

The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union
Spring 2021
theMU.org



The Road To Nowhere

The bureaucracy and cost of working in the EU post-Brexit makes touring unprofitable and arduous. So what exactly is being done?

contacts

Union HQ

General Secretary
Horace Trubridge

Deputy General Secretary
Naomi Pohl

Assistant General Secretary
Phil Kear

National Organiser
Jo Laverty (*Orchestras*)

National Organiser
Chris Walters
(*Education, Health & Wellbeing*)

National Organiser
Geoff Ellerby (*Recording & Broadcasting*)

National Organiser
Dave Webster (*Live Performance*)

Head of Communications
& Government Relations
Isabelle Gutierrez

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Official
John Shortell

In-House Solicitor
Dawn Rodger

Orchestras Official
Morris Stemp

PR & Marketing Official
Keith Ames

Campaigns & Social Media Official
Maddy Radcliff

Digital Development Official
Katerina Baranova

Head of Finance
Beverley Dawes

Live & Music Writers' Official
Kelly Wood

Sessions Official
Sam Jordan

Recording & Broadcasting Official
Michael Sweeney

Licensing & Distribution Official
Annie Turner

Education Official
David Barnard

Head of Membership
Wasim Yunus

Regional Offices

London

Regional Organiser: Jamie Pullman
33 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PE
T 020 7840 5504
E london@theMU.org

East & South East England

Regional Organiser: Paul Burrows
1a Fentiman Road, London SW8 1LD
T 020 7840 5537
E eastsoutheast@theMU.org

Midlands

Regional Organiser: Stephen Brown
2 Sovereign Court, Graham Street,
Birmingham B1 3JR
T 0121 236 4028
E midlands@theMU.org

Wales & South West England

Regional Organiser: Andy Warnock
Transport House, 1 Cathedral Rd,
Cardiff CF11 9SD
T 029 2045 6585
E cardiff@theMU.org

North of England

Regional Organiser: Matt Wanstall
61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY
T 0161 236 1764
E manchester@theMU.org

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Acting Regional Organiser: Barry Dallman
2 Woodside Place, Glasgow G3 7QF
T 0141 341 2960
E glasgow@theMU.org

Union HQ

60-62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ

T 020 7582 5566
F 020 7582 9805
E info@theMU.org

w theMU.org
@WeAreTheMU

**Musicians'
Union**



Action In Uncertain Times

With the duel attack of Covid and Brexit making our working lives ever more unpredictable, there's still some positive news on the streaming debate



Horace Trubridge,
General Secretary

While it is often falsely attributed to Chinese folklore, the origins of the saying 'may you live in interesting times' are in fact unknown. Nevertheless, whoever said it first clearly knew a thing or two. I can hardly believe that this time last year, the MU was enjoying an unprecedented growth in membership, work in the profession was relatively abundant and Conservative politicians were repeatedly assuring us that touring in the EU post-Brexit would be as frictionless as it was pre-Brexit. Fast forward 12 months and we have a profession on its knees with all live performance wiped out, the absurd complexities of working in the EU becoming more and more apparent, and a Conservative government completely deaf to the needs of so many who have fallen through the gaps in the SEISS. So, yes, we are all living through 'interesting times' and for many the pain is excruciating.

Due to the longish lead-in required for publishing *The Musician*, I am writing this column in the middle of February and soon the PM is due to make an announcement about the easing of lockdown restrictions. It appears likely that the first step towards something like normality will be the reopening of schools, and provided that doesn't lead to another spike in the 'R' rate, shops and hospitality will be allowed a phased reopening in due course. Where does that leave live performance?

What is clear from the various working groups that I attend is that it really depends on the nature of the event. A socially distanced musical theatre production with testing and maybe even vaccine passports is far more likely to be allowed than a sweaty stand-up gig. Equally, carefully managed orchestral concerts may well be possible long before it is deemed safe to stage outdoor festivals.

Most in the live industry believe that a return to a fully functioning live sector will not be likely until there is sufficient roll-out of the vaccine programme and/or fast and effective testing. However, as the weather warms up and more people are vaccinated we are all cautiously hoping for some kind of summer of 'live'. We will be pulling out every possible stop to get the Chancellor to provide assistance to our members and we will be asking you, once again, to help us to keep up the pressure.

Disaster Area

I casually joked to a colleague last week that there may have been shades of Douglas Adams in the final days of negotiating what is laughingly referred to as the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. I can just see the negotiators on both sides saying something like 'this touring musicians thing is proving

damned tricky, what about the fish'. Whatever was said the results are a disaster for our sector, and many others across the creative and cultural industries. We are now facing an uphill struggle in identifying where work visas, work permits, carnets, cabotage and haulage present obstacles for touring musicians, and that's before we start unravelling the complexities of social security, VAT and withholding tax.

It's clear that the EU made an offer which didn't fit with the UK government's 'taking back control of our borders' mantra, and the counter-offer from the UK was rejected by the EU. As a direct result, the future prospects for musicians wanting to work overseas have been sacrificed on the altar of political idealism, and we must never let this government forget how badly they have let us all down.

Making Headway

I want to end on some good news. The DCMS Select Committee Inquiry into the Economics of Streaming is rolling on apace and the mood music of the MPs involved is very positive. The label bosses got a rough ride from the MPs, and the evidence given by many musicians painted a very clear picture of the unfairness of the current system that seemed to resonate with the committee. After the complete disaster of the last twelve months it would be great to think that we might at last be making some headway on this vital issue.

Finally, I want to thank you all for granting us the great honour of representing you, supporting you and fighting for you. From a very early age I knew that all I ever wanted to do was hang out with musicians. You are a fantastic lot and I'm immensely proud to lead you through these challenging times.

Very best wishes
Horace Trubridge



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

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Yazz Ahmed

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Photo: Mark Allan

MU Contributors



Andrew Stewart

Andrew writes for *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *Classical Music* and *BBC Music Magazine*, among many others. He is also Director of Southwark Voices. **p32**



Katie Nicholls

Katie is a freelance journalist and editor whose features and reviews have appeared in titles such as *Mojo*, *The Guardian* and *Kerrang!* **p12**



Yemi Abiade

Yemi is a freelance writer and contributing editor for *TRENCH* Mag. He has written for *The Guardian*, *VICE*, *The Face* and many others. **p36**



Gary Walker

Gary has been a journalist for 20 years, most recently editing *Long Live Vinyl* magazine. He's hopelessly addicted to reverb pedals and Gretsch guitars. **p28**



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 Hackshaw. **p45**



Neil Churchman

Neil is an experienced journalist in broadcasting and print. A former BBC national newsroom assistant editor, he now writes on music and the media. **p20**



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. **p40**



Jane Cornwell

Jane is jazz critic for the *London Evening Standard*, contributing editor of *Songlines* magazine, longtime scribe for *Jazzwise* and more. **p16**

Photo: Seb J Peters

Cover: © MirageC / Getty Images



CORONAVIRUS HARDSHIP FUND To find out if you are eligible to apply for a support grant of £200 from the MU, please visit musiciansunion.org.uk/HardshipFund

frontline

Spring 2021

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians

MU Secures ATA Carnet Discounts For Musicians Touring In The EU

Musicians' Union members touring in the EU are now eligible for significant discounts on the cost of ATA carnets, the documents required for transporting instruments and equipment across EU borders, post-Brexit. While the MU lobbied hard against Brexit, the agreement reached with the EU means that currently ATA carnets are a reality for working musicians.

The MU has been in discussion with two leading carnet providers, the London Chamber of Commerce (LCC) and Boomerang Carnets UK, a US company based in the UK. We are grateful for the support they have shown musicians in agreeing a package of discounts when acquiring an ATA carnet for working in Europe and beyond. Both companies have offered generous discounts for MU members and will also assist with free advice before embarking upon the process.

Valuable Help For Members

MU Deputy General Secretary Naomi Pohl welcomed the discounts. "We are very grateful to both the London Chamber of Commerce and Boomerang Carnets UK who have offered our members favourable terms and advice when applying for an ATA carnet. We never wanted it to come to this, but we hope these schemes will help our members, who have been hit so hard by both Covid and Brexit, to plan to work in the EU."

Samm Henshaw performs at the North Sea Jazz Festival on 13 July 2019, in Rotterdam



Photo: Peter Van Breukelen / Getty Image

The MU advises all members working in the EU in the near future to acquire an ATA carnet. If you are travelling with instruments and equipment in a car or van, then you will currently need a carnet.

Members are advised to contact the LCC and/or Boomerang to talk through their needs and obtain a customised quotation. Please ensure that you have your MU membership number to prove qualification for this valuable member-only benefit. To apply for a discounted ATA Carnet contact:

London Chamber of Commerce
mu.ecarnet.co.uk

Boomerang Carnets UK
boomerangcarnets.co.uk/obtain-carnet

"We never wanted it to come to this, but we hope these schemes will help our members"

Naomi Pohl

Tory U-Turn On Workers' Rights

A controversial government review that could erode workers' rights was axed on 28 January, following pressure from the Labour Party and 11 trade unions, including the MU. A report in the *Financial Times* on 14 January exposed talks to dilute protections on the 48-hour working week, the inclusion of overtime in holiday pay and rules over break times after long working hours.

