



The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union
Autumn 2020
theMU.org

Eliza Shaddad

A singer-songwriter with a global view and a fluid, graceful sound

Black Lives Matter

Assessing the renewed drive to fight racial inequality in music

Income Streams

How revenues for musicians have shifted across the decades

Getting Creative

Tips and techniques on how to boost and manage creativity

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**Musicians'
Union**



Keeping Up The Fight

How your Union is lobbying government, fighting to get the voices of the forgotten freelancers heard, and battling to protect your employment rights



Photo: Ioanna Durrderidge

Horace Trubridge,
General Secretary

As I write, we wait with baited breath for news on how the £1.57bn that the chancellor has earmarked for the arts and culture sector will be distributed. Concern is growing that the money will simply be used to mothball institutions and hallowed halls until such time as they can safely and profitably reopen. This would in effect place the music profession in an induced coma for an indefinite period, and offers little comfort for the performers and creators that these institutions require if they are to get back to pre-C-19 production levels.

The need for a sector specific financial support package for the music industry's freelance and salaried community has never been more urgent. With the winding up of the JRS and the SEISS in October and the many, many musicians and others from the sector who failed to qualify for either of the Chancellor's schemes, a bail-out package is essential.

We are involved in daily meetings with civil servants and politicians from the DCMS and the Treasury, and our number one priority is some kind of accessible financial support package for musicians to see them through to when pre-C-19 work opportunities might resume. We are not alone. The TUC, Equity, the GMB, Prospect and BECTU all represent members who have lost almost all – if not all – of their work due to the shutdown of the live music sector, and the call for financial help couldn't be louder or more persistently made. But still the government refuses to act.

Notable achievements

The most frustrating aspect of this intransigence is that we cannot even use traditional Union methods of leverage such as withdrawing the workforce as there is no bloody work to withdraw from! Despite the lack of movement on a support package, we have made some notable achievements in relation to the published guidance. Our persistence saw the removal of references to the use of recordings in performances and the removal of limits to the size of wind and brass groups. The relaxation of live music outdoors and the pilots for indoor performance all came about as a result of our work with the DCMS.

We have done what we can to help members directly in paying out over £1m from our hardship fund and introducing a three month subs holiday for those hardest hit by the lockdown. This is much more than most unions have been able to do. We have encouraged our industry partners to help, which has resulted in generous donations into the hardship fund of £200,000 from PPL and £72,000 from the Mackintosh Foundation as well as many individual donations from companies, members and MU supporters alike. But so much more needs to be done. It is now the job of this government to step in and save the workforce. Without a sector

“More needs to be done. It is now the job of this government to step in and save the workforce”

specific financial package that can sustain the workforce through to better times this government can kiss goodbye to the £5.2bn that the UK music industry is worth to the economy, and the unquantifiable added value that our world leading talent brings to this country. Write to your MP, shout it from the rooftops – only hard cash for the workforce will save our industry, not grants to maintain bricks and mortar.

A big thank you

Finally, in these most terrible times, I pay tribute to your staff and officials who have worked tirelessly around the clock to provide the much needed advice and support. Moreover, I pay tribute to the tenacity and resilience of you, the members, who have shown remarkable fortitude in the face of such adversity. Your strength gives us strength, as we continue to strive towards better times.

Very best wishes
Horace Trubridge



TO HEAR MORE FROM HORACE,
VISIT [THEMU.ORG](https://www.themu.org)

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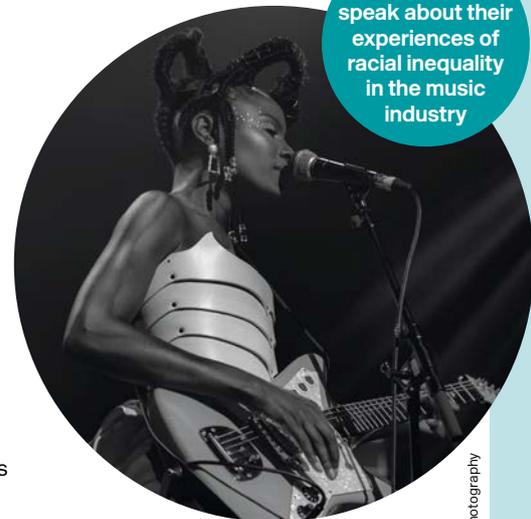


Photo: Luca Viola Photography

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MU Contributors



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Neil is an experienced journalist in broadcasting and print. A former BBC national newsroom assistant editor, he now writes on music and the media. **p34**



Roy Delaney

Roy has written for *Metal Hammer*, *Melody Maker* and TV's *Tipping Point*, and is the lead singer and drummer with the two-piece punk rock band Hacksaw. **p47**



Will Simpson

Will has contributed to a range of music magazines, including *Total Guitar*, *Guitarist* and *Mixmag*. He has also published the book *Freedom Through Football*. **p30**



Neil Crossley

A journalist and editor who has written for *The Independent*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times*. Neil also fronts the band Furlined. **p42**



Henry Yates

Henry is a freelance writer from Gloucestershire who has written for titles as diverse as *Classic Rock*, *Total Guitar*, *NME* and *Record Collector*. **p20 & 38**



CORONAVIRUS HARDSHIP FUND To find out if you're eligible to apply for a £200 support grant from the MU, go to musiciansunion.org.uk/HardshipFund

frontline

Autumn 2020

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians.

Update On Touring In EU Post-Brexit

Report by Naomi Pohl

The MU continues to lobby for musicians to be able to tour easily and with minimal admin throughout the EU post-Brexit. More than 82,000 people have now signed our petition calling for a Musicians' Passport.

The current UK position in the free trade negotiations with the EU means that carnets could be required – even for musicians travelling with their own instruments – and performers are not explicitly covered in the draft agreement.

However, there is still time for us to exert influence in the drafting process, and [we are working with UK Music](#) and the [Association of British Orchestras](#) to do exactly that. The draft trade agreement provides for short term business visitors to work for 90 days in any 180 day period and this would be sufficient for the majority of MU members.

We are lobbying for the following:

The continued ability for musicians and crew from the EU to tour and perform here, including as part of unpaid showcase events, with minimal admin; The continued ability for UK musicians and crew to work and tour across multiple EU territories with minimal admin and with a single process in place, i.e. no territorial variations; No double taxation for UK musicians working in the EU and no AI forms; No carnets for musicians travelling into and around the EU with their own instruments and equipment; The ability to sell



UK musicians may need work permits to play events such as the Umbria Jazz Festival

Photo: Michele Castellani / Alamy Stock Photo

merchandise at gigs when on tour in the EU.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 crisis has taken the spotlight and time away from the trade negotiations as far as the government is concerned, and it is difficult to get access to the negotiators. However, we know this is a crucial issue for our members and for businesses which rely on EU talent visiting the UK. We will keep lobbying government officials and MPs in order to ensure our points are reflected in further drafting.

Many thanks to those members who have signed the MU petition on this issue. If you have not done so, please do join us here: tinyurl.com/tour-pet

“This is a crucial issue for our members and for businesses which rely on EU talent visiting the UK”

The Musicians' Union

Lobbying Update

The government response to the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of its effect on musicians remains woefully inadequate, despite the headline announcements and figures. This, coupled with the delay to the expected return of indoor live music and the postponement of the pilot schemes that the MU was due to be involved in, have been a real disappointment. While the safety of members and the public is of course paramount, the MU has called the government out on its failure to help musicians to survive this period of income loss, and has asked the secretary of state for culture, Oliver Dowden, to properly engage with the music industry to solve the following problems:

- The £1.57bn cultural fund is going almost exclusively towards helping venues and theatres to survive while forgetting the workforce
- The SEISS and furlough schemes are due to end imminently, but most musicians are not yet able to return to work
- 38% of MU members never qualified for either of the schemes in the first place



The MU has been lobbying the government over their lack of provisions for the music industry

Photo: eye65.pix / Alamy Stock Photo

While the government has been reluctant to engage with the industry, the Shadow secretary of state for culture, Jo Stevens, has had regular meetings with the MU and raised a number of urgent questions in the House of Commons. On one such occasion more than 30 MPs spoke in parliament [asking for the gaps in SEISS to be plugged](#). Now we just need the government to act, and the MU will continue to press for this on a daily basis. We sincerely thank all members who are helping

by pressing their own MPs. The Musicians' Union is also [pressing the government for clarity on the position of musicians](#) given our upcoming departure from the EU. We are asking ministers to make changes to the draft Free Trade Agreement to ensure that touring is not adversely affected, but there are concerns that time is running out. Please visit [our campaigns page on the website](#) for information on how you can get involved in our lobbying work.

Horace Trubridge – Celebrating 30 Years Working For The MU

This autumn it will be 30 years since General Secretary Horace Trubridge began work as a full-time MU official. We asked the people that he's worked with and alongside to give their thoughts on this major milestone:

"Congratulations and thank you Horace for 30 years service to the MU! You've had an extraordinary career, rising to the top first as a musician and then as a trade unionist. But most of all you're one of the good guys, and we're lucky to have you at the helm in these difficult times."

Dave Rowntree, Blur

"Horace was an established official when I appeared on the scene, but we immediately developed a strong and lasting rapport. I was delighted when he joined the secretariat

and he became a crucial player in the reorganisation and the modernisation of the Union. I wish him good luck for the remainder of his term of office as General Secretary."

John F. Smith, Chair PPL, President of FIM

"Horace is a skilled musician and a committed trade unionist, and I have been privileged to call him a friend. When you are in a room with Horace, you know he will speak his mind with passion and from knowledge and experience."

Christine Payne, General Secretary, Equity

"I have really enjoyed working with Horace over the last 15 years and have witnessed first-hand what an effective and passionate advocate he is for performers. He has an excellent knowledge of the broader music

industry and good relationships throughout, all of which help Horace to deliver."

Peter Leatham, Chief Executive Officer PPL

"Congratulations, Horace, on thirty years with the mighty MU. Here's to the fight for a fair deal for all working people."

Frances O'Grady, TUC General Secretary

"He has been a tremendous asset to our union and, as his recent appearance before the Commons DCMS Select Committee showed, he remains a brilliant advocate and communicator on behalf of musicians everywhere. Encore!"

Kevin Brennan, MP and MU member

The full range of quotes can be found at [theMU.org](#)



SUPPORT THE MU Encourage your friends and family to sign up as MU Supporters at theMU.org/supportthemu

New Initiative For Disabled Musicians

Disabled musicians and music students in the UK will benefit from the first *Guide To Buying Adaptive Instruments*, a publication launched by Creative United, Normans Musical Instruments, and backed by the Musicians' Union.

This guide provides details of more than eighty products – from bows to one-handed clarinets – that have been designed to make learning and playing musical instruments as accessible as possible for disabled players.

The free guide was created after research by [the Take It Away Consortium](https://www.takeitaway.org/) found that 59% of music retailers were not aware of any adapted instruments, while less than 25% of parents with disabled children said that they knew where to source such equipment. MU General Secretary Horace Trubridge said the MU is proud to support the guide.

“Having an impairment should not be a barrier to learning an instrument, and for too long disabled musicians have struggled to find instruments that work for them,” he said. “The MU believes that this guide will remove one of the barriers disabled musicians face, and encourage the production and wider use of more adaptive instruments.”

To download a free copy visit bit.ly/3aoD51n



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New BAPAM Website Launched

In June this year, [the British Association of Performing Arts Medicine \(BAPAM\)](https://www.bapam.org/) launched its new website, which focuses on creating a user-friendly resource and information hub for all BAPAM's unique specialist health support services for performing arts professionals and students across the UK.

The new site features a diverse range of proactive help for musicians, such as downloadable factsheets and resources including the charity's updated Warm-up Exercises for Musicians, Fit to Sing vocal health tips and a Risk Assessment for freelance performers returning to work during Covid-19. To view the key features of the new website please visit [bapam.org.uk](https://www.bapam.org.uk)

Kelly v The MU

Further to the report on this case in the autumn 2019 edition of *The Musician*, Dominic Kelly's case was heard by the Court of Appeal on 6 May 2020. The union was represented by Oliver Segal QC, and Mr Kelly by David Reade QC. The decision of the Court dismissing Mr Kelly's appeal was handed down on 11 June 2020. The MU are pleased with this outcome.

Mr Kelly was expelled for a period of ten years by the MU in April 2018 following a disciplinary procedure as a result of complaints of sexual harassment and bullying, and threatening behaviour. Mr Kelly brought a complaint to the Certification Officer who decided that the MU Rules did not allow disciplinary process where the alleged offence had taken place more than 28 days before the date of the complaint. The union appealed to the Employment Appeal Tribunal who held that on a proper construction of the union rules it had discretion to instigate disciplinary proceedings occurring more than 28 days before the date of the complaint and overturned the decision of the CO.

Mr Kelly appealed. The Court of Appeal dismissing Mr Kelly's appeal held that “The approach to be applied when construing the language of Union Rulebooks is to consider ‘the reasonable expectation of union members’ and ‘common sense’”. Mr Kelly is seeking permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. The case continues.

Dates For The Diary

18 Sep

What: Guided Meditation Sessions which are open to members and non-members
Where: Online via Zoom
Info: tinyurl.com/yyht97kt

18 Sep

What: Introduction to Feldenkrais Workshop. Learn how to “reset a stressed body”
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/y3g5cp7c

23-26 Sep

What: Brighton Music Conference – electronic music conference
Where: Lower Kings Rd, Brighton, BN1 2LN
Info: tinyurl.com/qu3ypkd

25 Sep

What: Feldenkrais Workshop. Sensing Your Connections. Improve the way you move and play
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/y5x4fsq2

2-10 Oct

What: Sensoria UK festival of music, film, & digital media
Where: Sheffield – various venues across the city
Info: [sensoria.org](https://www.sensoria.org)

Your Voice

This selection of tweets, emails and letters reflects the diverse range of dialogue between the MU and its members.

Great Relief

So glad for all our friends in arts venues and theatres around the country who will finally see some relief in the form of the DCMS rescue package. Great first step says The MU. The government now has to support thousands of artists waiting to get back to work.

Eliza Carthy MBE @elizacarthy

Forgotten Freelancers

Creative industries contribute almost 16% of UK GVA annually and employ more than two million people – many are freelancers who have been ignored and excluded from job retention and self-employed support throughout.

Jo Stevens @JoStevensLabour

Music For All

Don't tell me music isn't worth saving. Music is for every single one of us #LetTheMusicPlay #SaveTheArtsUK

Xan Gill @XanGill

No Support

I've written to the Chancellor Rishi Sunak to make sure no musician is left behind. 38% of MU members are not covered by any government support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Totally Radical dude

@TotallyRadDude



MU members seek clarification on government guidelines for wind and brass playing

Photo: graphicart.net / Alamy Stock Photo

Fireman Louis

I may not be gigging these days, but under the PPE I'm still a Musicians' Union man.

Louis Barabbas

@louisbarabbas

Wind Issues

I have written a letter to Oliver Dowden MP about the government guidelines for wind and brass playing.

Richard Steggall @StegsHorn

Big Question

When will live musicians and performers be able to work again?

Camilla Mathias

@camillaCmathias

Save Live Music

Playing shows is a huge part of what we do. Live music has played a huge part in shaping us. We are asking this government to protect venues, festivals and the workforce now.

Disclosure @disclosure

Help Us

If you're a fellow jobbing musician in the UK, consider emailing Rishi Sunak to ask whether there's a plan to keep the people who make the art afloat as well as the places who put on the things we make.

Trying to stay hopeful.

Laura Kidd Penfriend

@penfriendrocks

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Why royalties for writers and performers are sacrosanct

The money coming in as royalties from bodies like PRS and PPL has been keeping many musicians and composers afloat. Naomi Pohl asks how can we protect this income in the future and ensure that our members get paid?



As I highlighted in my column in the last issue of *The Musician* on our #FixStreaming campaign, the Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated how vital royalties are to the livelihoods of performers and music writers. With the majority of work evaporating overnight, PRS and PPL royalty runs were eagerly anticipated by our members, and both collecting societies stepped up their distribution levels.

PRS for Music also launched its Emergency Relief Fund, while PPL made significant donations to the MU Coronavirus Hardship Fund and Help Musicians UK. The MU played its part in setting up the Hardship Fund, and our Recording and Broadcasting Department focused solely on royalty collection and distribution while the studios were closed, leading to record distributions of over £500,000 to musicians in the first half of 2020.

£23.9m of royalties were advanced to PPL members on 30 April, and CEO Peter Leathem commented: "PPL's collections are an important revenue stream to tens of thousands of performers and recording rightsholders. In these difficult times, it is important that PPL is paying members even more regularly than usual. In addition to our March distribution of £87.6m and our recent financial pledges to industry hardship funds", he added, "bringing forward part of the annual June payment to the end of April will provide further meaningful support for those in need".

