Abstract

East of Everything is a contemporary Australian television drama series shot on the New South Wales North Coast in and around the popular tourist destination of Byron Bay. In addition to utilising the region’s visual beauty – a cinematographic technique commonly employed in Australian drama – East of Everything has harnessed the musical culture that has developed in the area over time. The series relies on its soundtrack to create a sense of place and illuminate the program’s dramatic progression. This article will explore the use of music to ‘place’ East of Everything, examining the incorporation of pre-existing and specially commissioned material. I will show that the sonic representation of place through music has been key to the program’s success, and that place in the Australian drama is revealed sonically to be as diverse, emotive and striking as the region’s visual landscape.

Keywords

Television, Soundtrack, Australian music, Byron Bay, Surfing Culture

Introduction

Billingham (2000) argues that television drama often relies on the creation of ‘geo-ideological’ relationships to attract audiences. As part of his evaluation of various contemporary British and American television drama series, he suggests that many successful programs created a “dialectic of literal notions of place and location, transposed with their ideological marking, signing and delineation” (2000: 1). For Billingham the depiction of place was central to the success of these television texts, with the program’s target audience engaged as visuals and sound worked in “symbiotic tandem” to create an “imagined city” (2000: 119). One example Billingham described was the representation of 1990s Manchester in the UK’s Channel 4 drama Queer as Folk. Noting the program’s use of a particular type of music, the “pounding, rhythmic signature theme which is percussive and punctuated by a celebrity whoop of anticipated pleasure” (2000: 120), Billingham argues that the aural and visual signifiers of place were key to securing the program’s target audience, in the case of Queer as Folk, a mostly young, queer (and queer-friendly) demographic.

Billingham argues that the representation of place is central to television drama’s success, with the creation of a “longed-for performative utopia” (2000: 119) key to attracting audience attention. This description provides a useful analytical
framework to consider how television drama functions generally and, for my purposes, specifically the debut season of *East of Everything*. A contemporary Australian television drama shot in and around the Northern New South Wales (NSW) town of Byron Bay and screened on ABC TV in 2008, *East of Everything* had an older target audience, namely adults aged in their 40s to 60s. Also, like *Queer as Folk*, *East of Everything* depicted place in a way that would appeal directly to this audience, with the NSW North Coast shown also as a performative utopia, a place that encouraged its inhabitants to retain their links to the youth cultures they were once engaged with in the 1960s and 70s. As a contemporary Australian drama, *East of Everything* tells the story of a family who are reunited after the death of the family matriarch, with lead character Art (Richard Roxburgh) returning to his home town after years away to re-establish ties with his family, former friends and long estranged teenaged son. In this article I will analyse music's role in representing place in this way but also, more broadly, music’s role in *East Of Everything*’s attempt to establish a viable alternative to the Australian urban production capitals of Sydney and Melbourne. I will do this by examining music that was both sourced from pre-existing material, and specially commissioned for the series.²

**Importance of Place for Australian Television Production**

Connections to place have been widely acknowledged as beneficial for Australian creative industries, with the depiction of place able to characterise Australian film in the international marketplace. As Gibson described,


Gibson’s historical survey remains relevant to discussions of more recent Australian screen productions, with film and television particularly continuing to reference place as a way to ‘mark’ Australian identity³ and therefore engage audience interest. Film models such as Gibson’s remain relevant to contemporary television drama, so much so that importance of Australian community support for television and film production was debated in NSW State Parliament on 18 June 2008. *East of Everything* was named during this parliamentary session as an example of a production that had been particularly well received within the local community where the production had been based, a reception in part resulting from the producer’s consultation with residents (Parliament of NSW, 2008: 68).

*East of Everything* has been expressly connected with Byron Bay since the project was in pre-production. The first series was financed in conjunction with ABC TV, production company Twenty20, Film Finance Australia and a $100m Regional Filming Funding grant by the New South Wales (NSW) government – a coalition of financiers who expected that the production would provide residents of the NSW North Coast region with many opportunities. This expectation was demonstrated