Drawn up as part of a post-Brexit overhaul of UK labour markets, the plans sparked outrage from unions and the opposition, and prompted a U-turn. Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng denied the plans were intended to water down workers' rights, insisting that the UK was a champion for workers' rights. But the unions saw these talks as the tearing up of hard earned rights during a national crisis and united in opposition.

Within two weeks, on the 28 January, the business secretary announced the talks had been abandoned. In a joint statement with 11 other unions the MU said: "The whole of the labour movement will fight tooth and nail to protect and extend our rights".

Shielding Concerns

Joint research by the MU and The Ivors Academy, released in February, revealed that 70% of their members who are shielding do not feel they can return to work until they are vaccinated. Worryingly, almost all respondents (95%) do not believe the government has a clear plan on how to get them back to work safely.

The MU and The Ivors Academy are calling on the government to extend the SEISS scheme until our members can safely return to work, and plug the existing gaps so no musicians are left behind. Naomi Pohl, Deputy General Secretary of the MU, said: "With no guarantee of when they will be able to return to work safely it is essential that these groups of workers are not pushed further into hardship and out of the music industry".

Many MPs have spoken up in parliament on behalf of musicians who are ineligible for the SEISS scheme



Photo: Christopher Furlong / Getty Images

MU Piles Pressure On Sunak Over SEISS

It is a year since the MU began lobbying on behalf of freelance musicians who do not qualify for the government's Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Since then, the MU has been campaigning relentlessly, conducting impact polls, lobbying, briefing MPs for debates and launching the Invest In Musicians campaign.

Thousands of members have responded by writing to their MPs, who in turn have spoken up in parliament on the behalf of members. Sadly, the Treasury has shown no sign of shifting its stance, despite the fact that many musicians have had little or no income since March 2020. Chancellor Rishi Sunak's budget on 3 March [after *The Musician* went to press] is seen by many as the last big chance for him to make changes

to the financial assistance schemes. Consequently, the MU came up with new ways to grab the chancellor's attention.

The MU has created a number of stunts including visual projections, as well as a video message to Rishi Sunak, asking him to: adjust SEISS to ensure that previously excluded people will be eligible for new rounds of funding; extend furlough and SEISS beyond April; open up the second round of Cultural Recovery Fund money to freelancers in England; introduce an insurance scheme for festivals and live events; introduce a subsidy for live events to happen with reduced capacity under social distancing.

For further updates on this story members can visit theMU.org

Industry Stats

3,583

The number of concerts and performances given by UK orchestras in 2019.

Source: ABO

4.25m

The attendance for all concerts and performances by UK orchestras in 2019

£148.6m

The total annual income of UK orchestras in 2019. For the full ABO report, go to tinyurl.com/abo-orch

For the latest news on how the Musicians' Union is helping you visit theMU.org



ASK US FIRST Check through our list of promoters before agreeing to accept an engagement at tinyurl.com/askusfirst

Check Your Membership Record

To benefit fully from MU communications, members should ensure that the Union has their latest contact details, and are advised to check their membership records online via the Union's website at theMU.org

Visit Our Website

The MU's new website was launched in December and members are encouraged to visit regularly to benefit from its content. Members are also reminded that the latest terms and conditions of the MU insurance schemes, as administered by Hencilla Canworth, are located on the website. Please note that it is essential you are up to date with your MU subscriptions to enjoy all the benefits of MU membership.

Members Diary 2022

Thank you to all members who advised the Union during 2020 of their wish to continue receiving a Members' Diary. We have retained the details of these members so that we can send them a copy of the 2022 diary in the Autumn. We introduced this approach to remain in keeping with our policy of environmentally-friendly communications.



Photo: Supawit Paichawakit / EyeEm / Getty Images

Magazine Formats

In addition to *The Musician* being distributed quarterly in print, and in digital format to MU members who opt to receive an online version, the magazine is also made available in large print and audio versions on the MU website. We wish to ensure that members receive our communications in the most appropriate format for them, and any member with specific requirements should contact their Regional Office.

In Memorium

Tributes to deceased members can now be found online in the public-facing area of the MU website. For the tribute to former General Secretary John Morton, please see pages 48 and 49 of this issue of *The Musician*.

Statutory Notices

Members are reminded that the following statutory notices are no longer sent to members by post, and are available from the MU website at theMU.org

• Summary financial statements

Available in June each year (the latest full Accounts remain available upon request).

• Executive Committee election results

Available in November each year, except in the case of a casual vacancy. See MU Rule IV.

The above notices are required under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (Amended).

The following will also be published on the website.

• Regional Committees

Calls for nominations and election results. (See MU Rule III).

• Section Committees

Calls for nominations and election results.

Members who wish to receive paper copies of these communications should contact their Regional Office. Members will be notified by email about the publication of the above notices so members should ensure the MU has their latest email address on file. Please log into theMU.org to check your details.

Dates For The Diary

19 Mar

What: Dyslexia Awareness for Creatives
A live webinar for Welsh creatives by Cult Cymru
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/dafcreate

20-21 Mar

What: ILMCv33
The International Live Music Conference is a global meet up of music professionals
Where: Online
Info: 33.ilmc.com

23-25 Mar

What: TUC Trades Unions & Mental Health Awareness Course delivered by City of Glasgow College
Where: Online via Zoom
Info: tinyurl.com/8on2ccn9

26 Mar

What: MU Webinar
Improving the way you move and play using the Feldenkrais Method
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/3ld7smeq

2 Apr

What: MU Weekly Feldenkrais session focusing on awareness through movement
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/16m5ibvj



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

Your Voice

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

Diminishing Returns

I use streaming, it's not going away. However, the pitiful returns for artists have to change. The fifth round of the parliamentary enquiry can be watched live and The MU will be live tweeting. #fixstreaming
Rhoda Dakar @RhodaDakar

Poor Treatment

For the billions we contribute to the economy and the amount of joy we bring people, the way we've been treated as a sector has 100% not been good enough.

Sorana @SoranaSantos

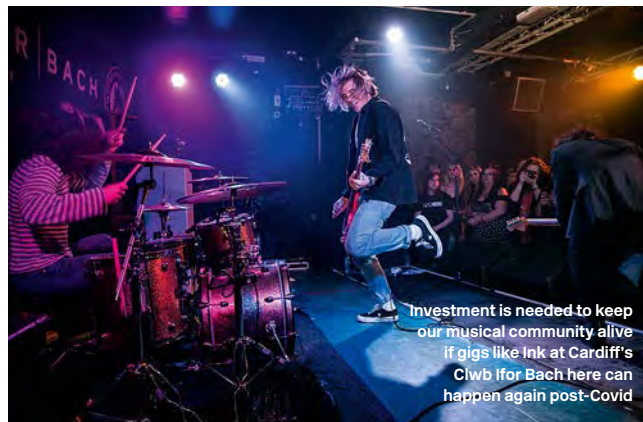
The Left Behind

Rishi Sunak, please Invest In Musicians in the next budget and include the many musicians and others excluded from current SEISS provisions.
Julian Costello @joolzcstello

Grim Reality

At the moment I work as a Carer. Until the full patchwork of my 15 or so regular employers is able to put work on stage, I can't make a reliable living in music. At the moment, only two of them can offer occasional studio work. Before Covid I was *only* a musician.

Louise Braithwaite
@LouBraithwaite



Investment is needed to keep our musical community alive if gigs like Ink at Cardiff's Clwb Ifor Bach here can happen again post-Covid

Photo: Mike Lewis Photography / Getty Images

Undervalued

A £5.8 billion industry left in limbo, taken for granted. We are professionals, highly skilled, who've dedicated our lives to music and community. Many can't survive without meaningful investment. The Government needs to Invest In Musicians. Thank you MU for fighting for us!

David Grubb @david_grubby

Help Us Live

Musicians are keen to get back to work ASAP – but while we can't work we need support. No-one should be ExcludedUK.

Richard Atkinson
@RichAtkinsonMD

Musicians' Passport

The UK music industry earns almost six times that of the fishing industry, yet it was overlooked in Brexit negotiations. We need a Musicians' Passport to ensure our music industry thrives.

The Green Party
@TheGreenParty

Stand Together

The music industry is on its knees and we are heading into a second year of no live gigs. We need to stand together and keep this industry alive, by supporting the people who make it.

Maddy Carty
@MaddyCartyMusic

THE TEAM

Editor Keith Ames (MU)
Consultant editor Neil Crossley
Art editor Chris Stenner
Writers Yemi Abiade, Neil Churchman, Jane Cornwell, Neil Crossley, Roy Delaney, Jack Fittes, Katie Nicholls, Andrew Stewart, Will Simpson, Clive Somerville, Gary Walker
Production editor Roy Delaney
Director of content marketing Clare Jonik
Head of Marketing Projects Chris Blake
Senior account executive Nina Collins
Editorial director Mark Donald
Art director Stuart Hobbs
Repro Gary Stuckey
Printed at Precision Colour Printing
See p2 for the contact details of Musicians' Union offices.