PRS for Music made a record £174m royalty distribution to its members at around the same time, marking the highest ever April payment in its history. This included a substantial increase in live performance payments as PRS staff prioritised processing and reduced the average turnaround time to three months. CEO Andrea C Martin said: "We hope that this record April PRS distribution, alongside our recently announced PRS Emergency Relief Fund, will help ease the burden felt by music creators due to Coronavirus. The entire PRS team is working hard to ensure that through this period of significant disruption – especially to live music and UK businesses – we do everything we can to minimise the risk to future distributions."

What's to come?

Future distributions will indeed be impacted by the closure of businesses, which have had their licence fee payments suspended this year. The outlook is far from certain and changing on a regular basis, but PPL currently expects that there could be a decline in UK revenue of up to 30% on 2019. International collections however are expected to remain relatively strong, although there is likely to be some impact in distributions made to PPL from other CMOs from 2021. PRS for Music predicts a 10% decrease in distributions for 2020 compared to 2019, and further reductions from 2021 onwards. This is set against forecasted declines in overall revenues of between 15%-25%, which take into account a fall in public performance revenue, international income, and a drop in TV and radio revenue caused by low advertising sales. Forecasts for

"There are many organisations exploiting our members' rights who seek to undermine royalties either by resisting licensing or seeking buy-outs"



The Royal Opera House sits empty. But the MU hopes that venues like this will programme music by living composers in the immediate aftermath of lockdown

Photo: Jim Ganetty-Clarke. © Royal Opera House

audio-visual streaming services show a likely increase due to improved viewing figures over lockdown, and this should prevent a more dramatic drop in PRS distributions during 2020.

In order to boost performance royalties next year, the MU and Ivors Academy have written to the ABO to ask that they prioritise programming work by living composers. The letter said “whether you can offer commissions of new work, or performances of existing work, any upfront fees and performance royalties will help to sustain composers into 2021 and keep them doing what they do best. One in five MU members told us that they may leave the music profession as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. You can play your part in keeping composers from having to make that very difficult choice.”

Relying on royalties

The fact that royalties have played such a significant role in sustaining many creators and performers this year demonstrates their value,

and that they must be protected. It is crucial that businesses such as music venues, once they reopen fully, are properly licensed, and MU members can play their part by joining the collecting societies, registering their works and performances, and submitting set lists to PRS when they perform live.

Unfortunately, there are many organisations exploiting our members' rights who seek to undermine royalties either by resisting licensing or seeking buy-outs. Some live venues are unlicensed, which prevents songwriters from receiving royalties they are due. We are also very concerned about buy-out deals being forced upon media composers (see my previous article on buy-outs). Plus, we regularly see BPI member record labels issuing agreements that exceed the terms of the BPI/MU Agreement, and make our own royalty collections for performers more difficult. All of these trends, alongside the well-publicised issues with music streaming royalties, undermine our members' ability to make a living.

As we emerge from the Covid-19 crisis and get members back to work, we must pull

together in order to defend and strengthen all income streams available to musicians. We cannot allow contractual terms and working practices to deteriorate, or major corporations to move to buy-outs as standard. The only way to reverse negative trends is collective action.

Protect your income

How you can help us to protect royalties for you and your colleagues:

1. Register with PPL as a performer and/or PRS for Music as a songwriter or composer.
2. Register your performances on recordings with PPL, and your songs or compositions with PRS.
3. Check the venues you perform at are PRS and PPL licensed and ensure set lists are submitted to PRS when you're gigging, via prsforsmusic.com/royalties/report-live-performances
4. Send us copies of any contracts you've signed as a composer so we can keep track of trends.
5. If you are asked to sign a buy-out agreement, let us know **before you sign** so we can help you negotiate better terms. 

Fighting Racial Inequality In Music

The Black Lives Matter movement and Blackout Tuesday have prompted a renewed determination to fight racial inequality within the music industry

Report by Jumi Akinfenwa

The death of George Floyd in Minnesota back in May sparked protests worldwide and led to discussions of police brutality and racial inequality, not just in the US but also over here in the UK. Discussions of institutional racism started in regards to policing and the judicial system but have since extended to other sectors, including the music industry.

With Black musicians spawning many of the styles we hear today, such as house, rock and jazz, many have argued that despite the need for Black music and artists within the music industry, racism is still prevalent. The mainstream resurgence of [the Black Lives Matter movement](#) has resulted in some frank conversations about industry-wide racial inequality, and the tide could be said to be turning. However, there's still some work

to do. Accountability has come in many forms, with [the most prominent being #TheShowMustBePaused](#), a campaign started by US music executives, Brianna Agyemang and Jamila Thomas, in an effort to highlight how much the music industry depends on Black talent, by pausing all work for the day. This was also mirrored by [Blackout Tuesday, a social media campaign](#) that saw users across platforms post pictures of black squares and going offline for the day to focus their efforts on anti-racist activism.

To examine the impact that all of these discussions have had on working Black musicians, *The Musician* spoke to several Black musicians at different stages of their career to find out their thoughts on Black Lives Matter and racism within the music industry, as well as the impact all of this has had on their music.

Lo-Wu

Music Producer, Composer and DJ

"Racism is prevalent in the music industry but if you're not alert to it, you might miss it. There is a systemic side to the racism in the music industry," argues [Lo-Wu, a London-based music producer, composer and DJ](#). "You can go into big labels or publishers and not see many Black people there, even when dealing with Black music. There have been times where I've been invited to companies alongside other composers and I'm the only Black person there, including employees and other musicians."

Lo-Wu points to the word 'urban', as a means to pigeonhole Black artists. "When dealing with Black music, there's the tendency to lump things under that one umbrella term. I sometimes get asked to do 'urban music' with no further explanation about what they're after. Afrobeats is very different to trap but they're both considered to be 'urban!'"

For Lo-Wu, being an independent artist has helped him avoid racist practices and has aided his creativity as a Black artist. "I'm lucky



A speaker at a Black Lives Matter rally in Glasgow, one of many that took place across the country

Photo: Skully/Alamy Live News

Musician Lo-Wu says that there is a distinct lack of Black people working at all levels of the British music industry, and this is an issue that needs addressing

Photo: Ryan Bound



because I'm independent and a lot of the other artists that I collaborate with are independent and Black as well. You don't feel bothered or feel pressured to conform to major label standards. Things have been heavy with all of the protests and talk of racism so it's impacted my creativity. I've had the urge to be much more unapologetic with my work and it has brought more of a focus on community."

"There have been times where I've been invited to companies and I'm the only Black person there"

Lo-Wu

Leon Jean-Marie

Singer, Composer and Sound Designer

"Racism is very much there but is not necessarily menacing compared to other industries," suggests Leon. Previously signed to Island Records, he released [the album *Bent Out Of Shape* in 2007](#). "I was signed by Island Records' president, Darcus Beese, but his team was pretty much all white. There's a blissful ignorance when it comes to the lack of diversity within label teams and that can impact how you're marketed, as I was a Black guy with dreads who didn't fit stereotypes – I didn't rap or sing reggae."

Given that Leon was difficult to pigeonhole, this made it much harder for him to be marketed and found him distancing himself from being a major label artist. "I'm not a confrontational person, so these experiences left me questioning things rather than speaking up at the time. I remember one incident where Radio 1 said that they couldn't playlist my track as they'd filled their →

Leon Jean-Marie says he was turned down for the Radio 1 playlist as the station had met its Black artist quota



Photo: Jade Jean-Marie

MU Actions

MU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Official, John Shortell, pointed to the provisions that The MU has in place to tackle institutional racism within the music industry.

"We represent members who've experienced racism and discrimination. Often these issues are hidden through NDAs, and a lot of artists don't want to speak publicly for fear of damaging their careers. We realise that individual action is unlikely to result in the large scale change, so hope that some of our upcoming projects will contribute to the changes our Black members want to see."

"We're in the very early stages of an exciting project to tackle the lack of Black and minority ethnic musicians in orchestras. We'll be working with Chi-Chi Nwanoku to deliver this, and will be offering direct practical support to Black and minority ethnic orchestral musicians with the long-term goal of increasing diversity in UK orchestras. This project has been inspired by the work of Sphinx Organisation's National Alliance for Audition Support programme."

"The MU are also working with examining boards to increase representation of Black and Asian composers in the music curriculum, and engage more Black and Asian children in music education. Plus, we are partnering with Girls I Rate again this year so they can deliver GIR BLK, an initiative that is focusing on helping to support Black female musicians."

“We need to get rid of this idea that Black women can’t sell or be successful pop stars”

TSHA

quota for Black artists, despite my track being the theme for Wimbledon.”

Now working primarily as a composer, the resurgence of Black Lives Matter has meant that for Leon, his work has inadvertently become more socially and politically conscious, leading to some unlikely collaborations. “All of the incidents in America happened and a mutual friend sent my music to De La Soul who asked to jump on one of my tracks, and it’s now been passed onto Lauryn Hill. These are artists who have all been quite political throughout their career so as a result of everything that’s happened, my work has become more politically driven and a celebration of Blackness.”

Shingai Singer-Songwriter and musician

“The racism within the music industry isn’t really overt but it’s reflected in the structure,” says [singer-songwriter Shingai](#). “I rarely meet people behind the scenes who are Black. I’ve never had a Black tour manager.”

For Shingai, who was formerly the lead singer of [chart topping pop group Noisettes](#), Black artists are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to the administrative side of the business. “I’ve lost count of the number of Black artists that I know who are stuck in really bad contracts. White artists have a lot more people advocating for them legally. The Noisettes for example, are still stuck in a contract so we can’t even post our music online without being hit with copyright claims, despite the fact that I wrote those tracks. There are even artists who have been around for decades who are still on the road as they haven’t made enough money to live off. I was at a jazz festival and saw a Black female artist touring with her whole family. It affects the next generation as these kids have to grow up like this.”

As a Black female artist, Shingai believes that artists like her are often given the short end of the stick, with their mental health left in the balance. “There are different expectations of Black female artists once we’re given opportunities. You’re often treated as a risk when you’ve been signed. If you’re the only Black signing, you’re likely to be on tenterhooks, which affects your mental health. You can’t just enjoy being an artist. You constantly have to prove yourself. We’re made to feel like we should be lucky to be there and work ten times as hard. We have to share all of our opportunities with other artists of colour as well as all non-white artists. For example, I have to fight for a spot at a festival against artists like Ray BLK and Laura Mvula, when we all deserve a space. It’s damaging and really unfair.”

Weyland McKenzie Musician, Rapper and DJ

“The music industry is built on racism. Music gets extracted from Black communities then put out in a watered down way,” suggests [Weyland McKenzie, a musician from East London](#) and member of the collective A Bit Of Everything. “People don’t pay attention to authentically Black grassroots stuff like No Signal until they blow up. They only exist because they were shut out from the mainstream.”

Being a performer, Weyland states that discrimination can often come into play, even if you’re the star of the show. “Security at venues can treat you in a negative way until they find out that you’re the performer. I don’t think I’d be treated the same way if I was a white rockstar. Even in formal business settings, people can really patronise you and talk to you as if you’re a child, just because you’re young and Black.”

In regards to Blackout Tuesday, Weyland suggests that there is a lot more work to be done. “I think there will be a lot of symbolic victories in the short term, but the real work is going to take much longer than people realise. A few hashtags here and there won’t change things. Black Lives Matter hasn’t really impacted my music as it’s not new to me. It’s always been part of the stories that I tell within my music. I’m wondering what’s taken



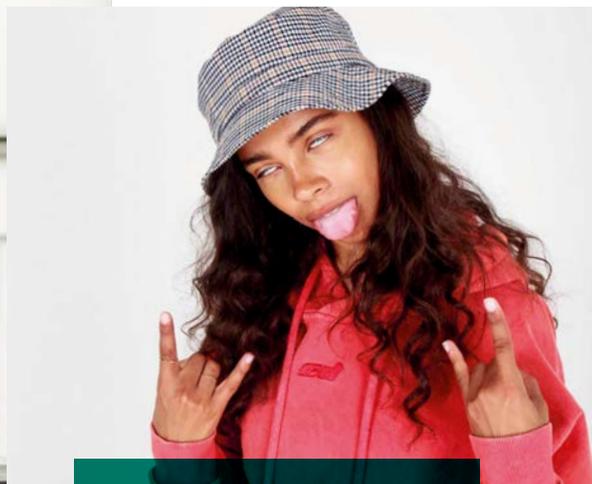
Singer Shingai, formerly of the band Noisettes, says that Black artists frequently fall foul of the administrative side of the music business, leaving many in restrictive contracts

Photo: Jeyal Anthony Dominic Photography

The Black Music Coalition

On 12 June, a collection of senior UK Black music executives formed [the Black Music Coalition](#), writing an open letter to the leaders of the UK music industry to fight the racism and inequality within it. This new body has made five initial calls to action.

1. Mandatory anti-racism/unconscious bias training across each respective company for all non-Black members of staff, led by Black educators in the field, and complementary counselling and holistic services made available for Black members of staff with immediate effect.
2. For each company to commit a specified annual budget to financially support Black organisations, educational projects and charities across the UK.
3. Career development implemented for Black staff across all business areas, including long-standing consultants in order to develop the next generation of leaders. To address, challenge and change the lack of Black staff at senior management level, or Black female presidents/chairwomen across the industry.
4. Following statements from major labels and management companies, the term 'urban music' is to be removed from your company verbiage and replaced with 'Black music'.
5. Establish a dedicated internal task force to review, and with the remit to drive and challenge both the equality and diversity aims within your business structure, and the advancement of Black executives across your business including equal pay, mentorship and career progression.



Weyland McKenzie (left) suggests that music companies often water down underground Black musics. TSHA (above) fears that Blackout Tuesday was mostly performative

everyone so long to catch up! I hope this triggers something in the mindset of musicians who weren't already thinking about maintaining some level of independence. If you have a message and people that look like you enjoy that message then that's the most important part."

TSHA

Music Producer, Composer and DJ

"I think it depends on which part of the industry you're looking at," argues [electronic DJ and producer TSHA](#). "From what I've seen and my personal experience, I would say the electronic scene is probably a more open community than others. The music obviously originated from Black and LGBTQ+ communities, and there are a lot of people advocating for people to pay homage to the genres' origins."

As an artist of mixed heritage, for TSHA, this has both its positives and negatives. "I've probably had a bit of tokenism in my career and have had people approach me for gigs as they just want a diverse line-up. That said, I feel like I have a privilege over darker skinned females trying to make it in my genre or other genres. Colourism is a huge issue across genres and just leads to a lot of artists being put in boxes. I think, if you get rid of this kind of preconception of what a pop star should

look like then we'll see a lot more Black pop stars. We need to get rid of this idea that Black women can't sell or be successful pop stars, they need to be given a chance and pushed and invested in."

Blackout Tuesday was a chance for people to figure out how to address structural racism, but TSHA felt that much of it was performative. "I think a lot of people posted messages, but weren't really doing the work. They just treated it like it was a day off work. It was a nice idea on the surface, but it led to a lot of people jumping on the bandwagon. If a record label didn't post that they were observing it, then they would look bad. Ultimately, the institutional problems need to be addressed and that won't happen overnight."

Moving forward

With all of this increased awareness of racism and structural inequality within the music industry, what exactly are we looking to achieve? "For the MU, it has opened a few new doors in terms of conversations about diversity, and renewed some conversations that had dropped off the agenda because of lockdown," says John Shortell, MU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Official. "People seem to want to move forward with this work now rather than just talk about it. We're hoping to see bolder decisions from organisations on how racism is tackled, and public commitments with measurable outcomes." 



T. Sign of the Times

Following a globe-trotting childhood and launching her career in London, singer-songwriter Eliza Shaddad speaks to *The Musician* about the musical journey that has taken her to Cornwall

Profile by Katie Nicholls

Before we come face to face in the now ubiquitous online meeting room, Zoom, singer-songwriter [Eliza Shaddad](#) very generously shares a link to a private Soundcloud account that is home to five tracks from her freshly-recorded second album. "They're really not ready to be sent out," she says, "they're completely unmixed... things need adjusting and vocals redoing, but it should give you an idea." The tracks from her *The Woman You Want* album, the first single of which is due out in the autumn, reveal a shift in style and sound for Eliza who is now based in Cornwall with her husband, producer Ben Jackson.

