

22 September 2020

Underground art — music and Brisbane’s youth culture

The poster art of Brisbane’s subversive youth culture of the late 1970s and ‘80s will be explored in a new exhibition at State Library of Queensland opening 28 September.

Cut Copy: Brisbane music posters 1977–87 uncovers rare handmade music posters and handbills that promoted the small, often underground, independent music scene of the time.

For teenagers living in Brisbane at the time, organising or attending live music events could be a difficult and sometimes dangerous proposition with authorities placing restrictions on live music venues and band activities.

In bedrooms and cheap rehearsal spaces, disaffected teenagers plugged in cheap or hand-me-down amps, tuned their guitars and cranked up the volume. Along with this DIY attitude toward music-making came a similar approach to music promotion.

Money was often scarce, so poster production involved hand-cut stencils, line drawing, hand-lettering and late-night kitchen table screen-printing sessions.

These techniques embodied the determination of Brisbane’s young people to pursue creative lives within the conservative social and political landscape of the time.

Bands featured in the exhibition’s posters and handbills include: The Saints, The Riptides, The Go-Betweens, The Leftovers, The Upsets, Razar and The Black Assassins.

Quotes from State Librarian and CEO Vicki McDonald:

“Cut Copy demonstrates the extraordinary diversity of our collections and the different ways State Library documents Queensland music history.

“Visitors are invited to immerse themselves in the era’s DIY design and the bands and venues of Brisbane’s independent music scene at a pivotal moment in the city’s history.

“The exhibition explores how the city’s conservative climate sparked a rebellious youth culture grounded in DIY creativity and underground music.”

Cut Copy: Brisbane music posters 1977–87

28 Sep – 18 Apr

Open daily | Free entry

Bookable sessions between 10am–1pm and 2–5pm.

slq Gallery, level 2 | State Library of Queensland, Cultural Centre, South Bank

slq.qld.gov.au/whats-on | #slqCutCopy