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Save Our Summer: Restarting Live Music

MU Deputy General Secretary, Naomi Pohl, provides an update on the plan for reopening live music events in the UK and the extra support that the live music sector will desperately need



Musicians, music lovers and industry organisations were devastated in January when Glastonbury announced that it would be postponing for another year. A statement from its organisers read "In spite of our efforts to move heaven and Earth, it has become clear that we simply will not be able to make the festival happen this year. We are so sorry to let you all down". The announcement took place during a DCMS Select Committee Inquiry into the future of UK music festivals.

On 22 February, there was much more positive news as Boris Johnson announced the government's roadmap out of England's lockdown. With English schools opening on 8 March as first priority, we were also given tentative dates for the opening of theatres, cinemas, pubs and restaurants in May – albeit with limited capacities – and nightclubs and full capacity events from 21 June.

When Can We Play Again?

So does this mean the live events sector will be back in full force UK-wide by the end of the summer? Here's what we know so far:

- UK Music's submission to the festivals inquiry, which we contributed to, sets out a clear strategy to protect and support the live music industry, with a government-backed Covid cancellation insurance scheme being a key priority. The TV and film industries have been able to take advantage of a

government-backed £500m insurance scheme since last summer, but nothing has been firmed up for live events as yet. This makes planning to reopen more difficult.

- We are feeding into a UK government working group that's looking at means to safely reopen venues, including mass testing of audiences. Some pilot schemes were planned late last year, but were put on hold during lockdown. The new roadmap includes pilot events from 17 May. Test events are also being discussed in Wales where a tiered alert system is operating. Alert level 4 is the most severe, alert level 3 allows for organised indoor and outdoor activities with restricted numbers (15 indoor and 30 outdoor), but at the moment this excludes venues, theatres, and concert halls.

At alert level 2 theatres and concert halls can reopen as long as social distancing is enforced. At the time of writing, Nicola Sturgeon has said Scotland's roadmap "will not be identical [to England's] but there will be broad similarities", and confirmed that she thinks the "principles will be the same". We are feeding into plans for relaxed restrictions across all UK nations, and sector-specific financial support for organisations and the workforce until live music events are back to full capacity. We will also, of course, be monitoring and feeding into work related to the health and safety of the workforce.

- The roll-out of the vaccine appears to be going as planned, and this is of course the best hope for our industry and the rest of the UK economy. At the time of writing, there is early data showing a reduction in transmission in people who have had a

"The roll-out of the vaccine appears to be going as planned, and this is of course the best hope for our industry and the rest of the UK economy"

Will the West End – or any other entertainment venues – be allowed to open their doors this summer?



Photo: Oli Scarff / Getty Images

coronavirus vaccine, and Matt Hancock has said that hospital admissions are falling “much more sharply” than during the first wave. The government aims to offer a first jab to all adults in the UK by the end of July. The Union is particularly keeping an eye on guidance for individuals who may be higher risk and require longer term financial support if they cannot return to work when others do. This is something we are working on with the Ivors Academy, Help Musicians and the PRS Members’ Fund in particular.

- Despite much more positive news from the government, the industry remains concerned that reduced international travel may have a continued impact on bookings for the remainder of 2021 – and possibly beyond. There is also survey data that suggests audience behaviour may change. People could avoid city centres and choose to stay at home more often. This could mean getting back to full schedules is difficult for many productions and music venues, on top of the challenges presented by social distancing and mass testing. The MU is

calling for a Seats Out to Help Out style subsidy or discount scheme. A scheme of this kind could subsidise live events to take place under social distancing, which would make up for significantly reduced box office income, and incentivise audience members to book tickets.

Back To Live

Finally, many live events have moved online while in-person gigs aren’t possible, and this raises the possibility of a hybrid model while social distancing remains in place. We have reached an agreement with UK Theatre which enables touring and regional productions to sell reduced numbers of in-person tickets, but sell the remainder (up to the capacity of the venue) for a streamed version. Might this be a model adopted by other live events? And will online ticketed events be a continuing trend even when social distancing is dropped? The grassroots live music sector faced a potential setback when PRS for Music announced its new online ticketed events licence during the digital Independent Venues Week – an announcement that attracted criticism from grassroots music venues and many artists. While licensing of events to ensure

songwriters are appropriately paid is crucial, the minimum fee of £22.50 was considered too high at a time when many performers and venues are making small sums from streamed events. The response from its own members prompted a partial climb-down from PRS for Music and a further announcement of a free licensing scheme for online ticketed events where PRS members are performing their own works. Following engagement with the Union, the PRS licensing team have also clarified that you can apply to pay a percentage of ticket revenue rather than the minimum fee if that suits your needs better. For further guidance, contact your MU Regional Office.

To support our asks of government and keep updated on developments in the live sector, please engage with the Union’s #InvestInMusicians campaign and follow @WeAreTheMU, @UK_Music and @LiveMusic_UK on Twitter. 

Brexit: A Raw Deal

With Boris Johnson's 11th-hour Brexit deal now under scrutiny the MU asks how the agreement will affect UK musicians when they look to Europe to play gigs and festivals once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted

Report by Katie Nicholls

When big-name musicians and artists, such as Sir Elton John, Sir Simon Rattle, Nicola Benedetti, Ed Sheeran, Radiohead and Sting pool their considerable weight and influence into a single campaign, one would hope that the government would prick up an ear and listen. An open letter, written to *The Times* on 20 January and signed by more than 100 of the UK's most influential artists, stated that the government had "shamefully failed" British musicians during Brexit negotiations.

"The deal done with the EU has a gaping hole where the promised free movement for musicians should be," it reads. "Everyone on a European music tour will now need costly work permits for many countries they visit and a mountain of paperwork for their equipment... We urge the government to do what it said it would do and negotiate paperwork-free travel in Europe for British artists."

Sounding the ominous warning that the extra costs will "tip many performers over the edge", the letter was a reflection of the disappointment and concern felt by all those UK musicians who have historically earned a significant amount in Europe. Before Covid, over 40% of musicians earned half their income in the EU according to industry research. And, coming at a time when the industry has already been hit hard by Covid-19, the lack of support for touring musicians who wish to travel to the EU has been nothing short of devastating, with 76% of UK musicians claiming in a survey that it's likely that Brexit will stop them performing in Europe.

"We were promised something for musicians in this agreement," reflects MU National Organiser for Live Performance, Dave Webster, "and nothing happened, which is why it's come as a bit of a shock to the whole of the industry that there's nothing there. We were promised that everything would be okay. To find that there's nothing is a real kick in the teeth. Musicians are hurting..."

Visa-Free Travel

The Brexit deal has posed as many questions as it has answered, and there is confusion and uncertainty as to the nuances of the agreement and the ramifications it will have on musicians and their ability to tour in Europe. What is clear at the time of writing is that since

Royal Blood playing at the Lowlands Festival 2019 in the Netherlands. It remains to be seen how viable touring in the EU will be for UK artists



Photo: NurPhoto / Getty Images



Left: Elton John has made an impassioned plea for the future of young musicians. Above: Fish worries for the future of workers in the UK's music industry

Speak Out In Anger

There has been a clamour of voices from the music industry expressing dismay at the impact of the Brexit deal. Fish has been one of the most vocal, using his Facebook account to vent his opinions. In a post written on 21 January he said: "I'm still reeling from the new regulations revealed by the UK government just over two weeks ago regarding touring in the European Union post Brexit..."

"I've grown tired of hearing 'So what did musicians do before we joined the EU then?'. In 1973 when the UK joined the EU, I was 15 years old and the Global Music Industry revenues were around \$5bn. By the turn of the century they were around \$25bn and today worth around \$21bn with the UK music industry generating \$7.5bn. That is a figure that doesn't even take in the vast independent network or all the ancillary workers and bolt-on industries that contribute hugely these days to the International music business."

In the 3,000-word post he is detailed and explicit in his feelings on the devastation the deal will cause and concludes, "We, the music business, and industry of the UK are currently in a perilous state. After all we have given to the world over the last 50 years and more; the revenue and cultural recognition that has been provided to this country through the musicians and technicians and every ancillary member of the live music communities with their writing, creations, and performances. We deserve better than this from our elected government."

midnight on 31 December 2020, UK nationals are now considered third-country nationals in the EU and may need a visa and/or work permit to tour, depending on which country they visit. Each of the 27 members of the EU has its own rules on what is required and the onus is on the touring musician to know the requirements of the member state they plan to visit. While some countries will have exemptions for cultural activities, others will not.

After calling the government "spineless" in January for failing to reach a visa-free agreement, Thom Yorke added his name to a 280,000-strong petition that was put to government to argue for a waiver that would mean visa-free travel for musicians. The resulting 90-minute debate in Parliament on 8 February saw strong cross-party support for musicians – including the voices of Harriet Harman, Conservative MP Giles Watling and Lib Dem Jamie Stone. However, the culture secretary Caroline Dinenage MP said that the government will not pursue a waiver scheme for visa-free travel for musicians, but that it was "absolutely committed to supporting individuals and businesses" and to "make new processes as straightforward as possible for UK artists performing across the country".

As well as asking the government to return to the negotiating table, and in the pursuit of finding solutions, the MU along with other music industry organisations, is seeking clarification from each EU member state to agree measures that will ease touring for musicians. "We understand that each

sovereign state has the right to impose work permits on its borders if it wants to," says Dave Webster, "but in some countries, we've got a good response and they're welcoming us and they're saying, 'Come and work, come and play'. France for example, Holland is another one. There are about 14 member states at the moment who say that they don't require additional documentation, but there are others that do and the patchwork effect that that is having is very hard for musicians... We need bilateral agreements with member states who are proving less welcoming to musicians."