As she has warned they're a little raw, but each track is soaked with an organic, soulful confidence with Eliza's rich, emotive vocal coming to the fore. "Some of these songs were written before lockdown, but some were written during it," expands Eliza. "Traditionally I've kind of buried the vocal with lots of layers. At the moment, I think with all the activism that's happening, I really want my current experience to feed into the music and I found

myself thinking about people like Tracy Chapman and Alanis Morissette and wonderful vocalists who are telling an important story and how clear and upfront their vocal is – the message and delivery – and that's been feeding into how we're producing and mixing this next record."

A constant flow

This album will be Eliza's second. Her debut *Future* arrived in 2018, following two EPs *Waters* (2014) and *Run* (2016). *Future* showcased a heavier, brooding sound, with a retrospective, grungy guitar style overlapping her crystal-like vocal, while her EPs reside in a more folk-influenced domain. "I had to fight quite hard to move from the folk space and into a more alternative space," says Eliza. "I'm moving out of it again. I think it's confusing for the audience, but it amuses me that each record is quite different."

This fluidity most likely stems from her upbringing. The daughter of a Scottish mother and Sudanese father, she travelled across the world as a child following her mother's career at the British Council. It meant constant uprooting for Eliza, who spent her childhood in Spain, Nigeria, Slovakia, Poland and Russia. "I think I'm used to moving on!" she says. "I guess the influence of all those different cultures has given me an appreciation of how much there is out there in the world →

"I found myself thinking about vocalists who are telling an important story"



Photo: Joseph Branstorn, at The Taphouse, St Agnes © MU 2020

One benefit of the lockdown is that Eliza has had more time and space to work on her new album

and how much I can experiment myself, which I feel is beginning to come to the fore... Also, I wonder if the constant moving meant that when I really found a sound I was happy with it was from my teenage years, sounds that had been quite formative and quite stable amongst everything. I went back to grunge and emotive female singer-songwriters as home ground. That was the constant companion among all that movement."

A moment in time

Eliza says singing was her passion from birth, and a detour from music to study philosophy at university was followed by a teaching stint in Spain where she was reunited with her love of songwriting. "The whole time I was there I missed it so I moved back to London." She applied to Guildhall School of Music & Drama to study jazz as a post-graduate. With no qualifications in music or a portfolio to speak of, her admission was by audition. "It was so hard," she says, "harder than any other academic study I've ever done."

After graduating, and in a wonderfully poetic moment of serendipity, Eliza's music career

took flight. "After Guildhall I thought, 'Well, while I'm waiting for my music career to turn up, how am I going to pay the bills?'. It was getting colder and colder as we were heading into winter and I'd busk in a lot of places, like the Southbank where the money is. I lived in Shoreditch at the time and I couldn't be bothered to get the tube. It was actually a good place to busk and one day Jack (Patterson, Clean Bandit songwriter) cycled past and gave me a smile and then ten minutes later he came back and said, 'I'm in this band and we're looking for a singer. Do you want to come and write some stuff in the studio?' I appeared on their first album [*New Eyes*, 2014]. It was a wild and random occurrence." It was also a fortuitous one with *New Eyes* reaching No. 3 in the UK charts.

While fortune is undoubtedly an ingredient in a successful musical career, so is resolve and hard work, and Eliza says she played every opportunity she could while she lived in London. Functions, busking and "every gig that came along. I've always wanted to have a sustainable career as a musician," she considers, "and it's... so hard! It's strange to have worked for so long and to be in such an incredible position and have things go so right

With A Little Help From My Friends

"Something that's really helped to inspire me during my career is my relationship with Gordon Smith Guitars," Eliza informs us. "A few years ago I needed another guitar for touring, so I got in touch with Gordon Smith and asked, 'Do you ever loan them?' And they did, so they lent me one. More recently they said, 'Come up to the factory and we'll custom make one to your specifications. So I travelled up to Manchester and I met all these incredible luthiers and chose the very pieces of African mahogany and flamed maple that make up the guitar. They brought it to me in London and it arrived ten minutes before I went on stage and they were like, 'Are you going to play it?! They're a real support to me. Honestly, it's like teenage dream stuff.'"

in so many ways and still feel like you're an absolute emerging artist at the beginning of their career. It's a strange industry."

Throughout her career, Eliza has been very aware of the value of her MU membership. "I've been a member since I was a student, so for about ten years. I've always found it really helpful, from the Busking In London guide to the legal advice and contract checking that's been a huge help to me. At the beginning of my career, before I had a lawyer, I would contact the MU at any point I could basically!"

Doing it her way

In many ways, Eliza is the quintessential millennial, as evidenced by her ambition, her appreciation of diversity, her adaptability, and the confidence to demand change when a situation doesn't suit. When she found herself tired of being chucked on a bill with a "house DJ and a metal band" Eliza and her friend Samantha Lindo set up the art collective Girls Girls Girls.

"It was all about showcasing female projects from any artistic discipline and giving them a really non-judgemental place to perform whatever they wanted to, as quietly or as loudly as they wanted to. A lot of beautiful collaborations came out of it. Poetry and music and burlesque, often performed in really beautiful spaces in London, like St Leonard's Church in Shoreditch. When we started it there wasn't anything like that in London and it's amazing that there's loads now. I think the increasing number of female-focused opportunities is really positive."

A global quandary

Of course, since Covid-19 hit the UK, the live music industry is in crisis, and the pandemic came at a crucial moment for Eliza. Fresh from [supporting Keane on a European tour](#), she was midway through her own jaunt around the UK before she was struck down herself with what she believes was the virus. She's fearful, she says, about the future of the live music industry. "I worry about my band who I want to support through all of this. Without the money coming in from the shows and festivals that we were due to do, it's hard to do that. I know everyone's in the same position."

She believes that the music industry was already in a dire situation, with only the privileged few able to take the risk of pursuing a career. "I saw this Tweet from the MU that said 19% of musicians are thinking about doing

something else because they can't survive. I also remember reading about how there wasn't anyone in the Top 10 who hadn't gone to public school. When I read that Tweet I thought, 'It's so sad because the people who are contemplating giving it up, who can't struggle through on the meagre amount that's trickling out, are the people who don't have someone to fall back on. That means that the richest people are going to be the people who see it through. It's not a level playing field.'

A time for contemplation

While the burning spotlight of Covid-19 continues to shine its glare on the myriad injustices in our society, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown has for many also provided an opportunity for contemplation, a reassessment of what matters. This mindset, Eliza says, has influenced the recording of her new album in her home studio with her husband producing. On listening to the new tracks, one in particular stands out. *Blossom* has a dream-like melody, lush strings and flute flutters in and out, while Eliza's vocal is graceful and pure, with a Laura Marling-esque vibrato. It's a confident piece. Would she have produced a track like that pre-lockdown? "We've had a lot of time to investigate the sound and figure out how it would work," she considers. "Previously it was very much a guitar-band sound and I think I was really concerned with the fullness of it and trying to... how shall I put this... I was less happy and it fed into this 'hardness'. I wanted really loud guitars and a wide, spanning overwhelming experience when listening to the music, because that's how I felt about life in general.

"Being a little bit happier now and having a really enjoyable life at the moment there's more space to be... not quite as angsty! It's a weird combination of trying to keep it bare and intimate, because that reflects the home recording and the style of the music that I'm interested in making at the moment, but also keeping it exciting and big and powerful. I think lockdown has given us the time and headspace to think about things other than our daily activities. That's why there's so much change happening at the moment. I can't write or finish a song unless it's really personal, and I guess something I've found is that the world has suddenly become personal, because the things that are worth caring about have been brought the forefront." 

For more information on Eliza Shaddad, visit her website at elizashaddad.com

Eliza got her first big break with Clean Bandit quite by chance



Photo: Melanie Tjeeng



Photo: Flore Diamant

"I think the increasing number of female-focused opportunities is really positive"

New MU Website

Introducing the concepts and key features of the Union's more personalised new website, which is due to launch soon

Report by Henry Yates

The past six years have seen seismic change across the industry. From the now-undeniable dominance of streaming, to the damage wreaked by the pandemic, musicians have been asked to pivot as never before, with the Union's service keeping pace alongside them.

Last updated in 2014, the existing MU website has been an anchor for musicians through uncertain times. But it's become increasingly clear, explains MU Digital Development Officer Katerina Baranova, that members need a refreshed online platform, designed to connect, inform and empower them during the fightback from Covid-19. "I can't wait for the new website to launch," she says. "We realise the time pressure, and want to have it available for musicians now."

The upcoming new website has been a year in development, with every element – from navigation to accessibility – designed with a focus on members' needs. The process began with extensive research, including a deep dive into feedback from the MU's latest member survey, frontline insights from Regional Officers, and a member conference focus group last summer in Brighton.

"It was important to know what people wanted from this new site," Katerina says, "so last July we did an online workshop, with members split into groups based on different areas of the music industry, deciding which problems need to be solved, and what needs

to be prioritised. So I had a bunch of insights, and that's when we took the decision to start designing the new website. A motion was put forward and confirmed – and we kicked off the project last August."

A personalised platform

Underpinning the new site is the concept that no two musicians are alike. From a drummer working in the West End's orchestra pits, to a rural piano teacher seeking to expand their client base, the focus on personalisation means members will get relevant, up-to-the-minute information based on their interests, professional area and career ambitions.

"Personalisation is a massive topic," says Katerina. "We're already taking the first steps on the new site, and this will improve over time. People will be able to modify their interests and preferences in the My MU members area. We're also planning to put algorithms in place, so for example, if a member is always looking for guidance in recording rates, there'll be personalised links to access that information fast. Another future project is email personalisation, with content personalised to each member. But people will be able to switch off personalisation, because a lot of musicians have a broad scope in what they do."

Just as flexible is the overhauled MU Member Directory. Whereas before, members were only able to view each other's profiles, the downturn since the pandemic has prompted a new system that lets musicians advertise their services to the general public. "It's a great tool for job opportunities," explains Katerina, "for example, if a member of the public is looking for musicians for a wedding or corporate event. Another great benefit is being able to look for other musicians, based on location,

"It'll be so much easier for members to see what's going on and find out what they can do"

Katerina Baranova

genre or instrument. Plus, members will be able to modify what is visible, so you might share your email address with other members, but not with the public. You'll be able to have a professionally made biography, and every element can be customised. It's like LinkedIn for musicians, opening up networking opportunities and giving that sense of community. I don't know anything else like it."

Activism made easy

A key element of the MU's remit sees it orchestrating the campaigns that protect the rights of its members. From high-profile work like the Fix Streaming and Musicians' Passport campaigns, to activism centred around equality and diversity, the lifeblood of these movements is the grassroots involvement of members. "But what we find with the current

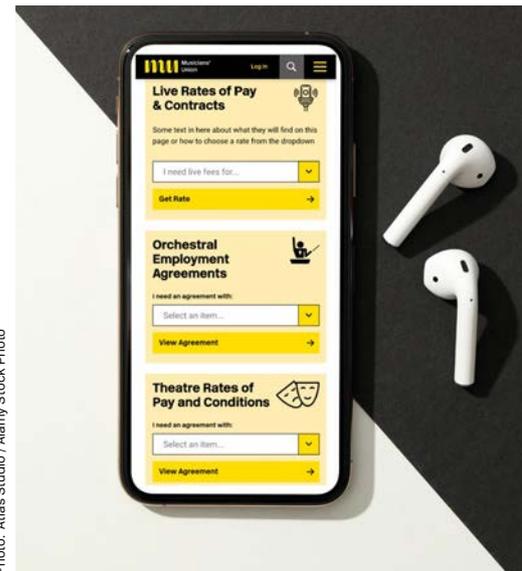


Photo: Atlas Studio / Alamy Stock Photo

The newly redesigned MU website will be more accessible, and offer a means for members to advertise their talents

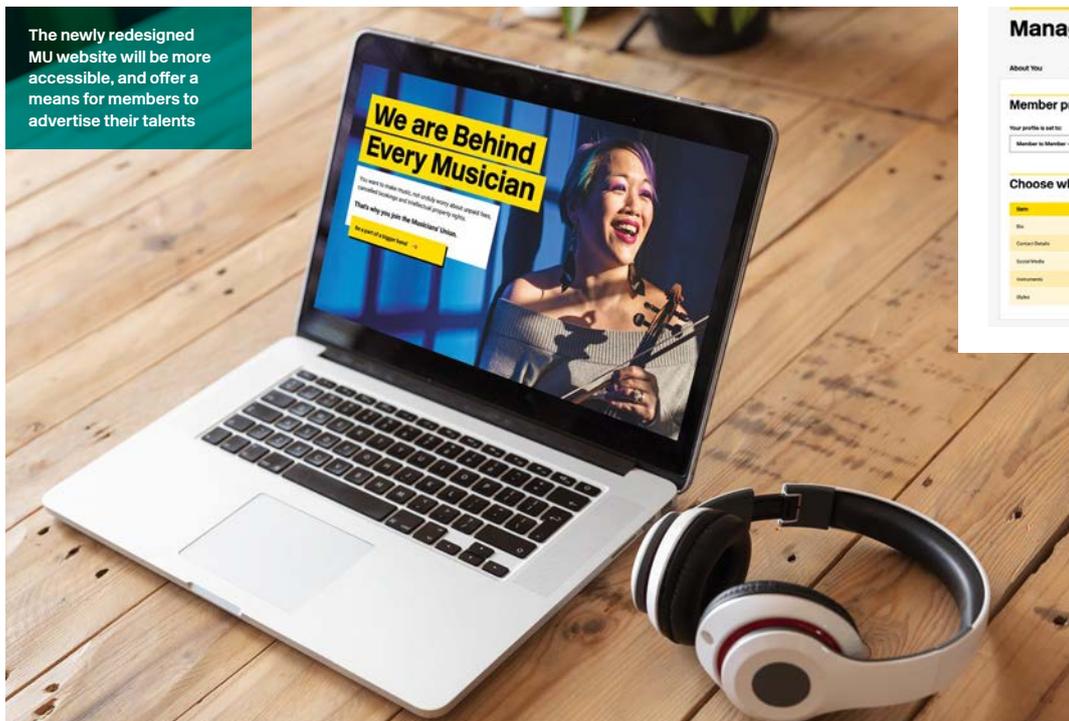


Photo: Wavebreakmedia Ltd / P-190910 / Alamy Stock Photo

site,” says Katerina, “is that it doesn’t really help us promote the campaigns, to give a voice to members or let them engage with us.” To address these problems, MU activists were invited to attend a workshop in January. “The workshop was all about what activism means,” says Katerina, “and we’ve tried to translate all those needs into the new website, from the design to the content. It’ll be so much easier for members to see what’s going on, find out what they can do, and engage with things that matter to them.”

The new site is far more intuitive when it comes to professional advancement, with dedicated pages for career development and training alongside easy-to-navigate advice sections. “During the lockdown we’ve asked members to write about their experiences,” says Katerina. “and we want to engage more of them to create content. A lot of our members complain that the information on the current website is overwhelming, so we’ve changed that – whether that means replacing text with interactive elements like video and audio, or reducing unnecessary PDFs. It’s about navigation, but also about aligning the content and organising it better.”

Accessible for everyone

Just as there’s room for every voice in music, so a priority for Katerina was ensuring the new MU site welcomed members, irrespective of circumstances. “Our current website is six years old, so technology has moved on since then, and we’ll have a really high standard of accessibility on the new website. It’s obviously a really important point for anyone who has any visual, hearing or mobility impairments. For example, we’ve improved legibility and colour contrast for someone who might be colour blind, and our members can ask for alternative versions of any of the content we produce, like larger text or audio. That was part of our research as well, and we are doing testing with our disabled members once the coding is done.”

Ultimately, explains Katerina, the new MU website is about providing a superior user experience, guiding busy working musicians to the help they need. “All of these different things tie in together – the way the navigation works, how we write content – it’s all about finding what you need, as quickly as possible. And the website launch is just the start. We’ll be listening to members, having a two-way conversation, adding features – and improving as we move forward.” 

Manage your Member Profile

About You Instruments & Styles Audio & Video Profile visibility

Member profile visibility

Your profile is set to:

Member to Member (only MU members can see your profile)

Choose what information to Show/Hide on your profile

Item	Show to MU Members	Show to Public
Bio	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contact Details	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sound/Video	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instruments	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Style	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Five Key Website Features

MU Member Directory

The ultimate shop window for professionals, allowing MU members to connect, and the general public to browse profiles and book players.

Online Events

An online career development hub consisting of events, musician experiences and professional advice from industry experts.

My MU

This members area enables visitors to specify their interests and preferences, making the website more personalised to the individual. My MU is also the place to get involved with the Union’s democratic processes.

Online Guidance

Reorganised, rewritten and accessed via an intuitive menu, the advice will offer sector-specific guidance from industry advisors, experts and musicians alike.

Accessibility

From improved text legibility to mobile and tablet-friendly pages, the new site will be a welcoming and reliable hub for every musician who needs it.

