch their careers. It needs to be said that studying is far from the only way to get a job in the industry, but it is an advantage that isn’t available to those who choose to go it alone and, in such a cut-throat business, every little bit helps. **H**



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Get in the game



To help you on your way, we've compiled a list of Australia's most popular undergraduate music courses and the institutions that offer them. This list is by no means exhaustive and is intended to help those looking for a starting point by giving a general overview of what is available and where to go.

AUDIO ENGINEERING AND SOUND PRODUCTION

Themes: Audio and acoustic theory, music production, recording techniques, electronics, live sound, sound aesthetics, audio system design, sound for TV radio and film, project management, electronic media, sound editing, mixing and mastering, and more.

Suits: anyone seeking to work with sound. Roles include audio engineers, live mixers, acoustic designers, voiceover artists, jingle writers, folly artists and many more.

Options: cert IV (1yr), diploma (1yr), advanced diploma (2yrs), bachelor (3yrs)

NSW

Australian Institute of Music, Illawarra Institute of TAFE, JMC Academy, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Sydney Institute, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE

QLD

Central Queensland University, Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, James Cook University, JMC Academy, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Southbank Institute of Technology, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE

SA

Music SA, SAE Institute/QANTUM, TAFE SA, University of Adelaide

TAS

TasTAFE

VIC

Australian College of the Arts, Australian Institute of Music, Bendigo TAFE, Box Hill Institute of TAFE, JMC Academy, Northern College of the Arts and Technology, Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Victoria University, Wodonga Institute of TAFE

WA

Castlerock Institute of Music, Central Institute of Technology, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

MUSIC BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT COURSES

Themes: professional communication and practice, entertainment marketing, accounting fundamentals, copyright and publishing, event and festival management, international touring concepts, licensing and branding, project-funding, artist management, contract management, occupational health and safety, and more.

Suits: anyone looking to learn more about business issues common to the music industry. Roles include promoters, managers, venue operators, accountants, tour operators, publicists, concert promoters, even managers and many more.

Options: cert IV, diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor.

NSW

Australian Institute of Music, JMC Academy, Sydney Institute, University of NSW, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE

NT

Charles Darwin University

QLD

Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, JMC Academy, Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, Queensland University of Technology, Southbank Institute of Technology, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE

SA

Music SA

VIC

Australian College of the Arts, Australian Institute of Music, Box Hill Institute of TAFE, JMC Academy, Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, RMIT University

WA

Castlerock Institute of Music, Central Institute of Technology, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

MUSIC

Themes: music history, music theory, music technology, instrument studies, music industry studies, music arrangement and composition, live sound and production, music performance, musicology, ethnomusicology, rhythmic studies and much more.

Suits: anyone looking to study the theory and performance of music. Roles include musicians, music teachers, composers, conductors and more.

Options: cert II, cert III, diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor.

TAS

TasTAFE
University of Tasmania

NT

Charles Darwin University

QLD

Central Queensland University, Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, Griffith University, JMC Academy, Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE, Queensland University of Technology, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Southbank Institute of Technology, Southern Cross University, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE, Tropical North Queensland TAFE, University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland

SA

Music SA, SAE Institute/QANTUM, TAFE SA, University of Adelaide

VIC

Australian Guild of Music Education, Australian Institute of Music, Box Hill Institute of TAFE, JMC Academy, Monash University, MWT Institute, Northern College of the Arts and Technology, Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, SAE Institute/QANTUM, University of Melbourne, Victoria University

WA

Australian Catholic University, Australian College of the Arts, Castlerock Institute of Music, Central Institute of Technology, Edith Cowan University, Illawarra Institute of TAFE, SAE Institute/QANTUM, University of Western Australia, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

LIVE PRODUCTION, THEATRE AND EVENTS (TECHNICAL OPERATION)

Themes: audio visual equipment, event management, lighting, live productions, multimedia, sound production, stage management, theatre and events, theatre industry, theatre technology and many more.

Options: cert IV, diploma, advanced diploma.

Suits: anyone looking to study the tasks and themes associated with running theatre productions and other live entertainment events. Roles: producers, directors, playwrights, scenic designers, lighting designers, show control designers, technical directors and more.

NSW

SAE Institute/QANTUM, Sydney Institute, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE

QLD

Entertainment Technical Event Training College, Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, SAE Institute/QANTUM, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE

SA

TAFE SA

TAS

TasTAFE

VIC

Northern College of the Arts and Technology, Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, SAE Institute/QANTUM, University of Ballarat

WA

Castlerock Institute of Music (tech production), Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

VENUE, EVENTS AND EVENT MANAGEMENT

Themes: professional communication, entertainment business, professional practice, entertainment marketing, event management principles, promotion and publicity, creative content design and distribution, touring concepts, licensing and branding, and more.

Suits: anyone looking to learn how to manage venues and run events. Roles include event planners, event managers, venue operators and proprietors, tour bookers, booking agents and many more.

Options: cert IV, diploma, advanced diploma, bachelor

ACT

Canberra Institute of Technology

NSW

APM College of Business and Communication, Hunter Institute, Illawarra Institute of TAFE, Martin College, McCleay College, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, William Blue College of Hospitality Management

QLD

APM College of Business and Communication, Entertainment Technical Event Training College, Martin College

SA

Music SA, TAFE SA, University of South Australia

VIC

Holmesglen TAFE, LaTrobe University, MWT Institute, Swinburne University of Technology, William Angliss TAFE, Wodonga Institute of TAFE

WA

Australian College of Applied Education, Central Institute of Technology, Challenger Institute of Technology, Curtin University, Polytechnic West, West Coast Institute.