Ticket To Ride

Alongside the complex and costly nature of touring between member states, musicians will also need to purchase an ATA carnet – essentially a customs waiver – that permits the transport of instruments and equipment around Europe without incurring additional costs and paperwork in each country. The cost of the carnet is circa £360 plus a deposit that's a percentage of the value of the kit. The MU has negotiated a deal for members to get a discount on the carnet [see p6], and while Dave Webster says the MU is grateful, the MU will continue to lobby for a waiver on the →

"To find there's nothing is a real kick in the teeth. Musicians are hurting"

Dave Webster

"As a solo artist without a promoter or agent, touring Europe is going to be a lot more expensive and stressful to plan"

Fiona Brice

need to obtain one. "What is possible," he says, "is that some people will say, 'It's not worth it, the gig fee is not large enough to cover the cost of the carnet'." Those travelling in cars and vans will require one, but government have confirmed that Carnets aren't needed for portable instruments. "The government hasn't provided everything we need yet, because I don't think it fully appreciates the depth and scale of the problem."

"As a solo artist without a promoter or agent, touring Europe is going to be a lot more expensive and stressful to plan, and therefore a lot less likely," confirms violinist Fiona Brice. "Especially one-off gigs like festivals and small tours, which previously would have been easy to organise at the last minute."

Confusion also surrounds the impact of the new cabotage rules and how this could affect UK touring musicians and crew. These regulations now state that truck drivers are only allowed to make two journeys within the

EU in a seven-day period before returning home. The logistics of building a tour around such restrictions would appear to be insurmountable. Tarrant Anderson, director of touring transport company Vans for Bands told *The Guardian*, "The potential ramifications are absolutely huge". He warns that European countries are less likely to look to the UK to provide transport, staging, lighting and sound – despite the UK's stellar reputation – because it will be easier to source via an EU member state. It's a view supported by Eric Van Eerdenburg, director of Lowlands Festival, who told the *NME* that the new rules could prove "horrible and very limiting for UK artists".

"It's gonna hit everybody hard," concurs Dave Webster. "Up and coming artists might not require five trucks to get the gear around, but established artists will and the cabotage rules will affect that. For the artists who are trying to get out and work under their own steam, they've perhaps not got management support behind them so they're going to have to go

Sir Simon Rattle conducts the London Symphony Orchestra. Carnets and new cabotage rules will impact on UK orchestras performing in the EU



Photo: Amy T. Zielinski / Getty Images

through what I would describe as a myriad of paperwork around customs declarations, to ascertain which countries require what in terms of work permits or visas – or both – and the costs connected with that."

Tit For Tat

With the details of the Brexit agreement and its impact on UK crews and musicians cloudy, the MU will continue to argue for clarity. It is unhelpful, at best, that the government and the EU are currently engaged in what appears to be a blame game. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden told the *NME* that the EU turned down the government's proposal for a "mutually beneficial agreement that would have allowed performers to continue working and performing across the continent without the need for work permits". The EU refutes this and says the government rejected its offer of 90 days of visa-free travel within 180 days as it didn't sit with the government's commitment of taking back control of the UK's borders.

Further investigation has revealed that although the EU claims to have offered a visa-free arrangement, they would not have been able to overrule the ability of member states to require work permits. Boris Johnson, himself



Nicola Benedetti is one of 110 artists who signed an open letter saying they have been "shamefully failed" by the government

Photo: Kevork-Djansezian / Stringer / Getty Images



confused by the agreement, mistakenly claimed in January that musicians had the right to play 90 days out of 180 – the offer his government had rejected.

Culture secretary Caroline Dinenage MP put the responsibility back onto the EU states: "It is absolutely within the gift of each EU member state to improve their own arrangements if they want to encourage a more vibrant and welcoming environment in their own country," she said. "We will use every power in our arsenal to engage with bilateral partners, to find ways to make life easier for those working in the creative industries in countries across the EU – but we can all play a part in this. There is an onus on all of those who care about this issue, for all those who signed this petition, these are not EU rules. These are rules decided in each member state country."

The Road Ahead

There is disappointment that, at the time of writing, the UK government has yet to find solutions to the most pressing issues weighing on the ability for UK musicians and crew to tour in Europe without incurring onerous costs and paperwork. Nevertheless, with strong cross-party support within Westminster,

Flow Chart

To help its members tackle the new Brexit rules, the MU has created a flowchart outlining all the main elements, which musicians – whether travelling as individuals or in groups – will need to consider when planning to tour the EU once lockdown restrictions are lifted. These include reminders about passports, insurance, work permits and carnets, plus CITES certificates, driving certificates, and merchandise EORI details.

The flowchart contains links to relevant online resources and these combine to provide an extremely valuable musician-focused document. Please visit the MU website and enter 'flowchart' into the search facility to access a copy.

N.B. Musicians should always seek advice from the appropriate authorities to ensure that the relevant documentation is obtained. Please continue to visit the MU.org for the latest information as travel requirements are subject to change.




Dave Webster,
MU National
Organiser

Photo: banna Dunderidge © The Musicians' Union

and the unification of organisations including the MU, the campaign for a better agreement will continue apace.

"There's lots of data gathering going on at the moment," says Dave Webster. "The industry seems to be pooling its resources at the moment, which is good because we all need to be looking at the same information and there's a lot out there, and some of it is accurate and some of it isn't. So it's a case of working out what's right and advising our members accordingly. We will continue to lobby government to get improvements," he continues, "and see if we can reach solutions to some of the problems. If we can get an exemption for the cultural industries on the cabotage rules, if we can get free travel for work built in and if we can get a waiver on the carnet that would be ideal."

On 8 February, Caroline Dinenage MP announced the formation of a Cultural and Creative Touring Group, which includes MU General Secretary Horace Trubridge, to work with the music industry in the coming months. During the debate, chair of the committee and Labour MP Catherine McKinnell concluded: "We are the country that produced The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Elton John, Queen and other cultural exports that are revered around the world. It would be an absolute tragedy to lose that status as a cultural hub. So we need to see real leadership and foresight from the government to urgently get back to the table and sort this out." 



Spanning Sonic *Boundaries*

Trumpeter, flugelhornist and composer Yazz Ahmed draws on her cultural heritage to create a strident sonic mix, one that blurs the boundaries between jazz and electronic soundscapes

Profile by Jane Cornwell

The music of Yazz Ahmed is informed by goddesses – the female deities variously wreaking havoc, inspiring the arts and protecting pearl divers in the sea around Bahrain, the island nation in the Persian Gulf that was Ahmed's childhood home. Her sound is enchanting and otherworldly, rooted in jazz, textured by electronics, and laced with silvery Arabic modes. It balances control and freedom, with experimentalism, rhythms from elsewhere, and whatever else takes Ahmed's fancy.

Ahmed is a trumpet and flugelhorn player. Her grandfather was Terry Brown, who played trumpet for such UK jazz legends as Joe Harriott, Tubby Hayes and Ronnie Scott. She is also a bandleader and composer, fronting outfits including the 12-piece Halfa Ensemble, the Electric Dreams project, and her eponymous quartet. All three bands play original work and have their own rich, immersive brand of storytelling.

"I always leave my band members space to express their feelings," she says. "It's a great contrast to the heavily composed sections and keeps things really fresh when we're playing live. Sometimes things will go off on a tangent and we're a bit like, 'Ah, how do we get this back?'. But that's the fun and excitement of jazz." She smiles, "So I do like to let the band members speak. It's not all about me, you know?"

Believe The Hype

With three solo albums, several EPs, and high-profile collaborations with the likes of Radiohead and art-rockers These New Puritans, Ahmed has forged a career worth talking about. Packed audiences at

festivals and venues around the world, plus consistent rave reviews, inclusion on 'Best Of' lists and such prestigious gongs as the 2020 Jazz FM Act of the Year all attest to as much. But she is wary of believing the hype. "I don't feel I'm remarkable, so all this recognition can feel a bit daunting," she says. "I have to remind myself that it's for a reason, and try and stay honoured and grateful."

There was a time when her inner critic would rubbish the compositions she'd spent days and weeks creating. Nonetheless she released a promising debut album, 2011's *Finding My Way Home* her first foray into fusing modal jazz with the Arabic music she'd heard in Bahrain. Music that she wouldn't fully explore until she was in her early twenties, and studying for a Masters degree at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London.

"My grandfather gave me my first trumpet lesson, teaching me the C major scale," says Ahmed, who relocated to south-west London aged nine with her mother and sisters and for the longest while missed simple things such as digging in the sand. "I decided I wanted to be a trumpeter like him," she continues. "Music lessons were on offer at my school so I started learning classical music on trumpet. But there was always jazz in the background at home." ➔

"I always leave my band members space to express their feelings"

The flugelhorn is just one of the instruments that Ahmed uses to create her varied soundscapes

Photo: C Brandon / Getty Images



Her early compositions reflected the musicians she'd been studying at Guildhall: Miles Davis, saxophonist Joe Henderson, trumpeter and flugelhorn player Kenny Wheeler, whose work on the seminal 1992 album *Blue Camel* by visionary Lebanese oud player Rabiha Abou-Khalil would eventually lead her back home. A sort of east-west *Kind Of Blue* in its mood and scope, the album combined the maqam melodic modes of Middle Eastern music with the anything-goes aesthetics of jazz. For Ahmed, who stumbled upon it late, the album was a revelation: "*Blue Camel* changed my life, including the way I write music".