The Future Of Classical Music

As some orchestral musicians make a tentative return to work, *The Musician* assesses what the future might look like for those working in the classical sector

Report by Andrew Stewart

Oliver Dowden's five-stage road map to reopen theatres and concert halls to paying audiences looks set to run over rough ground. The culture secretary's lockdown easing plan, announced on 25 June, was notably vague in terms of timing and silent on funding. Musicians and other performing artists are unlikely to feel confident about their future employment prospects as a result, despite the government's more recent pledge of £1.57bn to support the UK's arts infrastructure. At the time of writing, 150 grassroots venues have received welcome if not exactly redemptive news that they stand to share £2.25m in grant aid. Musicians in the nation's orchestras, meanwhile, especially those employed as freelancers, are waiting for a sign that bailout cash will be used to preserve performing arts jobs as well as protect arts buildings and institutions.

Several of Britain's orchestras have already made a tentative start on the comeback trail. Fourteen members of [the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House](#) returned to work at Covent Garden in mid-June to play a chamber version of Mahler's *Song Of The Earth*. Their emotionally charged performance, streamed live online, served notice of what the country stands to lose if support for orchestras is not forthcoming from the public purse. [The London Symphony Orchestra](#) took the next step with a concert at St Luke's at the end of July, one of several pilot events designed to test the safety of bringing players together in the same space. Orchestra members also

launched a Summer Shorts series of duo recitals on Friday lunchtimes at St Luke's, open to a small, socially distanced audience.

LSO first violinist Maxine Kwok recalls the joy of returning to work after a break of almost five months. She and her colleagues were tested for Covid-19 before the first rehearsal. "The whole week was great, first to play together with the orchestra without an audience and then, a few days later, for [me and Julián Gil Rodríguez, to perform duets to a live audience](#). I felt quite deflated after it was over! We'd been waiting so long for this moment and must now wait for our next performance at the BBC Proms later this summer. These are small steps, but at least I think we're going in the right direction."

"These are small steps... but I think we're going in the right direction"

Nigel Charman



Photo: David Jackson

Orchestras such as the LSO are back at work in a safe fashion, and taking every precaution

Back to work

Orchestra of the Royal Opera House percussionist and MU Steward, Nigel Charman, was also delighted to be back at work. The process, he recalls, followed guidelines set out in a 23-page document and strict protocols designed to protect everyone from musicians to backstage staff. "It was wonderful to make music again," explains Charman. "It was one of the most fulfilling weeks I can remember. After three months at home, occasionally looking at the diary to see what we would have been doing, it was great to be back in the building with fellow musicians. And to start playing again was simply amazing. I felt so fortunate to be one of those who took part, and wished the whole orchestra could have been there."



Photo: David Jackson

Nobody knows when the full Orchestra of the ROH will meet again, or how the Royal Opera's programme of voluntary redundancies, announced on 24 July, will affect the company's players and choristers. The run of three Live From Covent Garden concerts – complete with Mahler's symphonic song cycle – at least set a precedent for future live events with small ensembles, but did nothing to answer the existential threat posed by public health restrictions on theatres, concert halls and other indoor venues. "The orchestra committee and I have had several Zoom meetings every week to discuss what's happening, what's not happening, and what might be happening in the future," notes Nigel Charman. "We're still waiting to learn what management is planning for the medium and long term. It's a deeply concerning time."

Welcome return

Morris Stemp, the MU's Orchestras Official, welcomes the return of live orchestral

performances, but insists that the safety of musicians should always come first. He is pleased to see that calls on government to ensure that plans to reconvene orchestras are preceded by scientific research into mitigating the risks of Covid-19 transmission among musicians have been heeded. "It's not a matter about people losing money, it's potentially about whether they live or die," he notes. "Health and safety law says you must remove risk if you can and minimise risk if you can't. We have to make sure that everything that's being done to get orchestras back to work is evidence based. Until we do, we won't know what's safe and what isn't. The economic argument for going back to work is strong, of course. But there has to be evidence that it's safe first. We've got to get this right."



Maxine Kwok

"It's all very well saying that £1.57 billion is available for the arts," says Maxine Kwok, first violin with the London Symphony Orchestra, "but nobody knows where it will end up. Until we have some clarity about where money goes, every musician and every arts organisation will be concerned."

"We've all had to tighten our belts, and lost so much core income by cancelling concerts and tours. Even performing to a full Barbican hall, we're not talking about huge profits. If you take away our main income source – from ticket sales to our audience – then things become very precarious. I'm in awe of the people who are trying to manage that and raise funds to keep us afloat. We've got really good people at the top who have kept us abreast and spent weeks making sure that we were as safe as possible going back to St Luke's. That's given everyone a boost and a feeling that things are improving."

Nigel Charman

"Somehow we need to keep the Royal Opera's artistic companies together while we're waiting to launch a shortened season for hopefully ever-increasing audiences. When we do get back to 'normal', we must make sure that we do so with a full complement of orchestral players and a full chorus. The [Royal Opera House is much more than a building](#). It is the orchestra, it is the chorus, it is the ballet company. It's about the sound that we make in that building. The artistic companies are the core of what the Royal Opera is about. People come from all over to see the Royal Opera House Orchestra and Chorus working with guest singers. They can follow those singers around the world, but there's only one place they can hear our orchestra and chorus. The musicians who are there day in, day out are what make the place unique. We need to keep the bricks and mortar upright and our artistic companies in place, ready to go."



Orchestral players were waiting for the results of government-commissioned research into aerosol transmissions and droplet emissions from wind and brass instruments as initial guidance from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) advised wind and brass players to sit three metres apart. Studies conducted by the University of the Bundeswehr Munich suggested that the gap might safely be reduced and DCMS Guidance after their own research has now reduced this to the same distance as any instrument, two metres as for 'usual' social distancing. "We need to see the highest standard of evidence about keeping players safe in the workplace," comments Morris Stemp.

Mitigating risk

MU National Organiser, Orchestras, Jo Laverty, has been heartened by the readiness of managements to work with the Union to address the realities of life during lockdown. While she recognises the impossibility of

eliminating all risk of contracting coronavirus in the orchestral workplace, every attempt must be taken to mitigate risk. "We always pride ourselves on good industrial relations, but it's been an amazingly collegiate response from management," she observes. "We have each other's backs and want to work together for the good of musicians. That's been nice to see, since it's not always like that."

An initiative by [the Orchestra of the Swan](#) to take its acclaimed community engagement programme online, the Ulster Orchestra's evolving weekly programme of small-scale performances, music to be made by members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at Glyndebourne, and the prospect of concerts by physically distanced ensembles for the final fortnight of the BBC Proms reflect the collective determination of orchestral musicians to be heard.



Photo: Joseph Branston. © Musicians' Union

Left: The ROH faces tough months ahead. Right: LSO first violinist Maxine Kwok

At the Royal Opera House, Nigel Charman senses that the whole company is looking to find ways through the tough months to come. "The government's furlough scheme has been great for us," he observes. "We're the lucky ones who are receiving money every month so we can eat and pay some bills." What happens next will depend on whether the government's rescue deal for the arts reaches the pockets of performers. "It's going to take serious investment beyond the existing furlough scheme to save our orchestras. While we're waiting for it to be safe to return to the old normal, we'll keep practising at home in the hope that eventually we can make music together again."

Jo Laverty says that orchestras and other performing arts organisations must find ways to make online performances pay. "Almost every arts company is going to need to adapt to serve two audiences – one online, the other in the hall – when it can return," she comments. "They will have to serve and

develop a digital audience, which will mean that Union agreements will need revising. That may involve orchestras working together to share their existing digital equipment or create new partnerships with the BBC. There's certainly a role for the BBC to play as a public service broadcaster in helping out the orchestral sector. Of course, their priority will be to get the BBC orchestras back to playing together in BBC buildings and venues, and visible again as a collective. But there may be a future in which the main public service broadcaster can work with the independent orchestras to bring their work to a much larger audience."

Is this the end?

The future of classical music exercised those involved in a debate convened by [BBC Radio 3's Music Matters at the end of June](#). Presenter Tom Service began with a straightforward question. "Is it all over? Classical music as we know it, I mean." The programme's participants struggled to supply a simple or definitive answer. Service presented a bleak picture of closed concert halls, disbanded orchestras and ensembles, fearful former audience members and predictions of job losses in the performing arts affecting up to 114,000 people. "It was nice while it lasted, but that was the classical music culture that was in Britain from the public concerts of the 18th century to March 2020," he announced, clearly on a roll with

"We have to pull some positivity out of this situation, otherwise we'll just fall flat"

Maxine Kwok

his litany of disasters to come. "In the age of social distancing, it's finished. Or is it?" The debate was unsurprisingly short on optimism. It contained a reality check from Arts Council England's Director, Music and London, Claire Mera-Nelson, about the future prospects for the classical music profession if Covid-19 restrictions on live performance extend beyond the autumn. "Although virtually every musician I've spoken to is desperate to get back to work, between the regulations around social distancing and the extreme steps organisations have had to take to manage their businesses, it's just not been possible," she noted. "We are working very closely with DCMS and the Treasury to ensure the government is very well informed about the value of the sector. We're hopeful that there will be an option for us all at the end of this. Were no support to be forthcoming, it would see the end of the sector as we know it today."

Positive thinking

Maxine Kwok admits that she is concerned about the many uncertainties confronting classical musicians. "It's a horrible worry," she says. "Of course you keep thinking about where our funding will come from. But we have to pull some positivity out of this situation, otherwise we'll just fall flat. One of the positives for me is that what's being presented digitally now is far superior to anything that came before. We've had to leap forward and find new ways of doing things. We can reach more people of all ages through our online programme and connect with people that way. And it's right that there should be a charge to access some of that high-quality content, which might help us to survive while we're getting back to performing for live audiences again." 

Team Player

The multi-faceted Steve Sidwell talks about his music and his craft, but also relays his fears for musicians' livelihoods in the post-Covid environment

Profile by Andrew Stewart

When it comes to choosing a composer, arranger, music director or producer, it should be no surprise that Shirley Bassey, Robbie Williams and Paul Young can command the pick of the crop. They and many other A-listers can count on Steve Sidwell to fill one or all of these jobs. [The Grammy Award winner's work](#), hallmarked by its quality, versatility and creativity, reflects the best of British music-making.

He enchanted the nation with his Honda Civic choir ad in the mid-noughties, conducted the London Symphony Orchestra at the closing ceremony of the 2012 Olympics, and bagged his Grammy for scoring *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*. Sidwell was orchestrator and conductor for Robbie Williams' chart-topping *Swings Both Ways* and *Swing When You're Winning* albums, while his all-round skills have graced everything from hit Broadway and West End shows to The Queen's Birthday Party at the Royal Albert Hall two years ago.

The Sidwell diary was full when lockdown conditions were imposed at the end of March. Although most of his work vanished overnight, he has since been part of the BBC's VE Day commemoration at Buckingham Palace and has another BBC project cooking. Long lead times mean there's also a new musical for Scandinavia and the music for an American theme park in the works.

"I'm very lucky," he says when we speak by phone. "But there has been a negative effect. I'm okay but I feel for younger colleagues, such as West End musicians, the casts of shows, and people just starting out learning their craft. Lockdown is a disaster for so many."

Life in lockdown

Sidwell has been able to continue working from his Shoreditch studio. The lockdown experience, however, has made him more aware than ever that music is a team game. "I want to play together with other musicians in the same room. Remote recordings can be good, but lack the magic of people working together in the same space, feeling the air move at the same time." That said, he cautions against rushing back to the studio or stage before the potentially deadly novel coronavirus has been tamed.

"Musicians and performers can practise hard but probably won't be match fit to play at the level you need for a session. When they go back to work, they'll have to get their nerve back too. It's fine if you're playing solo lines every day in an orchestra, but what about after six months or longer away? It's going to take musicians time to get fit again and feel at their best. As with every situation in life, you have to make the most of it. I found lockdown made it much easier for me to continue the health kick I started in January. I've also been busy in the studio and working hard, writing things for myself."

Strong heritage

One of three musician brothers, [Steve Sidwell belongs to a musical dynasty](#). His father, the jazz saxophonist Roy Sidwell, was a star of the



"I want to play together with other musicians in the same room"



“I’ve made a living doing the things I love. But that all has to come from the heart.”

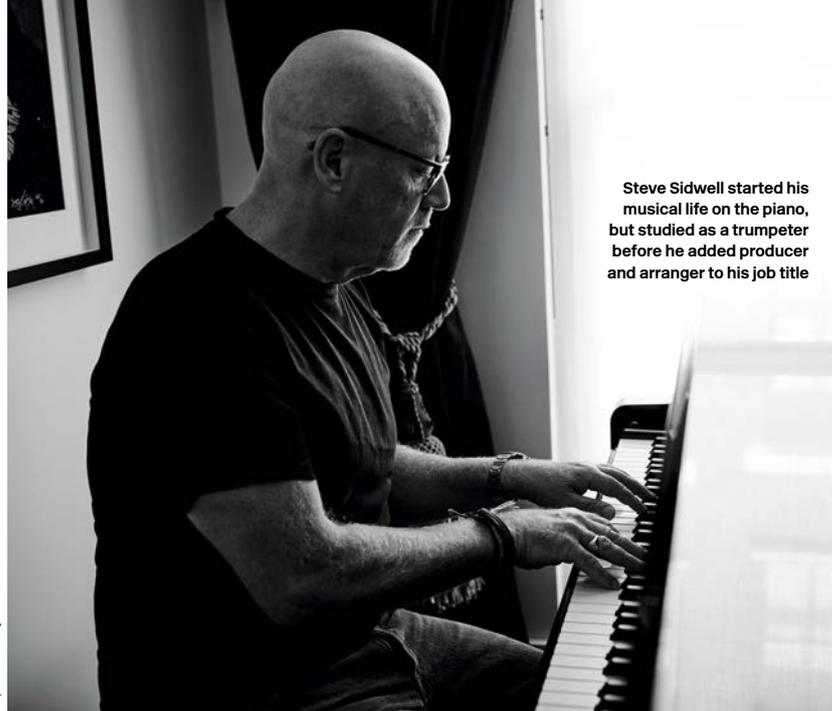
British big band scene, while his grandfather taught piano. “I grew up in London in a musical house,” he recalls. “I played piano from an early age, then violin – terribly – and started playing trumpet when I was eleven.” Progress on the latter, he notes, was advanced by a lucky accident: a badly broken leg left him practically immobile for a year, and with ample time to practise his new instrument. “I became quite good at it quite quickly!”

Sidwell was also fortunate to study with the trombonist and Early Music pioneer Alan Lumsden, his north London state school’s peripatetic brass teacher, and with the trumpeter Horace Barker. He received a scholarship to attend [the Royal College of Music’s Junior Department](#) before studying for a degree as a classical trumpeter at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

“I was more interested in the pop and commercial world,” he observes. “I always appreciated the links between music and the music business, the arts and fashion. I got very involved with rock and roll, which tapped into my psyche, as well as being a studious jazz and classical musician. From being a player and touring with groups while I was at the Guildhall, I started doing brass and then string arrangements. I did what I was asked to do and things just developed from there.”

Passion for music

The young musician learned his trade with dates [at the Hammersmith Palais](#) and other London venues. Saturday night jam sessions, meanwhile, helped build friendships that have lasted for more than forty years. He advises aspiring professional players to make music with their peers and establish good contacts as part of an age-old process of learning from others and sharing ideas. Above all, he counsels, cultivate the deepest possible passion for music. “I still love it! Music is so joyous. I’m really fortunate that things have worked out okay and I’ve made a living doing the things I love. But that all has to come from the heart.”



Steve Sidwell started his musical life on the piano, but studied as a trumpeter before he added producer and arranger to his job title

All photos: Joby Sessions. © MU

Educating The Brands

“I’m forever dealing with big entertainment, television and production companies – huge worldwide brands. You soon discover you’re discussing terms and conditions and how you’re going to record things with lawyers or accountants. It’s amazing how little they understand our business. We don’t want them to license an old hit for an ad on TV when they could commission a new score for orchestra and create work for musicians for the same money or less. It’s about getting them to think about creating fresh material wherever possible. I really feel the waste of huge budgets that are spent by equally huge companies that just don’t understand how music works. I think we’re missing a trick on how to advise big music companies so they become less afraid of using session musicians and commissioning bespoke music. The people making these decisions don’t know how creative musicians work and think and are getting further and further away from the root of our business.”