---

¹ The ABC is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the publicly funded Australian national broadcaster.
² This article will focus on the debut season of *East of Everything*, however a second season has also been completed and screened in Australia on ABC TV during 2009.
³ While there are various examples of this, Baz Luhrmann’s *Australia* (2008) is the most obvious recent one.
when the NSW Member for Tweed Neville Newell officially launched *East of Everything* a few months before filming began. Therefore, he was particularly supportive of *East of Everything*'s production in the area, describing it as “a wonderful opportunity for these highly accomplished professionals to be able to work in their local region” (ibid). Newell's praise for *East of Everything*'s shooting location was echoed by the show's producer Fiona Eagger who, Newell explained, would “relocate to the Northern Rivers Region from Melbourne for the production” (ibid). Eagger identified the decision to film in Byron Bay as part of her long term plan to develop industrial infrastructure in the area, something that those marketing *East of Everything* capitalised on, as 'Made in Byron Bay' was displayed in red on the program’s subsequent CD and DVD releases. In addition, by shooting in and around Byron Bay, the financiers could reasonably expect an increase in tourist activity in the area, an effect known as 'film induced tourism', that is, a situation in which “the pervasiveness of film” (Beeton, 2005: 3) may be a direct catalyst for tourism. As such, place was a central part of the production of *East of Everything* even before filming commenced, as it was through connections to place that the series was able to secure funding.

Beginning with a Theme Song...

Added to the financial benefits of shooting in Northern NSW, the producers of *East of Everything* chose this location because of its potential for artistic expression. As Eagger explained,

*Ten years ago [writer and producer] Deb Cox had a dream to shoot SeaChange in Byron Bay and at that point she was told that it wasn’t possible. Deb didn’t give up and East of Everything is the realisation of that desire.* (Member for Tweed Press Release, 9/3/07)

Eagger's description above outlines the role place has in her career and, in citing *SeaChange*, the critically acclaimed ABC drama from the 1990s, Eagger invited audiences and the wider public to draw comparisons between the established program and the then yet-to-be-released *East of Everything*. However unlike

---

4 Tweed is the New South Wales State Government electorate that covers Byron Bay and its surrounds.
5 Newell explained, “East of Everything will employ more than 65 local crew, 85 cast members and around 200 extras for the 15-week production period” (Member for Tweed Press Release, 9/3/07).
6 This emphasis on Byron Bay's connection to the film industry, both as a shooting location and as a place rich with residents with film industry skills, is also made by the Byron Shire Council as part of its promotion of the region. See in particular ‘Byron Loves Film’ on the Council’s official website (available via http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/Economy/Creative/Film, accessed 20/8/09). See also the site for the screen industry facilitating organisation, Screenworks, at: http://www.screenworks.com.au/.
7 Newell also articulated an expectation that *East Of Everything* would provide opportunities for less specialised industries as well, “The production will also inject millions into the local economy through the use of services like accommodation, catering and construction” (ibid).
8 This symbol is available as mentioned above, as well as on the ABC corporate press release for the series, accessed via www.abc.net.au/abccontentsales/programsalesworldwide/download/EofE.pdf, accessed 10/8/09.
9 In this study Beeton uses the term 'film based tourism' but discusses both film and television texts and shooting locations and notes the retrospective advantage local businesses were able to gain through exposure from *SeaChange* demonstrates the advantage of publicity through such television exposure, as following the success of the series some businesses began to advertise themselves in connection with the show directly, “‘Barwon Heads, the home of SeaChange’” (2005: 72). As Beeton concluded, following a study of audiences of the show as well as locals from Barwon, “the logos and promotional videos and CD soundtracks are also tangible products from the series [SeaChange] that can provide additional destination marketing material” (2005: 67-69).
SeaChange, which, as its name suggests, was centered around the experiences of an urban woman who moved to the coast to change her life, East of Everything uses place as more than a site to locate the program's dramatic action. This specificity began with the show's name and its theme tune, 'A Most Peculiar Place'. Originally released in 2002\textsuperscript{10} by Machine Translations (aka Greg ‘J’ Walker, East of Everything’s musical producer), ‘A Most Peculiar Place’ was edited only minimally to become the program’s theme. As Donnelly maintains, title themes provide product differentiation within a crowded arena of competing television programs. They provide essential branding [and therefore facilitate] instant recognition of the forthcoming programming (2005:145). ‘A Most Peculiar Place’ functions for East of Everything in the way Donnelly describes. The song’s introduction provides ‘product differentiation’ immediately as its use of eastern inspired instrumentation and singing style, repeating the song’s main melodic hook, is accompanied by handclaps and guitar. As such, the song sonically stands out, as it deviates from the popular convention of using mainstream western rock and pop songs as television theme tunes.\textsuperscript{11} The verses feature a smooth and relatively unadorned style of the main male vocal, and are in contrast with the clear delivery of the song’s lyrics:

\begin{quote}
And what will you do who have travelled so far
divided by light, your lucky star
the memory, a taste
of how you really are
in a most peculiar place.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

Like Donnelly’s description of the use of The Who song ‘Who Are You’ (1978) as “a reference to the narrative’s search” in contemporary drama CSI: Criminal Investigation (2005: 145-6), the lyrics of ‘A Most Peculiar Place’ also refer to East of Everything’s main narrative. The emphasis on the final lyric, the ‘peculiar place’, serves as a musical clue to the way place is represented in the program.