In 2012 she represented Bahrain at the London Cultural Olympiad, then visited Dubai with UK collective Transglobal Underground to perform a British Council commission, *In Transit*. In early 2015 the jazz education programme Tomorrow's Warriors commissioned her to write a suite to premiere on International Women's Day. Ahmed titled the work *Polyhymnia* after the ancient Greek muse of music, poetry and dance.

Water Music

Later that same year Ahmed showcased *Alhaan al Siduri (Melodies for Siduri)*, a work that saw her embracing the folk music of Bahraini pearl divers and the traditional wedding songs sung by the island's all-female drumming groups. "Siduri is a wise female divinity who features in the *Epic Of Gilgamesh*."



Photo: Seb JJ Peters

Many believe the island she lives on is Bahrain. I like to think of her as the goddess of the Gulf," says Ahmed, who took the piece to the 2016 Bahrain International Music Festival, her first public performance in her birthplace.

On her return Ahmed had a quarter-tone flugelhorn tailor-made made by Leigh McKinney of Eclipse Trumpets, whose workshop is within bugling distance of Ahmed's home and garage turned studio-and-practice room. "Leigh also made my trumpet, which he shaped to fit my smallish hands so that it's easier to hold and more flexible to play. It's a very physical instrument," she says. "Sometimes the trumpet wins and sometimes it doesn't. It's kind of like being a body-builder. You have to keep training or you'll lose your strength."

Side Work

"Jonny Greenwood was looking for two flugelhorn players for the next Radiohead album (2011's *The King of Limbs*), and asked his friend, the conductor Robert Ziegler, who put him in touch with Noel Langlely, who is my partner. Jonny played us recordings of music they were inspired by, one of which was by Alice Coltrane."

"Radiohead are remarkably hard working and serious. Their commitment to delivering and capturing a passionate performance was a revelation. It made a big impact on the way I now approach rehearsing and presenting my music."

"I worked with These New Puritans from 2013 to 2015, touring Japan, USA, Mexico, and Europe. I recorded some trumpet for their 2019 album *Inside The Rose*. I love the way they incorporate field recordings into their tracks. Through them I was inspired to buy my own Kaoss Pad, now an essential part of my sound. I had a Kaoss lesson with Tom Hein from the band in exchange for bagels."



Blending the desert sounds from her youth in Bahrain with her grandfather's jazz stylings, Ahmed likes to mix genres and collaborate with diverse artists

Photo: Seb JJ Peters

As a youth she had few female trumpet-playing role models, either in jazz or classical music: "So when I was growing up I started to think, 'Oh maybe women don't become trumpet players. Maybe they're not capable!' Then I got into MySpace and found women like Ingrid Jensen, and Kiku Collins who played in Beyonce's band. They helped teach me that you can play trumpet and still be perceived as feminine. I'd always thought I had to be one of the lads."

She smiles. "It also helped that I'd joined the Musicians' Union when I was 18 and was getting the odd paid gig here and there. I really valued the feeling of being part of a community, and the useful legal advice and insurance support. I still do."

Confidence Booster

When Ahmed's inner critic continued to shake her confidence, she named it and wrestled it to the ground – and over three years created her 2017 landmark album *La Saboteuse*. Spacious and inward-looking, it featured

Shabaka Hutchings on bass clarinet, Naadia Sheriff on Fender Rhodes and the myths-and-music-informed artwork of London feminist-activist illustrator Sophie Bass.

"I stumbled into electronics," she says. "It began when I was playing with These New Puritans and Radiohead and got a lesson on the Kaoss Pad. My friend Jason Singh introduced me to the music of Jon Hassell with its harmonizers and beautiful additions to the trumpet sound. It definitely helped me expand creatively."

All the while her 2020 album *Polyhymnia* was gestating. Twenty-six musicians, many of them women (including saxophonists Nubya Garcia and Camilla George, keyboardist Sarah Tandy and guitarist Shirley Tetteh), perform on six movements dedicated to outstanding women: Saudi filmmaker Haifaa Al-Mansour; civil rights heroes Ruby Bridges and Rosa Parkes; The Suffragettes; jazz saxophonist, Barbara Thompson; and Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai, whose 'One Girl Among Many' speech to the United Nations was transformed by Ahmed into melodic fragments and chants.

"It also helped that I'd joined the Musicians' Union when I was 18"

Supplemented by sleeve notes that include artistic responses by Sophie Bass ("She really understands my music and it inspires her"), *Polyhymnia* feels like a major statement. To make it, Ahmed had to spear her saboteuse, her anti-muse.

"I'm always on a journey," she offers. "Everything is an evolution. I discovered my own voice with *La Saboteuse* and that album meant I could really express myself on *Polyhymnia*. So not only does it sound like I'm inspired by these women, I'm adding my flavour and emotional reaction to their achievements."

Ahmed planted the seed for *Polyhymnia* several years ago, then allowed it to germinate and grow in an organic, let's-see-what-happens fashion. It's a method specific to Ahmed, for whom characters such as *La Saboteuse* and *Polyhymnia* serve as conduits, facilitators of her own remarkable creativity.

Future Sounds

Her next studio album is focused on Siduri, the goddess of the Gulf, and it opens the way for further exploration of Ahmed's Bahraini roots.

"We've started recording pieces and it's developing into something really lovely," says Ahmed of a project that features the UK-based vocalist Randolph Matthews amid elements of fidjeri sea music, the lonely songs once practiced by pearl divers about to navigate the depths with just their wits and an empty bag. It's also inspired by the female drumming groups, who sing and play these big frame drums, and the trancey improvisation that is common in Arab music and shared with jazz. Hopefully it will be a real representation of the fantastic music of Bahrain and the region." She pauses. "My region," says Ahmed, owning it. 

The Economics Of Streaming

The Musician reports on the DCMS inquiry as artists highlight the inequity of music streaming

Report by Neil Churchman

In January, a few days before MPs were due to hear a new round of evidence in their inquiry into the economic impact of streaming on the music industry, Spotify's share price hit a new high on Wall Street. The global giant was now worth \$66.1bn. Two months earlier, at the start of their investigation, the politicians were told how some of the UK's most successful musicians and writers are struggling to pay the rent, and driving cabs to make ends meet. Major labels, meanwhile, were reaping colossal profits from the streaming of artists' works.

It's that yawning gap – between the surging corporate profits of the labels and streaming platforms, and the hardships experienced by tens of thousands of UK recording artists – that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee's inquiry into the economics of streaming has been exploring, and trying to find ways of bridging. The staggering inequity between the income of artists, and that of the labels and streaming platforms, was soon brought into stark relief.

The inquiry was announced on 15 October and has seen artists and industry figures present evidence via an online link. Nadine Shah, Guy Garvey of Elbow, Ed O'Brien of Radiohead and Tom Gray of Gomez were among the artists giving evidence at the first session on 24 November 2020. The aim of the inquiry, said its

"I want what we had for the next generation of musicians"

Guy Garvey

chair Julian Knight MP, was to ask whether the business models used by major streaming platforms were "fair to the writers and performers who provide the material".

Streaming is now the industry's chief source of revenue. In the UK last year it accounted for more than £1bn in revenue generated by 114 billion streams on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music and the like. But artists can be paid as little as 13% of the income generated. As performers, writers, collecting societies and labels lined up to present their cases, the hearings have been lifting the lid on an industry where the livelihoods of many of those who create its raw material are being squeezed like never before.

Fair Payment

In his testimony, Elbow frontman Guy Garvey warned that the pittance being paid to artists was threatening the future of music. "That sounds very dramatic, but if musicians can't afford to pay the rent, if they can't afford to live, we haven't got tomorrow's music in place," he said. "I want what we had for the next generation of musicians, but it has become so skewed."

Garvey told MPs how, in order to relax before the hearing, he'd been listening to a streamed 100-year-old recording by Bessie Smith. The ability to access every recording ever made, "in your back pocket for £10 a month" would be a miracle, he said, but for the lack of fair payment for musicians. "If you weigh up the effort and time that goes into these recordings – and not just the art, but the craft and the skills of producers, recording engineers and microphone manufacturers, all the different technical staff that surround this industry – and take all that work into account,

Guy Garvey of Elbow fears that the low rates being paid to musicians could be harmful for the industry



Photo: © Benjamin Ealovega

Above: Violinist Tasmin Little has campaigned for fair streaming revenue
Right: Ed O'Brien noted how unfair the current rates of streaming are



no, you shouldn't really have it for £10 a month," he said. "Some of that money had better be going to the people who put it in your pocket in the first place. It is really as simple as that."