Decent pay

Professional musicians, adds Steve, should be properly paid for their work, no matter how much of it they would do for love. He challenges the conventional wisdom that musicians earn fortunes for a few hours’ work in the evening. “It’s not a sensible equation to add up the amount of practice you have to put in to reach the standard of being an orchestral or studio musician. If you add up the number of unpaid apprenticeship hours and told that to any other profession, they’d laugh at you. Who would do twenty years of unpaid apprenticeship for a job that doesn’t pay particularly well? An architect will study



for seven years and then, with luck, get a well-paid job. But nobody's going to learn to play an instrument to a professional level in seven years."

Steve Sidwell has been a member of the MU since he was fourteen, and served for a period on its former Session Section Committee. He praises the Union for [its swift response to the coronavirus crisis](#) and its campaign to raise awareness of the pandemic's long-term threat to musicians' livelihoods.

The merits of the MU

"The MU have become far more flexible, particularly in lockdown, and have looked at things in a very good way. I feel good about

our Union and think they've worked hard during lockdown to encourage and help their members. They're a good bunch with a wealth of experience. I've enjoyed the messaging and emails the MU have sent out. The effect the virus and lockdown are having on musicians is very obvious to the Union, and I think they're responding well to the new circumstances. I've always been part of the Union and always will be. It's so important that we have a body that represents all musicians. We need a voice and people to negotiate on our behalf, especially now." While Sidwell's success has come in the commercial field, he stresses the importance of public funding to a flourishing ecology of music-making. The pipeline of new talent,

whether fed by the conservatoires or universities, depends on government support. Likewise, he observes, music lessons should be available to all, not just those with wealthy parents. "Government investments in music are for everybody, and for the long term. There's been massive underinvestment in music and the arts for decades, and that will come back to bite everyone on the arse."

Keeping musicians in work

As a producer, Steve Sidwell spends much of his time trying to persuade commissioners to budget for the maximum number of musicians and studio staff. "I'm always interested in how we can make that cost-efficient in so far as we can spread the love, spread the employment, and keep businesses and individuals going. I think it's vital we work in these ways – it's not just do it and take what you can. From my experience I can suggest to the BBC, for instance, the most effective way they can spend their budget, keep people in work, and get the best out of them."

He laments the loss of 'characters' from the music business over the past four decades and the parallel rise of all-powerful global corporations. "It means we're surrounded by suits who are trying to justify their positions. The most talented musicians were often the most charismatic and maybe they didn't always toe the party line. There was some magic in that. We live in a different kind of world now."

Post-lockdown future

How does he see the future of music in the post-Covid age? "We need to be really careful about streaming live theatre and concerts," he replies. "When you watch live performances, made for the stage, on laptops and smartphones, you're in danger of seeing a lot of bad TV. Theatre and television are very separate mediums with experts working on them. Sticking cameras in a theatre is not good theatre or good television. But the really big problem will be with audience numbers while we're waiting for this virus to be gone. It'll need government support to keep things going until then. That's where the campaigning that the MU and Equity are doing now is so vitally important for the future of performers." **mu**

For more information on Steve Sidwell, visit his website at stevesidwell.co.uk

The Impact Of Artificial Intelligence

As music creation by the means of artificial intelligence is becoming more common, we ask if the whole concept of copyright needs a rethink

Report by Will Simpson

Artificial intelligence (AI) has long existed on the edge of our imaginations as a threat, a challenge and, perhaps, a promise. Indeed, the idea of robots making music, via the likes of Kraftwerk and Daft Punk, has over the years become almost comfortingly retro. But it is here now, in 2020. Only not in the manner those electronic icons once presented.

If you count the algorithms that dictate our use of streaming services as AI then it has already completely re-shaped pop music over the last decade. The 'Like this? Try this!' culture that algorithms have engendered has overturned the way we are introduced to music. It's proved a double edge sword. Whilst they've undoubtedly been useful to consumers there is an argument that their presence – alongside Spotify playlists – has homogenised pop to the extent that these days anything daring and different doesn't stand much of a chance of making a commercial impact.

But aside from that they are also shaping the creation of music. The last few years have seen [a proliferation of AI tools for musicians](#), from ones that aid live performance such as Rhythmiq and NotePerformer, to those that arrange samples (Atlas), to compositional software such as Aiva and Amadeus Code. The latter is a songwriting aid into which you input the type of music you intend to create. It then makes suggestions about which chord you could use and might recommend a melody that's 'inspired by' an existing track.

Of course, you don't have to follow its lead, but suppose you do allow Amadeus Code to choose the chords and top-line melody – who should get the copyright? Yourself? The company that developed the software? Or the writer whose track 'inspired' the melody? It's a potential minefield.

Electronic auteurs

AI has long been talked up by cutting edge figures – Brian Eno was endorsing 'generative' music back in the 90s. More recently [Berlin-based artist Holly Heardon](#) released her 2019 AI-assisted album, *Proto*. But established electronic auteurs incorporating AI is one thing, more concerning is the implication it has for other musicians. On library music composers, for example. Universal Music has apparently stated that within five years all their library music could be AI-generated.

Michael Sweeney, the MU's Recording and Broadcasting Official fears the impact this may have on members' livelihoods, and the implications AI has in terms of copyright. "While AI is unlikely to ever replace human songwriters and composers, there are dangers for cultural diversity when it comes to what they might produce and what people's search terms might direct them to. We should not be afraid of the technology, but we do need to understand it, and in particular be alert to the fact that human beings, with all their potential for inherent biases, are the ones creating the software."

Update the act

Copyright in the UK is still covered by the Copyright, Design and Patents Act of 1988, passed long before mass usage of the



"We should not be afraid of technology, but we do need to understand it"

Michael Sweeney

Up until recently our image of robotic music began and ended with acts like Kraftwerk



AUTOMATIK

Photos: EFE News Agency / Alamy Stock Photo; dpa picture alliance archive / Alamy Stock Photo; NotePerformer 3

internet. Many industry observers have suggested that the Act badly needs updating to reflect the rapid growth of computing power since. Others are more relaxed about the implications of AI. "I think a lot of the sturm and drang we have about AI and copyright at the moment is a bit overstated," insists Trevor Cook, a solicitor who specialises in intellectual property. "There are people making a name for themselves on the conference circuit talking about it. One does question how close to reality the development of music or literature without ANY human intervention is? Or, in fact, are all these machines tools, in the same way as a word processor or computer programme is?"

Cook suggests that algorithms should be treated as just another instrument. "Nobody is suggesting because Microsoft Word is provided by Microsoft that they own the copyright to everything that you write. I mean, it could be a... remote possibility," he concedes. "You know these licences that you click through and never read? It's entirely possible that one day somebody might slip in some sort of clause like that. The question is

the enforceability of that. I think if they did start trying to do that then people would come down on them pretty hard. It's dangerous to try and anticipate problems and introduce new laws. Only once you identify the problem and see how it is happening in practice can you judge whether the existing law is inadequate to address the issue."

Who is the owner?

Florian Koempel is a copyright consultant who has advised UK Music and the Music Publishers Association. "First of all the algorithm itself. It belongs to the company or the developer of the algorithm. That is the neutral part. Then there's the secondary level - what happens to the ideas generated by the algorithm? On the legal side it is pretty clear that under EU, UK and US law copyright is the remuneration for human endeavour. Humans take decisions. What interests me is the situation with the material that the computer uses to learn from."

He is scathing about the examples of purely AI-generated music thus far, including Iamus, the classical composer computer based at the University of Malaga whose work has →

Landmarks in AI music

1957 – The first piece completely written by artificial intelligence. Lejaren Hiller and Leonard Isaacson from the University of Illinois program the *Illiac Suite For String Quartet*.

1994 – The software company SSEYO release *Koan*, the first real time 'generative' music system.

2008 – Launch of Spotify, the world's most successful streaming platform.

2011 – Iamus, the University of Malaga's computer cluster premieres its first full original composition – *Hello World!*

2016 – The Sony Computer Science Laboratory release *Daddy's Car*, a track in the 'style' of The Beatles.

2016 – The launch of AIVA, the AI compositional program.



flowmachines

The AI Beat Assistant on the Rhythmiq (left) enables you to jam with the instrument itself. The visual interpretation of the AI track *Daddy's Car* (above).

been [performed by the London Symphony Orchestra](#), and [Daddy's Car](#), which is what you get if you feed The Beatles' back catalogue into an algorithm – a harmony-heavy track with none of the spirit or melodic flair of a Lennon-McCartney composition. Fabs by numbers, literally.

But Koempel does feel that the industry needs to get to grips with the copyright issue regarding collaboratively-used AI. "At the front of our conversations need to be the creativity of the human composer and performances. But to tell you the truth, UK Music doesn't have a policy statement on it, and the publishers don't have one."

Philosophical question

The Ivors Academy doesn't either, although it is working towards one, according to Helienne Lindvall, the Chair of its Songwriting Committee. As both a songwriter and the founder of LANDR (a cloud-based application that supplies AI mastering services) she has a broad perspective on this. "A lot of this pivots around the philosophical/legal question of where you think the creative process lies," she suggests. She refers to the 2015 case involving the British wildlife photographer David Slater. Slater was in Indonesia taking pictures of macaques when one approached the camera

"A lot of this pivots around the question of where you think the creative process lies"

Helienne Lindvall

and took a selfie. When the photographer selected the snap for publication PETA (People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals) took him to court, claiming the picture's copyright lay with the macaque. Fortunately (for humans, anyway) a US court held that animals cannot hold copyright. "It was an interesting case because where does the copyright lie? In the person who actually presses the button? Or is it in the person who makes the selection? This is similar to the way AI works now – in the end, someone somewhere is making choices. Yet at the same time, whatever is put into that machine are copyrights that belong to other people."

Lindvall explains that she supports a system where creators are properly rewarded if it is clear their work has been used in AI. Where multiple recordings have been used and it is unclear what they are she suggests the copyright proceeds should be collected and distributed collectively.

"We need to be on the front foot for this because that train is coming down the track at full speed whether we want it or not. It's hitting media and library writers first – they will be the first to be replaced by machines. The question is then 'Whose work is being fed into those machines?' It feels similar to when you're trying to unravel a yarn that is so tangled up by the time it gets to you it's impossible to separate."

"It's complicated. If it's a purely AI creation based on, say, The Beatles, then obviously copyright should go to Lennon and McCartney. But what if another human creator makes choices and changes? We only have to look at things that are not AI where you have legal cases – Marvin Gaye and Pharrell, for example. Where does the copyright lie? What is inspiration, what is production and what is composing? At least in that case there were humans on both sides rather than a robot."

Deep questions about the nature of human creativity lie ahead, and it's high time all of us – musicians, writers, industry stakeholders and government – began to get our heads around them. 

Finding An Agent

Assistant General Secretary Phil Kear on the benefits and pitfalls of finding an agent for your live work

Despite how distant getting back out there and performing live in front of an audience may seem, it will happen. At the time of writing, the government has committed to a review of social distancing in November and this could see a resurgence of live events. When this happens, it's worth considering what benefits enlisting the services of an agent might bring and, as important, the pitfalls to look out for when signing with one.

Bands will usually start out booking their own gigs, liaising with venues and clients directly. While this ensures 100% of the earnings go back to the band members, as the number of bookings increase the administration work can begin to take over in place of writing and rehearsing and all the other things that you got into music to do in the first place! This is the right time to start looking for an agent.

Choosy wisely

Anyone can set themselves up as an agent, but they are subject to regulation under the Employment Agencies Act 1973 and [the Conduct of Employment Agencies and Employment Businesses Regulations 2003](#).

Agents vary in size and structure, from international giants like ITB, boasting a roster including Biffy Clyro, Aerosmith, Paul

“Seek out an agent with a roster of acts at a similar stage of development to you”



Bands such as Biffy Clyro are signed with major agents like ITB, but you may need to find someone appropriate to your size

Photos: Joanna Dudderidge; MARKA / Alamy Stock Photo

Simon and Pearl Jam, to local agencies representing function bands for weddings and parties. When assessing which agent to approach it's useful to review their current roster and make a judgement on whether you would be a good fit. If the agent you've found only represent classical musicians, it's unlikely they'll take you on if you're a thrash metal band!

There is also a judgement to be made on the relative size of the acts on the agent's current roster. As an upcoming band, if you were lucky enough to attract the interest of ITB, you could find that their extensive roster of household names meant they had little time left to work with you. So, seek out an agent with a roster of acts at a similar stage of development to you.

What to pay

How much should you be looking to pay for the services of an agent? Usual rates are in the 10-15% range. I certainly wouldn't advise agreeing to any higher than 15% without first consulting the MU. While the majority of agents are legitimate and can greatly assist in your development, as with any business there are always some less scrupulous individuals out there to beware of.

In recent times we've received a number of complaints about agents that have gone out

of business owing significant sums to musicians and other parties, only to resurrect themselves under a slightly different business name and then repeat the same practice.

Another trick is to take advantage of the fact there are three parties involved in any agency agreement (act, hirer and agent) to issue a number of convoluted contracts containing contradictory responsibilities, so that when, inevitably, a gig is cancelled or an act doesn't receive the payment they are due, no one is entirely sure who to pursue for settlement.

Ask us first

So, if you are thinking of engaging an agent – and I can't emphasise this enough – before signing on the dotted line please check our Ask Us First list to see if the agent in question is someone you might want to think twice about signing with, and forward any contract you are offered to your MU Regional Office requesting [our free Contract Advisory Service](#). Our lawyers will review them and let you know whether it's safe to sign or not. **MU**

Phil Kear

Disabled Musicians In The Covid Crisis

Lockdown may have added an extra layer of complication into the lives of disabled musicians, but many have shown a customary resilience

Report by Neil Churchman

For many musicians with disabilities, lockdown has been a perfect storm of mental, physical and financial disruption. The pandemic has magnified the problems they face as artists, and the obstacles and negative attitudes that confront them in everyday life. But it has also highlighted innate qualities of resilience and creativity, and hinted at new and better ways of working which have the potential to make the post-Covid industry more accessible and inclusive.

Ben Lunn, who has autism, is [a highly regarded young composer with a growing international reputation](#). The emergency hit his work hard, and fast. A theatre project in the UK was cancelled in its entirety. Two premieres of his work in the United States were scrapped, and a residential summer school project in Antwerp was reduced to a series of Zoom conversations.

"If we had gone into this from day one knowing how long it was going to last, maybe it would have been easier to mentally plan," he says. "But because things are changing so rapidly from week to week, the insecurity means we can't take advantage of that time we have been given."

"Obviously I need to have quite a hermetic lifestyle, and I am quite lucky in the sense that my disability is more to do with fatigue and interaction. Using sites like Zoom works very well for me, but for visually impaired or deaf musicians it can be impractical, and that instant shift to online without considering issues of accessibility has just left them out."

Uncovering prejudice

For Lunn, one of the most distressing effects of the pandemic has been how it has reinforced what he sees as the deep-rooted prejudice against the disabled.

"I haven't felt too much isolation personally, but there's been a real underlining of what our value is in society," he says. He points to the scandal of Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) forms being sent to disabled people once they had contracted Covid-19. "It's as if, being disabled, we wouldn't want to be resuscitated," he says. "And there's the fact that many disabled people weren't getting support straight away, and this idea that the 'weak' would die, but the economy would keep going."

His view was echoed by [Drake Music, a charity campaigning for disabled musicians](#). It is also deeply concerned about public attitudes. "Musicians have said to me they feel disposable. Being sent DNR forms to sign is unconscionable," says Drake communication officer, Becky Morris Knight.

"The pandemic has uncovered a lot of ableism in how society is set up. In much the same way as the Black Lives Matter



Photo: Brian Hartley / stillmotion

Ben Lunn finds it difficult not knowing how long the pandemic is going to last

"The pandemic has uncovered a lot of ableism"
Becky Morris Knight

Baluji Shrivastav is concerned that people will forget about disabled musicians after lockdown



movement is revealing structural racism, I think the pandemic is revealing the structural ableism. There's a danger that the coronavirus will take us backwards. With the language about disabled people being 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' there's a sense that disabled people are being written out of the story."

She explains that the bewildering speed at which the crisis has developed has made life especially hard for musicians with mental health issues. "We're seeing a lot of overload and fatigue. One musician we work with has ADHD and is autistic, and that pace of change and the switch to digital has created many moments of overload for her. That's been

challenging because routines have been disrupted. If everything is moving really fast it can leave you feeling on the back foot. The rapid changes are a lot to cope with."

MU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Official John Shortell says disabled people who need personal assistants have also been facing particular problems. "There's anxiety for them about whether their assistants are observing social distancing," he says. "Some people have had to find new PAs during lockdown as their usual PA has been ill or had to shield. This has left some members with little or no support."

John says there are specific financial issues facing self-employed disabled musicians who may lose vital government Access To Work grants if they claim Employment Support →

Digital Poverty

Drake Music has raised the alarm about so-called 'digital poverty' during lockdown, warning that the pandemic has exposed a growing divide between the digital haves and have-nots.