Walker’s music creates a sonic branding for East of Everything. Using ‘A Most Peculiar Place’ as a musical style guide, Walker described the music he’d been commissioned to compose for the show as a “kind of cousin” to work he’d done previously, with his composition from the television program undertaken using tools that were “part of the palate of things that I had been composing with, you know, ukuleles and sitars and Chinese violins and... things that you just don’t hear that often in a [television] soundtrack”.\textsuperscript{13} Walker explained that he composed music for the program “as part of a collaborative process with the filmmakers”, and that music was used to help achieve the series’ overall artistic vision: “when I got the job one of the first things we talked about was that we wanted to create this fairly exotic feeling for the show”. As the program used Australian actors well known to Australian audiences,\textsuperscript{14} and a relatively familiar range of characters (centred around two brothers, Art and Vance, and their relationship since the

\textsuperscript{10} Walker first released ‘A Most Peculiar Place’ in 2002 on the Machine Translations album Happy (Spunk Records).
\textsuperscript{11} As Donnelly argued, that “pop songs have proven themselves easily assigned as television program themes” (2005: 145), continuing to discuss the use of music by The Smiths, The Who and Portishead in television soundtracks.
\textsuperscript{12} The song’s full lyrics are available at www.machinetranslations.org/lyrics/happy.htm (accessed 10/08/09).
\textsuperscript{13} All quotations by Walker, unless otherwise cited, are extracted from telephone interview with Walker by the author, 6 August 2009.
\textsuperscript{14} Stars such as Susie Porter, well known for her roles in TV series such as RAN: Remote Area Nurse, East West 101, features such as Little Fish (Rowan Woods, 2005) and international productions, and Richard Roxburgh who starred in Moulin Rouge! (Baz Lurhmann, 2001) and many television productions
death of their mother), the show’s location was key to achieving this ‘exotic’ sense. As Walker continued,

The two main elements are the cinematography… capturing the landscape of Northern New South Wales which is a very striking and beautiful part of the world, and then the music as well, to… give it this sense of the exotic but also… to signal to people that this show’s a little bit different to your average drama in terms of what happens in it, and the settings and so forth.

Walker’s emphasis on the interplay between music with a “sense of the exotic” and the program’s “striking” cinematography demonstrates how place was constructed within the series, a place that would be called Broken Bay within the program’s diegetic world but that was modelled on shooting locations in and around Byron Bay. In order to write music to fulfil this production brief, Walker relocated to Byron Bay to observe the local music scene. During this time he observed,

Byron Bay’s a really complicated place and I think the music reflects that. There are things about Byron Bay culture that are really tokenistic… But then there’s a more sophisticated element as well and you’ve got layers and layers from there. Even things like the surf community, there’s an aspect of it that’s totally consumer culture, and then there’s an aspect of it that’s totally counter-cultural and underground and all those things collide up there.

Most telling here is Walker’s acknowledgement of Byron Bay as a place that is culturally heterogeneous. His description of a place where things ‘collide’ provides a useful way of considering the range of music performed at Byron, music that is experienced often as part of the international festivals held there, including the East Coast Blues and Roots Festival and mainstream rock and pop oriented Splendour in the Grass, as well as the smaller community events such as the Byron Bay Arts and Music Festival. However the word ‘collision’ also provides a framework to consider how Walker created music for the show. Walker indicated that his approach was unusual in the television soundtrack industry, “for me it’s great because I don’t have to… do sort of boring blues soundtracks. I can explore some interesting musical terrain on this show and I think that’s ended up being a good thing”. This comment is consistent with Donnelly’s description of the almost uniform use of incidental music is British soap operas, whereby music that is generically similar is used in a number of similar types of programs (2005: 115-8). Walker’s relief at being able to move away from such conventional soundtrack composition and explore his own music making while writing for East of Everything is something I will explore below, as well as his claim about the influence of being on location while writing, “it’s been really important to be up there [in Byron Bay] and to sort of let the ambience of the place soak in a bit, and I think you can really hear that in the music”.