Streaming Rights

Radiohead's Ed O'Brien spoke of the "unfairness and opaqueness" of streaming rights that had simply been bolted on to the old analogue model, with all its imbalances. At the next session on 8 December 2020, Chic guitarist Nile Rodgers also highlighted a lack of openness: "We don't even know what a stream is worth," he complained. "And there's no way you can find out," because of non-disclosure agreements between record labels and the streaming services. "We must have transparency," he told the MPs.



Photo: CBS Photo Archive / Getty Images



Photo: Jim Dyson / Getty Images

Singer/songwriter Nadine Shah shocked the Committee when she told them her earnings from streaming were not enough to “keep the wolf away from the door”. She said: “As an artist with a substantial profile, a substantial fan base, critically acclaimed, I don’t make enough money from streaming. I am in a position now where I am struggling to pay my rent and I am embarrassed to talk about these issues publicly.”

“We can’t afford to be musicians, and that is a wild concept,” she added. “We are in a really stark, bitter, awful reality that we could lose lots of musicians, lots of great music. This country is known for producing some of the finest musicians of all time and we’d best protect them and make sure that continues.” The DCMS inquiry came about as a direct result of the #FixStreaming campaign, a joint initiative from the MU and The Ivors Academy,

which calls on industry stakeholders to agree an equitable, sustainable and transparent model for royalty distribution in the streaming era. The MU-supported #BrokenRecord campaign, created by Gomez’s Tom Gray, also helped trigger the inquiry. Gray said it would be disingenuous to pretend there were not some artists who are doing well in streaming, or that streaming wasn’t great for consumers. But he said the evidence showed that many music lovers were taken aback when they learned how little musicians were receiving.

He cited polling he’d carried out with YouGov: “Uniformly, consumers are upset about where their money is going,” he said. “When they learn that this money is not going to the artists and the songwriters that they listen to, they are not happy about it. It is as simple as that. They do not expect all of the money to be going in one direction. They think that labels and streaming services are being overpaid.”

Guy Garvey agreed that consumers “needed a voice” in the argument over streaming payments. “They are an integral part of what we do. People are now very responsible about what they eat and how they shop for clothes. I think they consider themselves responsible, and I think they would like to be able to ethically source their music.” →

MU Evidence

Questioned by the MPs, MU General Secretary Horace Trubridge was asked to name the single change to the system that would make the most difference to the musicians he represented. His answer was simple: rethink the definition of what a stream is. Reclassifying streaming as ‘communication to the public’ like a radio play was the “fairest way” to resolve the crisis, he said, as it would guarantee a 50/50 split in payments between performers and labels. “For us, Spotify is a modern version of radio,” he said. “At least radio pays equitable remuneration, which means that session musicians get paid for the fantastic contributions they make to recordings.”

“Streaming doesn’t pay anything to studio musicians,” he said.

“A studio musician could play on a track that becomes the most successful recording in any year and still only be paid £120 for their session and no more money apart from that, for all the different streams that might occur on all the different platforms.”

He said equitable remuneration had thrown a lifeline to musicians, but without urgent change that would vanish as streaming overtook radio as the go-to medium for music lovers. He also focused on the plight of musicians on legacy contracts that pre-dated the digital revolution, who, despite their recordings no longer being reproduced physically, now found themselves being widely streamed.

“There is an awful lot of money flowing into record labels on legacy contracts that they’re not paying out,” he said. “Most of that money, I’m afraid, goes to allow the very high salaries and the profligacy of the record labels.”

"You have the last 50 years of the music industry to compete with in trying to get streams and activity"

Peter Leatham

Many say the key to making streaming more ethical is 'equitable remuneration' – the 50/50 split of royalties between artists and labels that already applies to music played on the radio. It is administered by the rights collection organisation, PPL. The Musicians' Union and other campaigning groups want the principle to apply to streaming, which they say is effectively a modern version of radio, and they are hoping that the Select Committee will make a recommendation along these lines. A key benefit would be automatic payments to all musicians involved in a recording, not just to featured artists.

"Equitable remuneration does what it says on the tin," said Gray. "If you just apply it to some extent to on-demand, suddenly, for the first time in history, money goes directly into the pockets on the first stream, irrespective of what awful contract terms an artist has. This produces an income from stream one for artists and an income for our entire music community. It is a very, very simple solution."

"Of course, the big, powerful major labels, these huge behemoth corporations, will not let equitable remuneration into streaming because it will eat into their margins," he continued. "These are not bad people but they will not do anything to affect their share value. So we need intervention."

Shifting Demographics

Gray pointed to another reason for urgent action: shifting demographics and listening habits. "We receive PPL from radio at the moment, but 18 to 35-year-olds are not using linear broadcasting anymore, so our PPL has been going down steadily. Equitable remuneration, the existing right that you have already chosen to give us, is going down by about 5% every single year. Younger people are going to be using this service as their broadcast. That is just the way that it is. It is replacing it."

Peter Leatham, CEO of PPL, highlighted another pressure facing music in the age of streaming. Even though the platforms have helped rescue the industry from the pirates who once threatened to destroy it, the overall market has still shrunk. "It's less than two thirds of what it was twenty years ago," he explained. What's more, new artists were having to contend with those from the past, who were still selling well. "If you look at 2019, two of the bestselling albums were Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*, based on the film, and *Abbey Road* by The Beatles for its 50-year anniversary. As well as trying to break a new artist, you have the last 50 years of the music industry to compete with in trying to get streams and activity. Generally speaking, it is hard, but ultimately you've got some of the most talented people in our society as performers struggling to make a living."

The Labels' View

There were tough questions for senior UK executives of the three major labels – Universal, Sony Music and Warner Music Group – when their turn to appear before the committee came on 19 January 2021. They robustly defended the money they were making from streaming, insisting it was fair reward for the financial risks they took in fostering new talent. Sony UK's chairman and CEO Jason Iley said that 80% of the company's revenue now came from streaming, and that more money was being spent now on A&R and marketing than at any time in his career.

"When I started at Sony Music, there were six labels in the company, and now there are 15. So there has been a huge investment in more labels, in order to help us sign up more acts. Over that same period, I have spent more than £175m on marketing those acts. We have more than 400 employees in our company, who help sign artists, market acts, and do the press, promotion and digital campaigns. We have a huge investment."

The executives rejected criticism about a lack of transparency surrounding the deals done with acts. "Different things are important to

Photo: NurPhoto / Getty Images



Why Artists Are Scared

Many musicians stay silent about the poor returns from streaming because they are afraid of reprisals from the platforms and big labels, the inquiry learned. Nadine Shah said many of her friends were reluctant to come forward. "So many of them are scared to speak out because, myself included, we do not want to lose favour with the streaming platforms, and we do not want to lose favour with the major labels."

Her concerns were echoed by Tom Gray: "A lot of young musicians I have spoken to would love to be telling you the things that I am telling you, but they are afraid," he explained. "They think that if they are slightly critical of any of this system they will not get playlisted and will lose what little income they do get."

Committee chair Julian Knight MP later warned that companies could be found in contempt of parliament. "We would take a very dim view if we had any evidence of anyone interfering with witnesses. No one should suffer any detriment for speaking to a parliamentary committee," he said.

Despite a high-profile career, Nadine Shah is living close to the breadline on streaming revenue



different artists. One artist might want a huge advance and be prepared to do life-of-copyright, another will take more royalties and prefer to do a licence," said Iley. "Every deal is different, and the idea that it is literally 'Sign here – take it or leave it' is not the case."

Universal Music UK's chairman and chief executive David Joseph said he believed artists were happy with the investment and advances they currently received – a statement dismissed as "living in cloud cuckoo land" by one of the interrogating MPs. Joseph also declared that artists such as Nadine Shah could not expect streaming payments to suddenly be increased to make up for the suspension of live music during the pandemic. That, he said, was neither possible or logical. Warner's chairman and CEO, Tony Harlow, suggested that the fundamentals of the streaming model weren't broke and didn't need fixing.

"It is still a pretty new industry," he said. "We see larger numbers of artists who are getting to the million stream, the billion stream, the multi-billion stream, and we are seeing that grow all the time as the economics of this industry work better. This is an evolving situation. It is being well governed by a market that is efficient and nimble, and it doesn't need change. Any disruption could diminish UK competitiveness at a time when I feel the UK needs to be the home of recorded music."

Moving Forward

MPs are expected to complete their report in the spring. They will present their findings to government ministers, who will have two months to respond to recommendations. Many MPs were visibly shocked by the pitifully low slice of the pie that artists receive for their work, compared to the huge profits of major labels. MU Deputy General Secretary, Naomi Pohl, says the major labels' assertion that artists are happy with the way streaming revenue is divided up only highlights how out of touch with reality those labels really are.

"If recorded music revenues were paid out fairly to artists then we might not have seen over 20,000 applications to hardship funds in the first few months of the crisis," she says. "Recorded music must play its part in sustaining the livelihoods of musicians and songwriters. We can't have labels announcing record profits while our members are literally unable to put food on the table. The system is broken and it needs to be fixed." **mu**

Photo: Ollie Millington / Getty Images

Assessing The Aggregators

All music creators need digital aggregators to get their music online – but which one to choose? An invaluable new MU resource is helping members to decide

Report by Will Simpson

Aggregators are, to all intents and purposes, the gatekeepers of the digital realm. They are the distributors that enable you to get your own original tracks onto online platforms such as Spotify and iTunes, by paying a fee or commission. You simply cannot get your music into the marketplace without them. The power they wield is extensive and navigating the small print in their contracts can be confusing for an independent artist without label backing.