As rehearsal, teaching and performance migrates online, those unable to afford computers, good internet access and technology adapted for their disability are being left behind. Around 1.9m homes in the UK are thought to be in digital poverty.

"People who are less financially secure or in insecure housing are less likely to have good digital access," explains Becky Morris Knight. "They are less likely to have strong internet or adequate computers at home. Disabled musicians are more likely to experience poverty, so it's a double exclusion for them."

"The fact is that if you are a working class disabled person, and you don't have digital access, then this pandemic will hit you harder. Or say you live in a rural area and your internet connection isn't good – that's another exclusion, so that's a concern – particularly for younger people."

“Going live online makes me make an effort once a week. It’s been a godsend”

Heidi McGeough

Allowance or Universal Credit. He says the Access to Work scheme enables them to pay for specialised roadies, drivers or other helpers, but it has to be applied for every year, and is subject to stringent rules.

“Access To Work grants are an essential part of disabled people overcoming the barriers they face finding work,” says John. “Losing the grants would mean having to re-apply, a process that is complicated for freelancers and can take up to six weeks.”

He also levels criticism at the Coronavirus Act 2020 – the legislation rushed through parliament giving the government emergency powers in the crisis. The Act contains a clause that allows local authorities to suspend duties to provide care for disabled people unless it is a breach of their human rights. “In reality, the situation would have to be extremely severe for it to qualify as a breach of human rights, meaning disabled people could be left with minimal or no support,” he says.

Double lockdown

Renowned [sitar player and multi-instrumentalist Baluji Shrivastav](#), who is totally blind, describes the plight of disabled musicians during the pandemic as a “double lockdown”. An accomplished recording artist, teacher, and sought-after session player, he is also the founder of the Inner Vision Orchestra, a group of players from diverse backgrounds who are all blind or partially sighted.

“We can’t go out and about, and we can’t really get together and do music. Sound is the medium for blind people, and not being able to play music with other blind people affects their sense of identity,” he explains. “Members of the orchestra are being mentally affected because they are very lonely. Sometimes they cry over the phone to me because of this. They are locked down because of the coronavirus, and they are also locked down by their disability.”

Online has been a lifeline though, he says. Baluji has helped to arrange a series of web concerts featuring solo performances by members. “We have been trying to turn the situation around so our players have the chance to show off their talents, in the hope that they can get work later.”

But he is worried that, when normality begins to return, disabled musicians will be the last to benefit. “The less people see of blind musicians and know about them, the less likely they are to get work when it reappears. In the music business, unless you have a presence, someone else is going to get the job instead of you. On the whole, people don’t know where to find these musicians, and they are not that good at promoting themselves. This is why the Inner Vision Orchestra exists.”

Unknown future

Heidi McGeough is registered blind, and [a singer and music teacher from Merseyside](#). She has been on her own throughout the lockdown, nursing a broken arm, which has compounded her problems. “I did my last gig in the pub at the top of my road on the 6 March,” she recalls. “It was a brilliant night, and when I think of it now, I get very emotional. When can it be like that again?”

But like thousands of other musicians, she’s been helped by embracing the opportunity to go online. She performs live every week on a local Facebook group with 20,000 members. “I was really spiralling mentally, I had nothing,” she says. “But going live online makes me get make-up on, get changed into something pretty, learn new songs, and makes me make an effort once a week. It’s been a godsend.”

Problem solving

Sonia Allori is [a composer, multi-instrumentalist and music therapist](#) who has partial hearing and uses a wheelchair. She says some of the problems she has encountered during lockdown have been expected, while others have been a shock.

“I’m a fairly resilient soul, and this hasn’t changed, except that I’ve had to dig deeper into that resilience, and to adopt a flexible

Sonia Allori says that it took a while for those working online to consider disabled musicians in their plans



Masks And Social Distancing

For musicians like Heidi McGeough, who is registered blind, the anticipation of returning to live gigging is being tempered by fears about Covid security in the pubs, clubs and other venues where she performs.

“You have got to think of the safety aspect. You can’t wear a mask as a singer, and you can’t socially distance when you can’t see people. You want to feel safe but you are relying on others to stay away from you, and, of course, they won’t always do that.”

It’s a dilemma that sighted people simply don’t face, but she’s philosophical as she gets ready for her first gigs in months.

“I have got to the point where I will social distance where I can, but where I can’t I will just have to bite the bullet. What else can you do? I can’t stay at home forever. I have got to go out and live my life.”

As a blind singer, Heidi McGeough (right) is doubly concerned about social distancing at clubs

Photo: Brian Hartley / stillmotion



problem-solving approach to creating new work and building networks in new ways," she says. "One of the biggest challenges was to secure captioning services for meetings and rehearsals when working online. For the first month or so this took time to set up, but has now become the new norm, if you like. I think everyone was in shock for the first few weeks, then had a quick period of mourning for all the lost work, and then moved into damage-control mode. I guess this closely mirrors what has happened in many other sectors too."

While it's been particularly difficult for freelance disabled musicians to find new income streams and navigate the government assistance schemes, Sonia has been impressed by the amount of cooperation she's encountered. She says there's been a genuine sense of everyone rallying to help one another. "The next thing to worry about is the legacy of the impact that lockdown will have on the performance and theatre sectors, and if everything will reopen, and what that will look like. It's difficult to imagine this at the moment. But it also helps if disabled artists, directors and performance makers are represented at the table in those high level new cultural policy conversations for post-Covid UK."

A new normal?

So, will something good emerge for the disabled music sector, in the wake of coronavirus? Drake Music's Becky Morris Knight thinks it might. She is hopeful that some of the new ways of working established during the crisis will become permanent.

"Things have become much more accessible than normal," she states. "The switch to online means that disabled musicians who normally couldn't attend an event can now do so. We have also seen that there has been positive action across music and the arts to try to make online work accessible. For example, bringing captions to a Zoom event so the hard of hearing can still connect with what is going on. When people were rushing to put things online, issues around access were being forgotten, but then we and other organisations did some campaigning around that and suddenly there was a big effort to understand what good access looks like online."

"It is really exciting, although, of course, the worry is that it will go away when we return to normal". [mu](#)

Changing Tracks

Few industries have transformed more dramatically over the past half-century than the music industry. *The Musician* invites a panel of artists and experts to reflect on the shifting landscape since the 1970s – and its implications for your income

Report by Henry Yates

If there's a crumb of comfort to be taken from the music industry's post-pandemic straits, it's that this business has always existed on shifting sands. From the gatefold sleeves and super-earners of the 70s, to the streams and crowdfunding of 2020, the last half-century has witnessed an industry with a talent for shedding its skin, and a habit of pinballing from boom to near-bust.

In the midst of Covid-19, with the live scene's shutdown bringing the streaming model into sharp focus, there are urgent questions to be asked of giants such as Spotify, and the major labels who make a reported £636,248 every hour from the medium. Yet it's important to put this debate into the context of the industry's evolution, the listening formats and contract clauses that came and went, and what it all meant for the musicians at the sharp end.

Seismic shift

From a modern viewpoint – when around 80% of a typical musician's earnings come from live work – the 70s is an industry turned on its head. Then, most artists toured at a loss, kept afloat by advances that the record label would later recoup. "There's been a seismic shift," reflects Midge Ure, [who joined Ultravox in 1979, wrote 1980's smash-hit Vienna](#) and co-organised Live Aid.

"When you toured in the 70s, 80s and 90s, you weren't doing it to generate income. The tour was an advert for the new album, you'd be put on a £50-a-week wage, and we were always

Midge Ure says there's been a seismic shift in the way the music industry works since his early days

Photo: dpa picture alliance / Alamy/Stock Photo



presented with a bill at the end. But that wasn't a problem, because you could invest in the live aspect, and you knew you'd generate income from record sales."

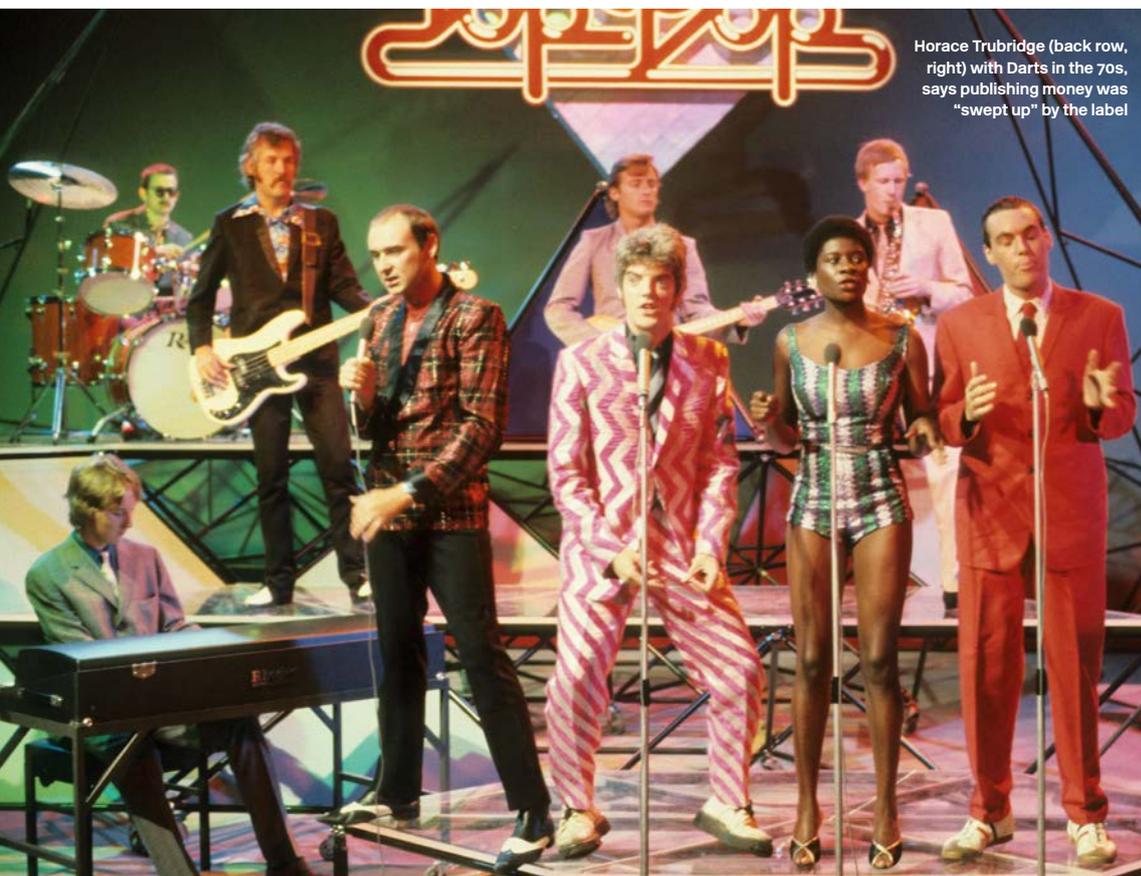
While the era's superstars could dictate better terms, it's not necessarily the case that a 70s deal was more lucrative than its modern equivalent. Ure cites 14% of the record as the best an artist might expect, while MU General Secretary, Horace Trubridge – then songwriter and saxophonist with Darts – says the theoretical 50% a writer might receive from publishing was often lost to small-print.

"If you owed money on the record side, the label took it from your publishing"

Horace Trubridge

Photo: Granger Historical Picture Archive / Alamy/Stock Photo





Horace Trubridge (back row, right) with Darts in the 70s, says publishing money was "swept up" by the label

Photo: Pictorial Press Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

"In Darts, our label and publisher were one and the same. We had a cross-collateralisation clause, so if you owed money on the record side, the label took it from your publishing. I remember getting a publishing statement saying I'd earned £9,000, but because we were unrecouped on the record side, that money was just swept up by the label. Very frustrating."

Yet for the bands that broke through, those modest percentages and punitive caveats could be offset by the sheer volume of physical sales. By 1978, UK vinyl album sales hit £163m. Released [the following year, the Sony Walkman](#) helped push cassette sales to £252m within a decade. Horace says that a Top 10 single would sell at least 300,000 units.

Such sales would result in healthy revenues for artists says Peter Jenner, who managed a nascent Pink Floyd, The Clash and Billy Bragg. "So if you were on a royalty of 10%, that was a decent amount of money. What are you getting now on streaming? Nothing like that."

Between 1983 and 1990, total recorded music sales grew at a rate of 12.3% – and it was the CD that drove the boom, with the format hitting £273m in 1990 and £1bn by the millennium. "Did bands get their slice of those high CD prices?" considers Horace. "It depends what deal they were on. When a CD sold for £10, the artist was probably getting close to a pound, which was not bad money. But it was the labels that really did well. That's why, when the tech companies said, 'MP3 is the way forward', they didn't want to know. They were just so drunk on the massive profits from CDs." →

Music Business Evolution

1978

UK vinyl album sales reach £163 million

1979

Sony Walkman released

1982

CD format launched

1986

Cassette sales hit £152 million

1990

CD sales overtake cassette, at £273 million

1991

Microsoft introduces Windows Media Player

1993

Introduction of MP3 format

1997

South Korea's SaeHan Information Systems releases first MP3 player

1999

Napster becomes first peer-to-peer (P2P) filesharing service and sparks panic across the music industry with 80 million registered users

2000

Metallica files a lawsuit against Napster

2000

Numerous P2P filesharing networks launched following Napster's lead, heralding in the age of digital piracy and the 'free' model concept

2001

Apple releases the iPod

Ultimately, with peer-to-peer (P2P) filesharing jeopardising label profits, and 2000's high-profile case of Napster versus Metallica, the industry was forced to act. Apple's iTunes Store arrived in April 2003, and the following year, 5.7 million single-track downloads sold, with an unsigned artist typically earning £0.55 apiece by 2015, according to [the data and infographics website, Information Is Beautiful](#).

Meanwhile, as live became an ever-larger income stream for musicians (51% of total earnings by 2013, followed by teaching, at 32%), record labels responded with so-called 360 deals, taking a cut of everything from merch to publishing. "During the piracy years, the labels were struggling and looked to get a piece of the action," reflects Horace. "I always thought those deals were terrible. But they still happen."

Streaming success

But if downloads briefly seemed like the future, the true line in the sand was streaming. Spotify's rise since 2008 has not been without merit. The platform has largely killed piracy ("The ad-supported version costs nothing," says Horace, "so most people opt for that rather than risk using a piracy site"). There's a clear public appetite, with the BPI reporting that streaming rose 61% from 2015 to 2016, and 90 billion streams in the UK in 2018 (up 33% year-on-year). Streaming is a big factor behind last year's *Music By Numbers* report, which found the UK music industry had contributed £5.2 billion to the economy (and £2.7 billion export revenue). Global recorded music revenues hit \$20.2 billion last year – the healthiest figure since the internet bit in 2004.

Yet there's a fundamental problem: musicians on the ground simply aren't seeing enough of that huge streaming revenue. According to [UK Music's Music By Numbers report](#), in 2018 the average musician earned £23,059 (against the UK average of £29,832). Pre-Covid, live remained the biggest income stream: it's feasible for a middle-tier band to command £20,000 for a festival set, while global merch sales reached \$3.1 billion in 2016, and anecdotally represent around 20% of a band's income.

But when Sheffield metallers While She Sleeps released a merch T-shirt that pointedly read: 'One t-shirt is the equivalent to 5,000 streams



Photo: Richard Levine / Alamy Stock Photo

In 2000, American metal giants Metallica (right), took Napster (left) to court for copyright infringement

on Spotify', they spoke for many of their generation. With the pandemic shutting down other income channels – by late-March, there had already been an estimated £13.9 million in lost earnings – the only payment hitting many musicians' bank accounts is streaming proceeds. And it's not a pretty picture.

The big streaming platforms' payment model is neither as simple or transparent as '£x per stream'. However, by taking an extensive sample that aggregates all streams and revenue against subscription and ad-supported revenues, [artist-rights blog The Trichordist](#) calculates Spotify's average per-stream payout – after the streaming platform takes its 30% cut – to be 57% (equivalent to £0.28) for the recording, plus 13% for the song. That 70% first goes to labels, publishers and collection societies, who then pay artists as per their deal. Typically, a writer-musician might expect 20% of the recording from their label, and 50% to 80% for the song from their publisher. Extrapolating those statistics in his excellent feature on streaming in the June 2020 issue of *Q Magazine*, Dorian Lynskey suggests that one million plays under a standard 20% deal would net a musician £553 (for the recording). YouTube pays even less: £180 per million views.