15 There is an actual Broken Bay in New South Wales about 50kms north of Sydney, however, as indicated by the show’s producers, the Broken Bay in East of Everything is fictional. As producers Deborah Cox and Roger Monk explained just prior to the show’s first broadcast, “[East of Everything] is not a documentary and [creating a fictional town] does buffer you - you can take more liberties… We didn’t want the audience thinking ‘that must be a real councillor or a real property developer’ - they’re all fictional” (Cox and Monk quoted in Munro, 2008: 3). Byron Bay was also renamed Broken Bay out of respect for the customs of local aboriginal people in the shooting location. As declared in each episode’s credits, “Out of respect for the traditional owners, the Arakwal, no sites of spiritual significance have been referred to or depicted.”
Walker’s connection to place is highlighted when he makes a performance cameo in episode five of the series. Appearing as a local songwriter in a bar performing his song ‘Don't Give Up on Me Just Yet’, Walker features during the scene in which Eve (Susie Porter) and Lara (Leah Vandenberg) talk about their relationship experiences with Art (Richard Roxburgh). The music begins by providing a diegetic background for the conversation in the bar, and continues to play non-diegetically as the shot moves to different characters and locations. As the performance of the song continues, we see Art and Josh (Craig Stott) camped under the Broken Bay sky and they appear to be playing along with Walker on their battered acoustic guitars. Finally we see Dale (Tom Budge) sitting alone in his caravan while also apparently playing along with the song. In this way Walker is not only seen performing in Broken Bay but his music seems to travel across the imagined region as the characters in their various locations appear to play along with him. Here music is used to directly connect the characters and different narrative arcs of the story.

A Northern NSW Sound?

In Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place (2003) Connell and Gibson provide a comprehensive examination of the relationship between popular music and place. Byron Bay features in the book as a prominent case study, a place that has,

*become mythical in Australia as a site of ‘alternative culture’, supplemented in recent waves of counter-urbanisation that have brought many former urban residents to the area searching for natural beauty, sub-tropical beauty and the ‘creative’ arts scene.* (2003: 261)

Gibson continued to explore Byron’s cultural history, and particularly its musical history, in subsequent studies. In a more recent article he argues for the use of the term ‘region’ when considering Byron and its surrounds,

‘Region’ is a word used to describe both areas large and small, from a sub-national or sub-state area through to the multinational. In Australia, the ‘region’ often, but not always, refers to a sub-state level geographical area containing patchworks of towns, villages, rural and ‘wilderness’ areas. (2009: 62)

Gibson acknowledges some key problems with the idea of region, particularly noting that, “there are official boundary definitions for Australian regions in statistical and economic discourses... [yet] at other times ‘regions’ are popularly constructed in the media and cultural discourse” (ibid), however, he persists with the term as a way of attempting to articulate the diversity of Byron Bay and its surrounds. Most important for Gibson is how region is performed rather than how it is constructed discursively, and he acknowledges that he presents “two sometimes contradictory, yet not inconsistent storylines” (ibid) of the Far North Coast region that directly engage music and place. Writing about music in the area over the last twenty years, Gibson concludes,

*There is not ‘regional music’ of the Far North Coast, no single regional ‘sound’: but there is an active set of technological, social and economic networks through which regional music is performed, ‘fixed’ in relational space, and yet always made geographically fluid.* (2009: 78)
Gibson’s identification of Byron Bay’s relationship with networks of music provides an appropriate frame to consider the pre-existing music that was used in East of Everything. The music featured in the program, which includes folk, pop, rock and even Hawaiian and Asian-inflected song material, was considered to be broadly representative of the musical and ideological traditions of Byron Bay. Stylistically these artists may appear to have little in common, however Walker and the production team’s observation of these musicians in the local Byron Bay music scene qualified them for inclusion. As Jon Stratton noted, while there are often problems attributing “a particular sound and/or lyric and a certain geographical location” (2007: 377), a ‘sense of place’ can still be achieved in an examination of the relationship between music and place by focusing on the “cultural experiences” musicians express in their music (2007: 378).