The MU has had many requests from members uncertain of how to negotiate their way onto digital platforms. "A lot of our members probably see reams of terms and conditions and feel like they have got little option but to sign up regardless," says Naomi Pohl, MU Deputy General Secretary.

"It's important for our members to make sure that they fully understand them before they sign up," she says. "The problem is that on the whole the aggregators aren't in the market of negotiating in any way. They set terms and conditions that every musician has to sign up for if they want to use their services."

Which is why the MU has decided to review the six of the most popular aggregators and provide an overview of their terms and conditions. "This shows you have a choice," continues Naomi. "If you do decide you want to use a digital aggregator, at least you can look at our feedback and make an educated choice about which one you'd like to use. It's

important to be really clear on issues, like what the termination process is and what the pitfalls are before you sign up."

Empowering MU Members

MU Midlands Regional Organiser Stephen Brown is the co-ordinator of the project: "When I started developing this it was never about telling members which one to use," he explains. "That is obviously a choice for each member and depends on a number of factors because the services and quality vary enormously."

"What we're providing is a snapshot of how aggregator terms and conditions stack up against each other, as reviewed by our lawyers, P. Russell & Co," Stephen continues. "We hope it will allow members to decide which aggregator works for them based on getting a better understanding of what you get for your money."

It should be noted that the MU's Contract Advisory Service does not cover aggregators, nor does it cover the online generic terms that they or anyone else offer for services to musicians. Therefore, this review of aggregators constitutes generic and not legal advice. Stephen chose the six aggregators based on members' feedback over the years.

"There are, of course, many other aggregators out there, and there are review sites online that focus on the services each of them provide. However, none of these cover the legal terms. Members should always take

"What we're providing is a snapshot of how aggregator terms and conditions stack up against each other"

Stephen Brown

everything into account when making a decision on which one to go with. If you are unsure, get in touch with your Regional Office to talk it through with us."

All of these summaries – of the aggregators AWAL, CD Baby, Distrokid, Ditto, EMU and Horus – should be read in conjunction with the main standard terms and conditions available on their websites. The MU feels that most are hard to digest, some are not clearly written,

Photos: Westend61 / Getty Images





If you want your music online you will need the help of an aggregator

and that there are contradictory elements in parts. This may be due to the fact that, as far as the MU is aware, they have never been legally challenged, or simply that this is an evolving part of the industry. The MU review represents an opinion that arises from those terms, and it may be that the aggregator actually meant something else entirely by them – such is the unclear way in which some are written.

Digital Distribution

The MU concentrates on the digital distribution side rather than other services such as publishing or sync placement. These are mostly separate services covered in any addenda the aggregator may have and usually come at extra cost. Where that additional service is present and mentioned in the terms and conditions, the MU references it in the summaries for you to check them out yourself.

For general clarification, these are the main issues that the MU's lawyers found arising in a number of the aggregators' terms and conditions:

- The contracts are presented to artists on a 'take it or leave it' basis and cannot be negotiated or changed by the artists or their representatives. The aggregators can make changes to the contracts during their term, and even if these are against the artist's interests they have no choice but to accept any changes. Alternatively, they could terminate the contract.
- Due to the lack of negotiation, these contracts (unlike the majority of contracts in the music industry) are in many areas, unreasonably biased in favour of the aggregators and often exclude, to the greatest extent possible, all legal remedies for breach of contract by the aggregator.
- Artists have little choice other than to enter into such contracts because they are often the only way for artists to make their →

Distribution Revolution

The Association of Independent Music (AIM) also has concerns about aggregators and the dominant position they hold in the digital marketplace. In 2019 AIM published a report, *Distribution Revolution*, which looks at the entire landscape of 21st century distribution from the traditional physical services to aggregators. "I'd say any musician coming into that landscape should read it to make sure they really are fully aware of what they're being offered and whether they need it," suggests Gee Davy, chief operating officer of AIM.

"*Distribution Revolution* goes into a lot more detail on this – making sure you're only signing up for those that are going to be really useful to you on a practical level. It may be that the distributor you're working with is particularly strong on finding sync deals for you. So, if you're at the point in being ready for that then that might be one to sign up for. But if they're not so strong in that area, you'd have to get a separate sync agent and you don't want to be paying twice for those services."

Doing your research and understanding the pros and cons is essential before you sign on the dotted line, she says. "Know who you're forming a business relationship with and remember that, while they may be fantastic at doing all the things you need, ending this relationship can still go wrong! The market may change or your career may change direction and you might want to change your mind. You should always go in – and I say this with any business partnership – with half an eye on how to get out!"



Aggregators may be useful, but check their terms before you sign

Photo: Maskot / Getty Images

recordings available on the main digital music services worldwide.

- In some contracts, the rights are expressed to be non-exclusive and allow artists to use other digital aggregators. However, in other cases they are exclusive, meaning artists cannot use anyone else to exploit their recordings on digital music services.
- Many of the contracts are badly drafted. For example, in one of the contracts the definition of 'works' includes 'any musical works or sound recordings'. Therefore although the contract is intended only for digital distribution of master recordings, it may instead acquire rights in the underlying songs, which is neither needed nor reasonable, and those rights are not paid for.


“The aggregators take no responsibility for non-payment or failure to account by any digital service”

- The definition of 'term' is inconsistent in some of the contracts, meaning it is not certain how long those contracts last, nor how they can be ended. In one contract, the notice to terminate is stated as being both 'one day' and '30 days'.
- The royalty and accounting provisions are unclear (and there is no transparency) in a number of the contracts. Therefore it's difficult for artists to understand the basis on which they will be paid and to calculate how much they will earn.
- With certain aggregators, several different contracts apply to the artists' recordings (and other rights) and the terms of such agreements are in conflict and contradictory.
- In the main, none of the aggregators take any responsibility for failure of third parties to stop exploiting an artist's recordings after the end of the contract. In some they will not even send 'take down' notices.

This means the artist's recordings may continue to be exploited, but without them being paid. This in turn would also make it difficult for the artist to arrange digital distribution via another aggregator.

- The aggregators take no responsibility for non-payment or failure to account by any digital service. The artists are unable to seek redress if an aggregator is not paid by any of their customers. The artist's only contractual relationship is with the aggregator.

The MU believes these reviews will form a valuable resource for members, re-balancing the relationship between music creators and aggregators by empowering MU members to decide which companies will best suit their creative and commercial needs.

Naomi Pohl says the project forms part of a broader MU initiative. “This feeds into our Fix Streaming campaign,” she says. “We’re arguing that songwriters should generally get a better deal from streaming and a big part of that picture is the digital aggregator.” 

To view the MU's summaries of the six aggregators please log in to theMU.org and type 'aggregators' into the search facility.

Why I Joined The MU

We asked two solo artists and one band why they joined the MU and why they treasure their membership



GÉNIA

I think the MU is a great organisation, and I am delighted to be a part of it. When I was just starting my career, I greatly benefitted from their legal advice on performing and setting up my teaching practice. These days, I take full advantage of what the MU has to offer. I enjoy attending seminars given by great professionals. I also use MU insurance to cover my studio equipment, as well as all my online and offline performing and teaching activities, which, considering that I often mix yoga with music, is not straightforward. I feel comfortable knowing that I am always supported by the MU and they are just one phone call away.

Described by *The Times* as “an outstanding musician”, Russian-born concert pianist Génia has enjoyed success with her compositions alongside numerous London shows (Wigmore Hall, Barbican, Southbank, Kings Place), while her music enjoyed placements in the TV Series’ *Killing Eve* and *Cold Feet*. Recently she has moved away from the classical concert platform into the world of pop music, collaborating with an eclectic range of artists and producers. Following her passion for yoga, she also trained as a qualified yoga teacher, developing the Piano-Yoga method for musicians. Visit genia-music.com and piano-yoga.com



LIZZY HARDINGHAM

Why the MU? At the beginning, sure, it was for the great insurance. But since becoming a member I've realised just how many other invaluable services they offer. I had heard no end of positive news about the MU during my music degree at Liverpool but never really considered it a necessity until I needed public liability insurance for a gig, and boy was I glad to be pointed in their direction! No more so than this year during such an uncertain time. It's been of great comfort to know the MU are lobbying for our rights around international touring and Brexit, fairness from music streaming platforms and live online performing.

South-East based singer-songwriter and folk musician Lizzy is a powerhouse performer with “beautifully delivered folk songs that sing straight to the heart”. Lizzy's dazzling songwriting and storytelling skills have not gone unnoticed as she has picked up numerous awards from prestigious folk clubs across the UK. Lizzy is currently being mentored by Michael Hughes of The Young'uns under the English Folk Expo artist mentoring programme, and working on “firmly nailing her place as one of the rising stars of the folk scene”. for more information visit lizzyharingham.com



GNOSS

Being part of the MU has granted us access to a tonne of tools that have been invaluable on our journey as a band; musical equipment insurance, draft contracts, contact details for other industry professionals, public liability insurance for own gigs – the list goes on. Seeing the MU campaign so actively for us throughout this pandemic and the troubled seas of Brexit has been a real encouragement too. Nice to see someone in your corner! Membership has certainly made us feel a lot more connected to our industry.