"We've ended up in a very bad position for the musicians," says Jenner. "Streaming is very different to CDs and vinyl, because it's a deal done by the labels with the streaming

"I have no idea where the industry is going to be in six months, a year, or ten years' time"

Midge Ure



Photo: Trinity Mirror / Mirrorpix / Alamy Stock Photo

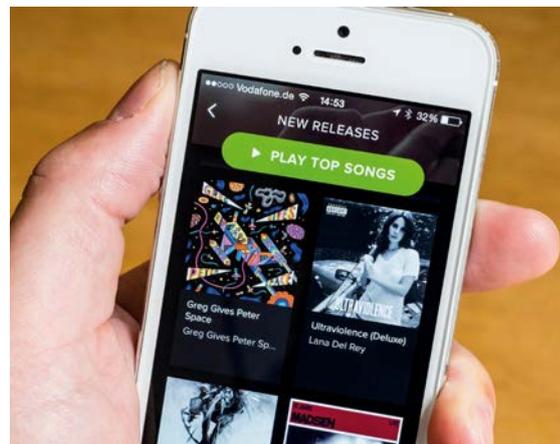


Photo: iain Maisteron / Alamy Stock Photo

services, and I don't think the artists were ever considered, except in terms of headline acts. There's no question in my mind that the musicians are being really taken to the cleaners."

Horace agrees. "Streaming has been a fantastic step forward for the music industry. The problem is, the money seems to be going everywhere but to the artists and writers. The income from streaming is very poor. Something has to change. Because the coronavirus has shone a spotlight on the fact musicians can't survive without live work. At the same time, the labels are boasting record profits. It needs a thorough, government-led investigation to see whether they need to legislate to enable artists and writers to get a fair share. Because the labels aren't going to do it voluntarily, unfortunately."

Proactive approach

So what can musicians do right now to look after their income streams? Firstly, the MU advises musicians to sign [the MU and Ivors Academy's Keep Music Alive petition](#) to address inequalities in streaming revenue. Secondly, musicians should gain an

understanding of their entitlement to royalties, and join the appropriate societies, whether that's PRS, PPL or MCPS (for mechanical royalties). "PPL is a great source of income," explains Horace, "because the right for equitable remuneration, as it's called, can't be assigned to a label. So even if you're badly unrecovered with your label, you still get your PPL money coming through. That's been an absolute godsend, and vital income. Having said that, as more people gradually migrate from radio to streaming, the equitable remuneration will reduce. That's why we're arguing that an element of streaming should be equitable remuneration, so we can ensure that musicians continue to get that money."

In the end, says Midge Ure, the best advice is to be alert, informed, proactive and ready for anything. "I have no idea where the industry is going to be in six months, a year, or ten years' time. It's belt and braces. Maybe live touring never comes back on the level that we thought it would. And if that's your main income stream, you'd better start thinking. We have to be prepared." **mu**

2003

Apple iTunes Store launched

2004

5.7 million single-track downloads sold (in a single year)

2006

One billionth song purchased from iTunes

2008

Spotify launched

2013

Digital album sales peak at 160 million

2015

Ed Sheeran's *Thinking Out Loud* passes 500 million Spotify streams

2016

Streaming accounts for 30% across overall label revenues

2018

90 billion songs are streamed in the UK

2018

Average UK musician earns £23,059

2019

UK music industry contributes £5.2 billion to the economy



Emily Breeze works on a song's lyrical context before she starts on the music

Photo: @londavey007

MAKING THE MOST OF: YOUR CREATIVITY

The creation of innovative new music requires drive, commitment and an abundance of talent. It can also involve a great deal of frustration and stress. Neil Crossley assesses how musicians can boost creativity and overcome the challenges of the creative process...

Few moments can inspire and excite in music quite like the creation of a new song or composition: a potent hookline, a haunting motif, a beautiful lyric or an innovative new sound. These are the moments when musicians, songwriters, composers and producers push boundaries, defy their own expectations and take themselves and their music to new creative heights.

Most musicians develop their own patterns and processes for writing, but the truth is that even those with enviable back catalogues can hit creative walls at times and fear that their mojo has deserted them. At such moments it can be worth reassessing the way you work, noting how others do it, and trying different approaches. By shining a light on your working methods it may be possible to refine your processes and empower yourself to create even more inspiring and innovative music.

Getting Inspired

Creativity by its very nature is a highly personal and individual process with the imagination, thoughts, emotions and memories of the creators fuelling the idiosyncratic whole. This is abundantly clear when it comes to the first stage in the process – the inspiration.

“There are countless things around us, sights and sounds that can trigger our creativity,” says [Craig Stratton of Modulus Quartet](#), a London-based string ensemble that prides itself on working with contemporary

composers. “We can be inspired by listening and watching others. Let’s not forget too, that great art, music and literature were created through love and tragedy.”

The possibilities are infinite. A title or feeling alone can spark an entire narrative, as can an overheard phrase, a powerful emotion, sorrow, elation, discontentment or a desire for political change. The key is to be attuned to spotting inspiration and acting upon it. Many simply wait for inspiration to hit. But for working creators this is not an option.

Proactive approach

“I have long been impressed by the Nick Cave method,” says [singer-songwriter and musician Emily Breeze](#), who also teaches at BIMM in Bristol. “Apparently he has an office with a piano and a typewriter and works on his songs from nine to five as opposed to waiting for the planets to align and a fully formed song to emerge out of a dream. He says, ‘inspiration is a word used by people who aren’t really doing anything. I go into my office every day when I am in Brighton and work – whether I feel like it or not is irrelevant’.”

The key is to dedicate yourself to the craft of songwriting or composing, putting in the hours even when you appear to have little to show for it at times. As Breeze notes: “If I turn up and dedicate my time and focus, something will happen, and the more frequently I do it, the quicker and richer the results will be,” she says.

For most songwriters and composers, the simple germ of a good idea is enough to compel them to begin. “Sometimes, I’ll wake

“I want to experiment with techniques to unlock my creativity more”

Bishi Bhattacharya

up with an idea that I have to sing into my iPhone immediately,” says [Bishi Bhattacharya, a London-based musician](#). “Sometimes musical phrases come to me when I’m on the tube. Sometimes, ideas arise from just improvising with instruments and pedals.”

As a teenager, Bishi would deconstruct songs, which she says was a great method to unlocking why she loved a piece of music. “I apply the same approach when I study orchestral scores or Indian ragas. I want to experiment with techniques to unlock my creativity more. As I manage myself and run [a platform called WITCiH](#), I am always looking for creative techniques to discard the associated stress with spinning a lot of plates.”

Lyric-led writing

Songwriting and composing techniques vary wildly of course. Some writers will flesh out a motif, a skeleton chord sequence or a top line melody, by which time a lyrical phrase or theme may have presented themselves. Others, [like Emily Breeze](#), will focus on lyrics first, and these will drive the direction of the song.

Craig Stratton of Modulus Quartet suggests looking outside of your own direct influences when writing



RANDOM SYSTEMS

When asked how to boost creativity, three of the contributors interviewed for this piece cited Brian Eno. "I read about Eno having a process where he puts on sketches at random on his sound system and he works on whatever grabs him," says Bishi. "That's something that I've found really inspiring."

Eno's first foray into random creative processes came in 1975, when he and artist Peter Schmidt launched *Oblique Strategies*, a set of cue cards derived from the I Ching, which have [the potential to send projects off at unexpected tangents](#), forcing artists into unfamiliar and often uncomfortable scenarios. He used a similar technique while producing *The Lodger* album for David Bowie, writing chords on a blackboard for guitarist Carlos Alomar to play.

"He'd say, 'Okay I'm going to point to that chord and you play that chord,'" recalled Alomar in the BBC documentary *Five Years*. "I'd be like, 'Dude... hey Brian look... this isn't working for me man'. I mean, some of it worked, some of it didn't, but quite honestly it did take me out of my comfort zone and it did make me leave my frustration at what I was doing and totally look at it from a different point of view. And although I didn't like the point of view, when I came back, I was fresh."



"I am a lyric-led writer, so without a theme or a line, a chain of chords carries no meaning," she says. "I recently wrote a song about Anna Nicole Smith after seeing her wedding photos. A pretty pastel chapel, rows of vacant foldaway chairs and Anna, statuesque in a virginal white orgasm of frothy lace and roses, gazing down fondly on her intended, 89-year-old Texan oil billionaire J Howard Marshall. The photo is genuinely beautiful and struck me as the most extreme example of the transactional nature of love. Female anti heroes inspire me and I think she is brilliant, terrible and thrillingly three-dimensional."

Breeze says she enjoyed the voyeuristic research process and summoning words that rhyme – or can be forced to rhyme – with the refrain, 'Oh Anna Nicole' – for instance, 'silicone', 'centrefold' or 'overdose'. "This process informed the chords, I wanted something that sounded like a cross between [Link Wray's Rumble](#) and a Bond theme with a strip club beat and a cellophane sheen to the production. Of course it probably sounds like none of these things but I was reaching out and am proud of the results."

Having a strong, clear idea from the outset is invaluable when creating new work. But even if the writer only has the sketchiest of ideas, the general advice is to just start and not to

worry if some of it sounds terrible at first. This is all part of the creative process. Don't be tempted to start editing or seek perfection as you go along, but explore and exploit your thought processes as fully as possible.

The problems arise of course when inspiration fails to appear in the first place, or if find yourself unable to start or finish a composition. In such situations the general advice is to step away and try something entirely different.

Creative collaboration

"I would advise any musician who feels that they are stuck creatively to meet with other artists, to listen to music, to read, and of course to practice, even if it's just technical work," says Craig Stratton. "There's nothing like a social gathering to inspire creativity, and you certainly don't need the instruments to generate artistic ideas."

It's a view echoed by Bishi Bhattacharya. "I would encourage musicians to spend a lot of time exploring their interests, safe in the knowledge that these are ever-expanding. I'd encourage people to try writing different

© Drafthouse Films/Courtesy Everett Collection



Nick Cave follows a disciplined nine-to-five routine in his office

styles and experiment in the writing process with other people, where you can combine your strengths. When you are on the same wavelength, only good things will develop.”

As senior business lecturer at BIMM in London, Andrew Armour is accustomed to coaching students on productivity, self-management, creativity and happiness. He believes that creators must take a broader approach, making changes to their lifestyles and wellbeing in order to flourish creatively.

“Creative and talented people will have high drive and will put pressure on themselves. We often talk about flow, that feeling of almost timeless focus and dedication that people get when they are in the zone. To some people this drive can appear unreasonable and even obsessive, and that puts a lot of self-pressure on talented people themselves and on their friends and family. Recognising this and learning how to balance that kind of drive is something all creatives have to deal with.”

Step-by-step

Armour advises creators to take a more positive approach by focusing on the present and the small step-by-step achievements rather than the epic long-term goals. He also advises creators to make slight changes to their systems and habits. “Manage yourself

“Creative people will have high drive and will put pressure on themselves”

Andrew Armour

and be autonomous, as that is incredibly positive. What would you say to a friend? Maybe a change of routine? What do you need to stop doing? What can you start doing? What do you need to do more of? Do you need to work more with others or do you need time to focus on something technical?”

Armour advises musicians to keep mentally fit too, by exercising “that curiosity muscle”, perhaps looking at areas of interest like history, science or cooking. By focusing on something else, musicians, songwriters, composers and producers will feel refreshed when they return to their work, he says. And when it comes to starting work, there is one technique that can reap real creative dividends he says.

“As a practical behaviour, I have seen that [the Pomodoro technique](#) is very effective, both in terms of reducing stress and simply getting things done when it comes to music students or creative people. It simply requires working very intensely, in short bursts of 20-30 minutes, then stopping, then starting again. It builds a freshness and a focus.”

Be kind on yourself

Armour says that most creative people always feel there are more challenges, fresh projects and bigger stages to perform on. This inevitably brings frustration and stress. One important lesson all creatives must learn is to “be kind on themselves” he says,

“Avoid regretting the past or too much wishing about the future. Recognising that everyone gets stuck and accepting that most creative work can be frustrating at times is a good and decent place to start. It is okay to feel like that and then move on. Everyone has to find their own way to build what suits them and take care to build what is important for you, and your work.” 

Top 5 Tips

How to kick start your creative process

1

Just get started

Even if you all you have is a phrase or a couple of chords, just start writing. Putting ideas down on paper will often help spark creativity and lead to a more coherent theme. Don't worry if it sounds awful, that's part of the process.

2

Shake it up

Breaking out of your usual pattern can be enlightening. Try writing in a different genre, on a different instrument, or in a different tuning. Collaboration can also yield unexpected results.

3

Change of scene

All advice suggests that wrenching yourself away from your creative workspace can be hugely beneficial. Physical exercise in particular – even a simple walk around the block – will help rest and reinvigorate the mind.

4

Morning glory

The first few minutes of the day are the optimum time for our minds to be creative. This is because our natural self-critical faculties have yet to kick in. Use this time to come up with creative ideas.

5

Keep an open mind

Immerse yourself in new sights and sounds, and remain open to new influences. Visuals can be a strong inspiration, and listening to unfamiliar styles of music can also lead you down new creative paths.

ASK US FIRST

Ask Us First is a list of names of individuals, companies and businesses published in MU communications for the information and guidance of the Union's members.

It is in the interest of MU members to read the list carefully. Members are advised that offers of engagement by or on behalf of companies and businesses on the list should be referred to the relevant MU Office before acceptance. A professional approach is especially important at a time when any offers of work are welcome, and members may be seeking opportunities from new contacts.

Promotion companies

Some artist promotion companies have been known to approach MU members to sign them up, usually demanding an upfront registration fee. Members are advised to view any company or business that requires an upfront payment with a large dose of scepticism and to consult the Union before signing any agreements or parting with any money.

Contract Advisory Service

Throughout their professional life, musicians may be required to enter

into complex and often long-term agreements for such services as touring, recording, songwriting, management and merchandising. It is vital that musicians receive expert advice on the terms and implications of such contracts. To cater for this the MU offers members a Contract Advisory Service (CAS), which, in the vast majority of cases, is available at no cost, and grants up to an hour of our specialist solicitor's time on any music contract. To make use of the CAS service, please contact your Regional Office.

MU Standard Contracts

Members are also strongly advised to obtain written confirmation of all engagements. The MU produces Standard Contracts for engagement, and these are available from your Regional Office or at theMU.org

Invoicing

Ensure you get fair reward for your musical efforts and do not leave things

to chance. Invoice your engager promptly and professionally and prevent those who owe you money from taking advantage of your goodwill. You are in a business and will not survive if you cannot collect debts promptly.

Unscrupulous agents, managers and engagers benefit from those who fail to handle such issues. Others' cash flow problems are exactly that and should not become yours. If you are not paid as required, then the Union's legal services are designed to assist you.

Late Payment of Commercial Debts

MU members are reminded of the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, which seeks to protect against late payers.

Under this Act, you may be able to claim statutory interest on, and also possibly compensation for, late payment. For more information, please visit payontime.co.uk

ASK US FIRST

If you are offered any work or agreements by any of the parties listed below, please consult the MU contact shown before you accept. Where no specific MU contact or office is listed, please contact MU In-house Solicitor Official Dawn Rodger on 020 7840 5516 or email dawn.rodger@theMU.org

The latest edition of the Ask Us First list can be obtained from the 'Advice' section by logging into theMU.org

- Achim Holub
- The Akademia
Jamie Pullman 020 7840 5532
- The Convent / Matt Roberts / Charlotte Roberts / August Templar
Jamie Pullman 020 7840 5532
- Dutch Van Spall t/a Big Help Music
Stephen Brown 0121 236 4028
- Earcandy / Benjamin William Rogers
Natalie Witts 020 7840 5552
- Fest Camden
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028
- Gatecrasher Classical Limited / Rampant Lion Music Limited / Simon Raine Thrall / Scott Bond
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028
- Geronimo Festival / Geronimo Events Ltd
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028
- Jan Mulder / Miller Music USA
Phil Kear 020 7840 5557
- Jonathan Gilbert aka Jonny Gilbert
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553
- Kaaren Ragland/John Steele and Sound of the Supremes
- London Community Gospel Choir / MVLS Records
Geoff Ellerby 020 7840 5559
- London Music Centre (teaching agency)
Natalie Witts-Kilshaw 0207 840 5552
- MB-Xperiential Limited / Guildford Jazz Festival
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553
- Neil Eckersley / Speculation Entertainment Ltd / Wonderland The Musical Ltd
- The Parrot / Nicky Caulfield
Jamie Pullman 020 7840 5532
- Oren Rosenblum
Barry Dallman 0161 236 1764
- Productions at Southwark Playhouse
- Ross Dorrance t/a Skinny Music
Sam Jordan 020 7840 5553
- Thomas Simmonds
- Steve Robertson / Good Times Roll Ltd / Escape From Reality Ltd / Hi Res Agency Ltd
Ben Benson 0121 236 4028
- Tom McLean / Cherry Pie Music
Chris Walters 020 7840 5554

To submit an album or download track for review, send recordings and PR material to:

The Musician,
60-62 Clapham Rd,
London SW9 0JJ or
email TheMusician@theMU.org

You should also forward your cover artwork and/or photos (minimum 300dpi resolution) to: keith.ames@theMU.org

We try to help as many members as possible, and preference is given to members not previously reviewed.



reviews

Reviewer: Roy Delaney

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for 2020, together with links for more information on the featured artists.