Connell and Gibson emphasise that “the town [of Byron Bay] has sustained a considerable amount of musical production, far from other Australian rural centres” (2003: 261), a reputation that the producers of East of Everything utilised when creating the program. Walker explained that artists based in the Northern NSW area were given priority on the program’s soundtrack, a strategy employed to help create a sense of authenticity in the depiction of place within the program’s diegesis while also providing a platform for the musicians in more general terms:

... we [the production team] worked with lots of local people in terms of getting stuff for the soundtrack and also in terms of helping them get their songs onto the show as performers in their own right.

Artists included in the first series and as part of the series soundtrack CD included Azo Bell, Sara Tindley, Juzzie Smith, King Curly, Andrew Kidman and Jesse Younan, all of whom were at the time signed to local company Vitamin Records and Distribution, a company that promotes itself as “aiming to break the barrier between record labels, record stores, the artist, and the fan by increasing the flow of communication and personal contact” and, according to the ABC, “provid[es] a rich stream of talent from Byron and the surrounds”. In using local artists featured on a local record label, East of Everything’s producers are linking music and place by utilising already established musical ties to the area. Thus, again, music and its relationship to place is utilised as a way to engage audiences, as the compilation soundtrack CD acts as a marketing tool to promote the television series.

Pre-existing music by Byron Bay related artists was chosen to highlight key points in East of Everything’s storyline with relation to place. For example, Jesse Younan’s songs ‘Forever’ and ‘Queeny’, recorded near Byron Bay and released by Vitamin Records, were featured to suggest a type of spirituality associated with Byron Bay, what Gibson describes as the “distinct cultural ambience” (2009: 63) of the region. In episode 5, ‘Queeny’ accompanies a scene where Bev (Valerie Bader)

---

16 See also Hannan (2003) for more about the musical landscape of the Northern NSW region.
18 Vitamin Records is based in Mullumbimby, about 20 minutes from Byron Bay.
participates in a ceremony with Broken Bay Aboriginal elders. This simple love song features only acoustic guitar and a husky male vocal that bears no specific sonic references to any particular place, and it provides a sonic contrast to the points in the story set near the river in Broken Bay. In previous episodes we have seen Bev, while at the river, attempt to contact her neighbours, some Aboriginal elders of the region. However, the elders remain silent, apparently angry with Bev because of a suicide attempt she made in the lake, an act they considered disrespectful to the land. The scene in episode five is different, as we see Bev and the elders congregate and begin to talk. As the opening lyrics of the song begin, “Come sit by me, my love, and tell me your troubles / come sit by me my sweet and I’ll sing you a lullaby”, a reconciliation is realised as the elders lead Bev though a healing process at the water’s edge. The scene tells its story without dialogue or other sound, thus leaving the song to provide a commentary for the ceremony while also adhering to the production’s commitment to respecting the real life spiritual significance of the shooting location. In this scene music – rather than dialogue – has helped to indicate the uniqueness of place.

Azo Bell’s music also imbues East of Everything with a sense of the significance of place in the NSW Far North Coast Region. A specialist ukulele player based in Byron Bay, Bell has written and recorded much of his music in the region and, as such, his music has been chosen to signify Northern NSW. Bell’s ukulele instrumental ‘Long Road’ plays in Episode One as Art leaves his brother and returns to their mother’s handmade monument facing the water, digging through the rocks to reveal an inscription he’d made earlier. ‘Long Road’ continues as we see Art running into the water and taking his first swim since he has returned to the Australia (and the hippie resort owned by his mother) after six years living abroad, underlining the relationship between landscape and music as the character literally dives back into the water (and into his former life) in Broken Bay. Bell’s music indicates a place that is uncomplicated and familiar, a theme that runs throughout the series as Art’s character is developed, while also demonstrating the diversity of experience that is often associated with Byron Bay. The choice of instrument for this soundtrack cue evokes a sense of unfamiliarity and place almost immediately for a western viewer. The Ukulele has been widely employed internationally by a variety of musical traditions, yet remains somewhat unusual in comparison with musical instrumentation more often used in television soundtracks based on pop, rock and western art arrangements (Donnelly, 2005), so much so that it has often been used to depict a distinct (if not at times crudely generalised) sense of otherness. By these means, the sound of the ukulele itself draws the viewer’s attention to the drama’s somewhat exotic location.

Going ‘Soul Surfing’

Music is used in East of Everything to highlight a predominant beach culture, a culture that creates another parallel between the actual Byron Bay and the

According to Aboriginal tribal boundaries, Byron Bay is in Bundjalung (Bunjellung) country, which reaches from the northern bank of the Clarence River to Richmond River and inland to Tabulam and Baryulgil.

Bell has played solo and in a variety of groups in and around Byron, and is often described as part of the Byron Bay musical landscape. See for example the description of his band, The Blue Hulas. As the band emphasise on their website, “Byron Bay’s original and only Aloha/Hawaiian-style band regularly charm listeners from Byron Bay to the Gold Coast & beyond” (www.bluehulas.com, accessed 25/8/09).

The song was originally released in 2004 on Bell’s album independently released album Small Time, distributed by Vitamin Records. See www.vitamin.net.au/Azo%20Bell/Small%20Time/tracksdefault.asp?ai=51 for details, accessed 25/08/09.

For example see Slobin’s description of the methodologies of film score artist Max Steiner, who equated Ukulele with any need to produce “Hawaiian-inflected score for the main title” (Slobin, 2008: 6).
fictional Broken Bay. Within the show, the beach is represented as a stable and unifying location, a place where the characters, both local residents and visitors to Broken Bay, are shown to be (relatively) at peace. Beyond these general associations of wellbeing, the show draws on the Far North NSW region’s alternative culture as it was established particularly with the Nimbin Aquarius Festival in 1973. Like the town of Nimbin (which is located inland of Byron Bay in Far North NSW), Byron Bay was established during the 1970s as a desirable destination to accommodate people with “the trend toward ‘dropping out’ – escaping the capital cities in order to migrate to the North Coast – [and as such it] attracted permaculture enthusiasts, surfing subcultures, artists, musicians and large numbers of itinerant unemployed young people” (Gibson and Connell, 2003: 170). This history is described throughout East of Everything with dialogue but it is through music that an audience of a certain age was expected to engage with this nostalgic depiction of place and cultural moment.

In the final scene of the first episode G. Wayne Thomas’ ‘Morning Of The Earth’ is played almost in full. The song, which was the theme for the 1972 surfing film of the same name (directed by Albert Falzon), serves as an immediate musical signifier of a particular type of relationship between surfing and broader Australian beach culture. As Beattie (2001) argued of the film, Morning of the Earth had “the ability to effectively represent the emergent soul surfing lifestyle in a ‘psychedelic’ style that resonated with the content” (2001: 339), a representation that Australian viewers now in their 40s, 50s and 60s would likely recognise. This use of music is an example of Donnelly’s description of using “popular music as a vernacular, with historical as well as significatory and musical connotations” (2005: 146) to communicate to television audiences, a practice that is also well established in film. As Shumway (1999) described with reference to a number of films, including The Big Chill (Lawrence Kasdan, 1983), popular music is used to create a nostalgic tie-in between audiences and song. Shumway argued that screen producers use music in this way to engage audiences, with “the assumption that the audience will recognize the artist, the song, or, at the minimum, a familiar style” (Shumway, 1999: 37). For audiences who would remember its original release particularly, ‘Morning of the Earth’ would also serve the East of Everything’s producers as a tie-in between new and old cultural artefacts.

As a film Morning Of The Earth is symbolic of a particular time and culture in Australian history although it depicts an attitude towards surf culture that was quite unlike its international counterparts. As Paul Byrnes articulated,

*Part of the attraction of the film is the way that director Albert Falzon creates a romantic mythology around the act of surfing. ‘Soul surfing’ (as opposed to competitive surfing) was not a new concept, or debate, but Morning of the Earth offered a kind of visual manifesto for its would-be followers... The songs, by both popular and more underground musicians,*

---

27 For example, during Art’s homecoming and eventual acceptance of Broken Bay, in episode one he finds Edgar (Glenn Shea) on the beach, and the men comment about their own surfing, as well as their teenaged sons and their relationships to the water. Rather than competing in the surf, here it is shown to be a way of re-establishing the bonds of father and son. Similarly, the romance between Art and Eve is developed as they talk on the beach and arrange to make a date in episode 2.