NICK PYNN

47

Photo: Prof. Corne Kros

To call Nick a versatile musician would be to vastly underestimate his career. From playing with Steve Harley and Arthur Brown, via his work with comedians the calibre of Rich Hall, Stewart Lee, Jo Neary and Omid Djalili, to his regular theatre work and a stint with the Lost And Found Orchestra, he likes to keep busy on different projects.

But it is his solo work that is perhaps his most interesting of all. Following hot on the heels of his more experimental *Flipside* CD, *A Fiddle Album* is the culmination of a 15 year project that saw him collecting traditional fiddle tunes from around the world, including many pieces that he picked up from busking around Europe in his late teens.

Both projects, however, are welcome products of the lockdown. "I actually had the Covid symptoms for three weeks over March and April," he explains, "so I used this quarantine to creative ends – remixing, re-recording, and self-mastering both albums, throwing myself into the process to get them finished. I fully recovered, thankfully."



» NICK PYNN A Fiddle Album

Less experimental than much of his solo work, Nick sets aside the avant folk for an entirely more traditional sound. Taking in fiddle tunes from much of Europe, Turkey and North America this is a versatile selection of the finest folk sounds. nickpynnmusic.com

folk



» KEVIN HENDERSON & NEIL PEARLMAN Burden Lake

A collaboration between Shetland fiddler Kevin Henderson and American pianist Neil Pearlman. The traditional Celtic fiddle and jazz-tinged piano complement each other perfectly to lively effect.

kevinandneil.com



» JOSHUA BURNELL Flowers Where The Horses Sleep

A rising star on the British folk scene, this album's slick production offers massive crossover potential, from fine poppy-edged songs like *Le Fay* to full on traditional stomps.

joshuaburnell.co.uk



» RURA Live At The Old Fruit Market

One of the most exciting propositions on the Scottish folk scene, Rura have harnessed their incredible live power into this collection of eleven fine pieces, recorded as part of Celtic Connections in Glasgow early in 2020.

rura.co.uk



» SKERRYVORE Live Across Scotland

Effectively a whole Scottish tour on CD, the band's tunes range from old time jigs and laments, to more contemporary country-rock get downs, all infused with a deep love of their craft.

skerryvore.com

rock



» ACIVILIAN Newsfeeder

Norfolk native Phil Critten's second full-length release blends crunchy mod punk with late-90s alt rock, which results in a thoroughly enjoyable affair. Breakneck opener *Minor Threat*, *Major Problem* and laid back rap rocker *Stevie, You're A Halfwit* are the stand out tracks here.

acivilian.bandcamp.com



» COPPER STILL King Of Procrastination

Dirty, bluesy hard rock by this young band from the East of Scotland. Massive amounts of light and shade permeate through the music, as singer Lee's haunted voice spins tales of longing and regret.

tinyurl.com/copstill

jazz



» RED SHADOW QUARTET Still

With Peter Hayes on piano, Trevor Rowland on sax, Dave Pullin on bass and Rob Masters on the drums, these smoky relaxed tunes are a pleasure for the ears.

tinyurl.com/redshadq



» DAVE MILLIGAN Momento

This fine Scottish pianist teams up with crack Italian rhythm section Danillo Gallo and U.T. Gandhi for an album of delicate-yet-edgy sounds that never quite rest on their laurels, and take you to places that you don't always expect.

davemilligan.co.uk



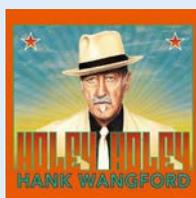
» DAVID BEEBEE David Beebee Quartet

Featuring Loose Tubes stalwart Julian Nicholas on sax, this minimal set meanders delightfully around its central themes, often with dynamic and surprising left turns. Quite the collection.

davidbeebee.org.uk

STAND OUT

This month's highlights include an atmospheric release from a British country pop veteran, and a massively eclectic benefit for Help Musicians



» HANK WANGFORD Holy Holey

British country trailblazer Hank is back with a new collection of heartwarming ballads and bouncy barnstormers, all flavoured with zydeco fringes, western swing shuffling and sleazy honky tonk guitars. A fabulous return to form.

hankwangford.co.uk



» MUSICIANS FOR MUSICIANS Many Voices On A Theme Of Isolation

A gloriously eclectic fundraiser for Help Musicians featuring an impossibly broad range of genres, from indie to jangly pop, chamber music to math rock, and folk to stoner blues.

tinyurl.com/mvoato1

instrumental

» **A KU STICK ROQUCER**
No Words No Title

This instrumental solo project by multi-instrumentalist Rowland Civil, known more commonly as Rowlie, offers moments of prog, pomp, rock and reggae, all based on events from his long and eventful life.

akustikroqucer.wixsite.com/mysite

» **KULJIT BHAMRA & DAVIDE GIOVANNINI**
Spiders Tango

With Kuljit on tablas and Davide on a more traditional drumkit, this percussive face-off is accompanied by The Villiers Quartet, blending traditions from countries and continents into an enthralling whole.

kedarecords.com

» **SCANNER**
An Ascent

Robin Rimbaud has been producing dark and sparse electronic music under the name Scanner for nearly 30 years. This collection of pieces inspired by the unsettling nature of lockdown is at once deeply restful and yet utterly fractious and otherworldly.

scannerdot.com

singer/songwriter

» **SASKIA**
Are You Listening?

Delicate and atmospheric guitar ballads, delivered in Saskia's angelic and confident voice. The personal songs about love and aging are topped off with a warm yet fragile version of *Hallelujah*.

saskiagm.com

» **THE VILLAGE**
Escape From The Witchwood

Based on old English myths and some overheard stories, Phil Matthews delivers a collection of delightfully whimsical songs that tell vivid stories of curious characters and strange situations.

thevillage.me.uk

» **JENNI**
Spring

Accompanied by her regular partner in crime Richard Carter on guitars and percussion, Jenni's songs are either bright and breezy pop tunes or sad and poignant ballads, all laced up with a most personal lyrical edge.

jennygould.net

classical

» **NICOLA HANDS & JONATHAN PEASE**
Light & Shade

This long-standing partnership joyfully interpret pieces from the oboe's core repertoire by Saint-Saëns and Schumann, as well as lesser known work by the composers Goepfert and Paladilhe.

nicolahandsoboe.com
jonathanpease.co.uk

» **BASS-ICALLY BRILLIANT**
Music For Cello And Double Bass

South Africa born duo Peter Martens and Leon Bosch, both major names in their own right, team up on the orchestra's string driven big boys to play the works of Rossini, Dragonetti, Boccherini and many more great names.

<https://bit.ly/3oNYk1l>

» **CATHERINE TANNER-WILLIAMS & CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS**
Oboe Sonatas

Cornish oboist Catherine plays rarely recorded twentieth century works by Arnold Cooke and Richard Elfyn Jones, plus two of her own pieces, all accompanied by her husband Christopher.

catherinetannerwilliams.com

acoustic

» **THE JAKE LEG JUG BAND**
Goodbye Booze

Duncan Wilcox and his team of troubadours celebrate the songs and sentiments of prohibition era America with a roustabout singalong aplomb and quaintly jarring English accents. Lots of fun.

thejakelegjugband.com

» **PASSAMEZZO**
They That In Ships Unto The Sea Down Go

Subtitled *Music For The Mayflower*, the early music specialists mark the 400th anniversary of the New World with a collection of poignant folk songs of the day.

passamezzo.co.uk

» **THE WILDERNESS YET**
The Wilderness Yet

This up-and-coming folky three-piece feature the rich vocals of BBC Young Folk Award finalist Rosie Hodgson on these jaunty tunes.

thewildernessyet.com

Tools Of The Trade

Top session drummer Ralph Salmins explains how he keeps his kit in working order

Report by Clive Somerville

Ralph Salmins' CV is simply astounding. He's worked with Aretha Franklin, James Brown, Paul McCartney, Quincy Jones, Elton John, and Burt Bacharach among a host of stellar artists. He was an integral part of Van Morrison's band in the 90s, and has been with The Waterboys for almost a decade. The highly versatile player is one of the most in-demand drummers in the world.

It took three years for Ralph to persuade his parents to buy him a drum kit, but he got his first pro gig just four years later, at 16. "It was a function band in a marquee, in front of around a thousand people!" recalls Ralph. "I was too green to be nervous. I just got on and did it. I remember this huge book of tunes in front of me and madly thumbing through them, just trying to keep up."

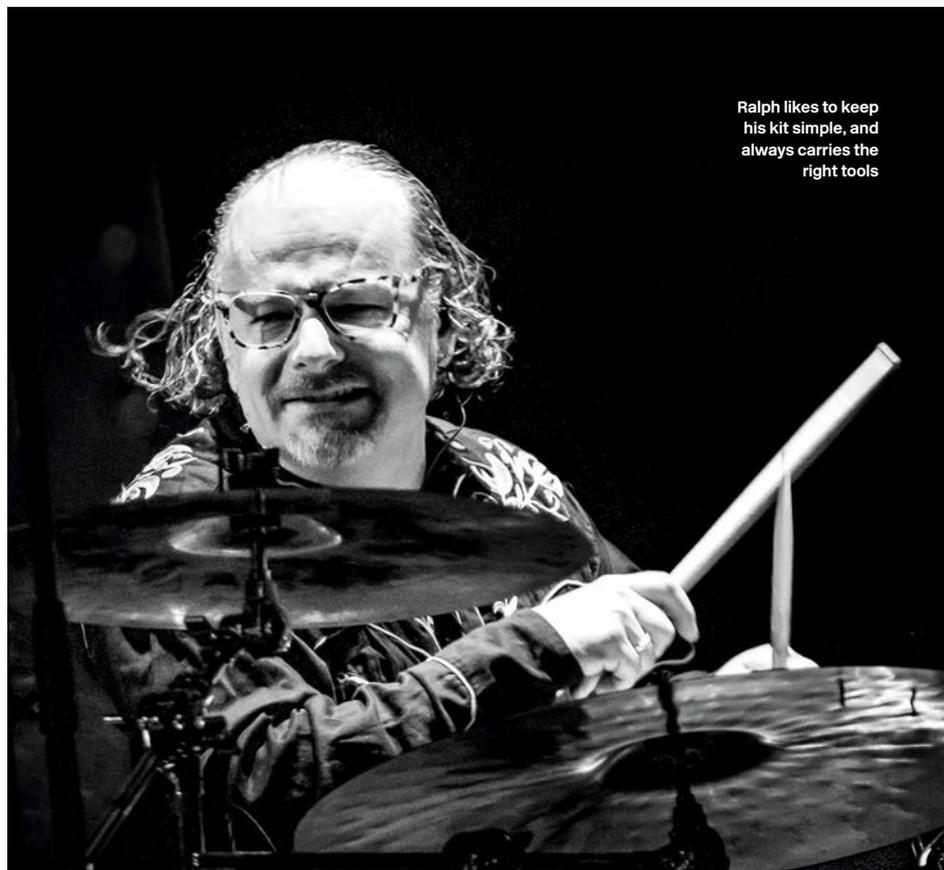
Minimal kit

These days, his kit might be better quality but he still favours a simple set-up. "I use a Gretsch kit – bass drum, mounted tom, floor tom and snare drums, plus two rides and a hi-hat," he explains. "I might swap a few things depending on the type of music I'm playing but it's basically a four-piece kit. The simpler it is, the easier it is to look after and the less to go wrong."

"I'm fortunate to have a drum tech for gigs, a guy I've known for years called Rob Jones,

"Drums have a lot of parts, which can squeak or rattle, so check them regularly"

Photo: Howard Rankin



Ralph likes to keep his kit simple, and always carries the right tools

who's fantastic. Once he's set up, I'll just spend a bit of time tweaking things. I generally like a big, fat muddy sound on the bass drum – dry and easy to play. I check the heads on the snare and toms often. If I see them getting pitted, I change them for new ones. I use good quality heads – Ambassadors – plus Moongel pads to muffle the snare."

Handy bag

His gig bag holds a few essentials too. "I always have a Leatherman multi-tool, a set of hex keys and a spare set of drum keys in case I'm using rented equipment and my usual keys don't fit. I'll also take some in-ear monitors."

The warm, dry environs of his Hertfordshire studio The Bunker are ideal for his gear. "Drum kits don't like damp – there's a lot of chrome and that can easily get rusty. The other thing is to play often, so you can see how the kit's playing – drums have a lot of parts, which can squeak or rattle, so check them regularly."

Ralph has so far avoided any kit damage in transit. "I've flown loads and I always put the kit in the hold. I put the drums and cymbals in foam-lined, hard cases. Even if something is

dropped, the kit is protected." He is also selective about what he takes with him. "I use the modern versions of any vintage gear. That stuff's too fragile to travel and too valuable to risk being stolen."

Often there's an even safer option. "When we recorded the Waterboys album *Modern Blues* in Nashville, I just rented a very good kit out there and set it up how I needed it. We had Muscle Shoals bass player David Hood playing on that and he toured with us afterwards. What a thrill it was to play with him."

Life on Zoom

Lockdown has brought its own challenges. "I've been able to teach on Zoom and Teams [in his other roles as Professor of Drum Kit with The Royal College and The Guildhall] and work remotely with other musicians, so that helps," he says. "In fact, some of the latest Waterboys album was made in lockdown. I'm spending more time with my family, too, and we're still getting on!" 

The new Waterboys album, *Good Luck, Seeker is due out on 21 August. For more on Ralph, visit ralphsalmins.com*

Have you registered for your MU benefits?

While membership of the MU offers a wide range of free services, there are a number of benefits that you need to register or apply for.

MU website

To fully access our website – theMU.org – you will need to register on your first visit using your membership number.

Contract advice – before you sign

Receive professional advice on the terms and implications of any complex agreements via our Contract Advisory Service. Contact your Regional Office to find out more.

Instrument and equipment insurance

For £2,000 worth of free musical instrument and equipment cover. Register by calling Hencilla Canworth on **020 8686 5050**.

Partnership advice

If all the members of your group are already MU members, or

decide to join, we can offer free partnership advice and an agreement. Contact your Regional Office for more information.

Motoring service

The MU Family Motoring and Accident Aftercare Scheme provides 24/7 cover. Members must enter discount code MU24 to obtain free membership of the scheme. Register now via telephone or the web. mu.assistprotect.co.uk/TMAJoinFree.cfm

Musician's Hearing Services

A range of hearing related services for MU members. For an appointment, call MHS on **020 7486 1053** or visit musicianshearingservices.co.uk

Help Musicians UK

Charity offering practical, positive support to emerging, professional

and retired musicians, whatever the genre. helpmusicians.org.uk

Medical assistance

The British Association for Performing Arts Medicine delivers specialist health support to musicians. Visit bapam.org.uk

Music Minds Matter

A comprehensive mental health support service providing advice, information, resources, and professional and clinical services for musicians in need of help. musicmindsmatter.org.uk

Music Support

A charity for individuals in the UK music industry suffering from mental, emotional and behavioural health disorders. musicsupport.org

For full details of all the benefits of MU membership see *Members' Handbook*.

MU Sections

To join, contact the relevant MU Official.

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National Organiser
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Music Writers' Section

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Live & Music Writers' Official
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Recording & Broadcasting Section

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E theatre@theMU.org



Are you due a royalty payment from the Musicians' Union for the use of any of your recordings in television programmes, films or adverts? Are you the next of kin of a musician who used to receive royalties from us?

The Musicians' Union pays royalties to a growing number of musicians for the secondary exploitation of their recordings. In most cases we know which musicians performed on the recording and already have their contact and payment details, so the royalty income can be distributed straight away. However, there is a certain amount of income we have collected that we cannot distribute as we have not been able to identify who

performed on the recording; or we do know the names of the musicians but we have been unable to trace them or their next of kin. If you can assist the Musicians' Union with line-up information or contact details, visit theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties. Here, you will be able to find more information on the types of royalty income we collect, as well as lists of musicians and recording line-ups we are currently trying to trace.

theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties

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#BehindEveryMusician