28 In episode 6 Art’s character details the history of Broken Bay as part of a hearing with the local council in an attempt to have his mother’s property, the Far Out East, heritage listed. Here Art argued that Broken Bay was a place where many different types of people lived over time, from loggers in the 1880s to banana, pig and dairy farmers in the early twentieth century to the 1970s people who “like my parents.... [were] hippies, surfies and lost souls [who] mingled with the locals because they all felt the pull of this very special part of the earth”.
Key to the process of ‘soul surfing’ was a rejection of competitiveness in surfing that had come to be associated with the sport during its rise in popularity in the 1970s. During *East of Everything* several types of ‘soul surfing’ occur, as a number of characters re-evaluate their previous ideologies and visit the beach for inspiration. Most notably, ‘Morning of the Earth’ provides a musical theme for the closing sequences of episode 6 in which we see the reprise of Art’s mother’s wishes expressed via her Will and the reconciliation between Art and Vance, and Art and Josh.

The song begins the series as Art, Josh and Vance (Tom Long) come together to sprinkle their mother’s/grandmother’s ashes over the water. The scene is interspersed with shots of various Broken Bay community members taking to the surf on boards, and concludes with the men releasing the ashes. As the ceremony of releasing the ashes begins, ‘Morning of the Earth’ remains at a constant volume as the dialogue continues, with the song’s lyrics eventually adding to the series theme of conflict resolution. The guitar and string instrumental introduction of the song accompanies the reading of the dead woman’s letter by her grandson Josh, and the lyrics begin just as the reading ends. As Josh reads “p.s. no more fighting” (a direction from the dead woman to her sons and grandson), the first line of ‘Morning of the Earth’ – “The forces of the universe and elements of space” – emphasises the theme of unity. This relationship between the characters’ dialogue and the song continues as the scene progresses. The men on the rock release the ashes as the song’s backing vocals call ‘Halleluiah’. The climatic lyric to the song’s chorus, “It was the morning of the Earth”, sounds and the camera moves high above the men to a wide shot of the water and the rocks and finally the credits, providing a conclusion to the first season and a resolution of much of the conflict during that season. The credits roll as the camera zooms out, the men appear in longer shots, overtaken by imagery of Byron/Broken Bay. The scene thus evokes Gibson’s description of Byron as “beach-orientated, tourist-friendly and marketable” (2009: 63). As such, the first series concludes as it began, with an emphasis on the importance of place as highlighted by music in relation to image.

**Conclusion**

In addition to facilitating the story’s narrative, music is used in *East of Everything* to create a clear parallel between a fictional Broken Bay and the show’s shooting location, Byron Bay. This relationship helped to promote industry in Byron Bay, a key factor in the financing of the program, but also served as an effective television device to attract a target audience. Music both sourced from, and inspired by, the NSW Far North Coast region was fundamental to creating the fictional Broken Bay, the ‘peculiar place’ central to the narrative within *East of Everything* and thus central to creating a drama that would capture the interest of its target audience.

Towards the end of the first series’ last episode Art and his family attend a court hearing to argue the historical significance of Broken Bay. Presenting a narrative that Australian viewers may recognise as similar to Byron Bay, Art’s description is idealistic and highly stylised, an example of a “longed-for performative utopia”

---

30 See image of Art walking on the beach on the Screen Sound journal cover for this issue (courtesy of….).
(2000: 119) like those Billingham described in his study of television drama and place. Art described Broken Bay as a “very particular place, something that the traditional owners have always understood but that some of us still seem to be struggling to come to terms with”. This monologue tied together many of the histories of Byron Bay that were explored during the series. While these descriptions of place are offered expressly through dialogue in the series’ finale, music provided a powerful evocation of place throughout the preceding episodes.

In *East of Everything* music is used to mark place deliberately, creating general ‘feelings’ of Broken Bay as a town with a surfing and alternative lifestyle culture while also using specific songs and artists to ensure that the drama’s fictional location relates to the actual shooting locale. By commissioning new musical work for the drama as well as utilising existing material, the producers of *East of Everything* feature music as a key storytelling device in the contemporary Australian drama, with audiences able to engage with music from a variety of positions. For older audiences, the use of music such as ‘Morning of the Earth’ functions on a nostalgic level; yet younger and international audiences may also engage with the way music has been chosen to evoke the drama’s main themes of homecoming and family, as well as spirituality tied to landscape. Like international TV drama productions that use music to evoke and create a sense of place, in *East of Everything* Australian musicians and songs have been chosen specifically to create a system of sonic references that emphasise place and its importance.

Acknowledgements
The author would like to thank the referees of this journal for their patience, in depth analysis and insightful suggestions when considering the drafts of this article. The combination of industry and scholarly advice was extremely useful and highly appreciated.

Bibliography