This young Glasgow-based band's signature sound is a rich tapestry of acoustic layers, encompassing outstanding musicianship, deep traditional roots and contemporary compositional flair. Double Scots Trad Award nominees, they have built an invested following through their forward-thinking take on traditional music, as well as the unique warmth of their live shows. Their 2019 release *Drawn From Deep Water* met with widespread praise and brought the band to entranced audiences across Europe and Russia, not to mention the length and breadth of Britain. Their dedication to their craft places them firmly at the fore of what's happening in Scottish folk. For more information, visit gnossmusic.com

Online Teaching

A year since the pandemic struck, we assess how music teachers are adapting to life online

Report by Gary Walker

"The first days of lockdown in March, my whole world exploded," says Craig Crofton. For both the Bristol saxophone teacher and the two-thirds of MU members who derive income from teaching, the past 12 months have been a case of 'adapt or die'. After Covid forced live venues and studios to close their doors, music lessons became a crucial revenue source. But with an ever-shifting picture of national and local lockdowns, schools and music hubs struggling to interpret government regulations, and a lack of financial support, teachers have had to migrate to online provision.

For those not already equipped to teach remotely, it's been a steep learning curve, with teachers having to: develop new practices, complying with online safeguarding and guidelines from schools; master software such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Microsoft Teams; cater for students with learning difficulties; and address the concerns of wary parents. Already struggling without touring income and missing out on furlough payments, many have also faced a costly race to kit out home teaching spaces.

But from a community of resourceful creatives comes hope, with social media groups springing up to share resources, support

"Self-employed teachers have suffered in at least two ways"

Chris Walters

and information. Those who have been able to adapt are enjoying a wealth of new opportunities. It seems the world of music education will never look the same again.

The Left Behind Self-Employed

"Self-employed teachers have suffered in at least two ways," says Chris Walters, MU National Organiser, Education, Health & Wellbeing. "Government's guidance has been changeable and often inconsistent. We've seen fluctuations between different things being allowed and not allowed, often not making much sense. We have lobbied the Department for Education to get these inconsistencies ironed out. Many schools have taken a cautious approach and restricted access to music teachers. When you're self-employed, you don't get paid if you can't work, so the MU has worked with schools and employers to show online teaching can be done in a way that's safeguarding compliant."

Having never taught online, the loss of all in-person work was a hammer blow to Crofton, but he moved quickly, buying a USB mixer and audio interface and fitting acoustic panelling to his spare room. Yet just being an experienced teacher is no longer enough in the digital age. He stresses the importance of reaching out to the music community for

skills he didn't have – website design, digital and social media marketing and SEO. "I thought everything was finished," he explains, "but I set up the Bristol Musicians Support Facebook page, so people could exchange ideas, techniques and equipment. We had 150 people joining every day, and within a week I knew what I needed to buy, and some approaches and techniques I'd never used."

For those entering this brave new world for the first time, it has meant rapidly reshaping methods developed over years. While ensuring he was complying with safeguarding rules and handling his students' data appropriately, Crofton encountered shorter attention spans from children suffering from screen saturation due to home schooling.

"One technique I'm using that's been so successful is giving students tasks to record and send back as little audio files," he says. "I send the tasks on WhatsApp, or if they're minors a WhatsApp group with their parents or a shared Dropbox folder. I will then give feedback. I had one student who had a severe dislike of seeing herself on the screen. So

Photo: Ruben Ramos / EyeEm / Getty Images



You may need to invest
in some new kit to get
the best results



Photo: Jo Hanley

The MU's Top Five Tips

1. Safeguarding should be your first priority. Be careful with your online profiles and messaging, dress and act professionally, and use a neutral background. Read our advice for safe teaching online: bit.ly/39oL5KR
2. Get familiar with more than one app. You might prefer Zoom, but your school might specify Microsoft Teams, and your private pupil might only have WhatsApp video.
3. Many music education organisations and companies have published free online resources for the pandemic. Check out these recommendations from Music Mark: bit.ly/3roc19K
4. Pupils with additional needs, disabilities or learning difficulties may find the online interface more challenging. Read this guidance from Drake Music, a charity for music education and disability: bit.ly/3sUeOCW
5. Online teaching can feel more distanced and less human, so make sure you leave time for a chat – with parents (if appropriate) as well as pupils.



Photo: Sofia Alvaria

Above: Martin Taylor was an early online adopter.
Left: Craig Crofton was new to online teaching, so set up a Facebook support and information group

I recorded a short 20-minute personalised video lesson each week and sent them to her father, along with the PDF lesson material. She's getting on well like that."

Guitarist Martin Taylor was an early adopter, teaching online through tuition platform ArtistWorks since 2010. He offers pre-recorded lessons and hangouts, and the chance for students to upload videos of their playing for expert feedback. Having filmed tutorials everywhere from airport lounges to dressing rooms and hotel bathrooms, online makes up the bulk of his teaching. He advocates short, punchy sessions and setting students exercises to take away.

"I'd never taught, I could barely send an email, but I gave it a shot," he says. "At first, I was giving my students too much information, moving them too quickly. You have to teach each student according to their experience and capacity to understand. For a lot of people, bite-sized chunks work best. If you go into a two-hour lesson with a list of things you want to learn, you might come out completely overwhelmed. You can manage the information better with online teaching."

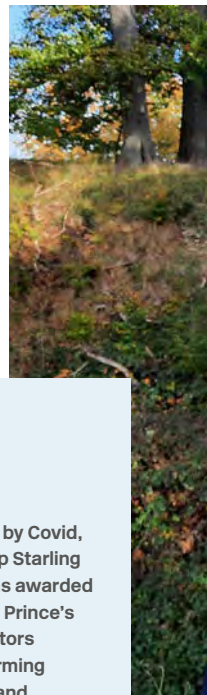
Learning New Skills

Another musician embracing digital delivery for the first time is contemporary vocal coach Tara Wilcox. When her live work with The Wandering Hearts dried up, she claimed Self Employment Income Support and funding from PRS for Music and Help Musicians, but remote teaching was vital. "I've seen huge improvements in the students, it's been wonderful," she says. "I've had to become more tech-savvy, I'd have said 'Zoom what?!' a year ago. Music teachers like myself have branched out into services like pre-recorded warm-ups that people can access or a series of exercises that can be purchased for people who want to study in their own time."



Greg White says that the level of teaching is dependant on what equipment each student may have

Photo: Joseph Branstion. © Musicians' Union



Making The Leap

Accelerated into action by Covid, Rhiannon Jeffreys set up Starling Music Academy and was awarded a £5,000 grant from the Prince's Trust and Young Innovators Programme for transforming music theory teaching and providing bespoke digital learning.

The idea, she says, is to help students pass music theory exams through individually tailored courses, freeing up time in their regular lessons. The programme "recreates some of the good parts of in-person learning, with the convenience of being online" and creates jobs for musicians.

"I found it important to create a pleasant workspace," she says, "and set myself breaks and boundaries. I've implemented a 'no teaching emails at the weekend policy' because I realised I was on call seven days a week."

"Music is such a human thing and I didn't want anyone to feel like they were learning from robots. My students have adapted very well. I haven't found that their attention spans are different with online learning. Without online teaching, both musicians and music students would have suffered even more than they have already, and for that I will always be grateful."

Teaching work became vital for singer Tara Wilcox after her live performance work dried up in lockdown



Photo: Joseph Okpako / Getty Images

Despite this sense of positivity, the shift online has brought challenges. Latency is the number one issue, along with audio and video quality. And that's assuming students have an instrument and internet-connection at home.

"Ultimately, it's not as good as a face-to-face lesson," says Greg White, a drummer and educator who found himself furloughed by two of the primary schools he teaches at. "You can make it almost as good with certain levels and topics if everyone's well kitted out on both ends. You don't have a proper angle of the kit and ideally you need to see their face and hands. I have to imagine a little bit what I'm hearing, and the sound from the students' end can be poor. Parents don't have time to read up and buy specific gear."

Crofton runs a two-PC system for optimum results, but admits the situation isn't ideal. "It's really hard, especially with sax, to get an idea of intonation, dynamics and so on," he says. "I always send students a YouTube link



Rhiannon Jeffreys won a grant for transforming online theory teaching

Photo: © Rhiannon Jeffreys

"I found it important to create a pleasant workspace and set myself breaks and boundaries"

Rhiannon Jeffreys

Against this concerning backdrop, many musicians have found themselves surprised by the positive impact of their digital awakening and are looking to the future with renewed optimism. "I didn't believe there could be any benefit to online teaching when in-person was possible," says Wilcox, who has picked up new students in Scotland and the US. "It's not something I ever thought I would do. How wrong I was! The advantages are plentiful and surprising. Studio-based teaching has its benefits, but due to the more formal setup of Zoom coaching, I actually feel students get distracted less. There's a real focus that comes with being at a screen for an hour that doesn't always happen in person."

"Many people assume that teaching online is a poor alternative," says Walters, "but a lot more is possible than schools and parents might realise. We've published a wide range of free guidance on our website, covering how you can teach individuals, choirs, ensembles and even whole classes. Even duet playing in real time is now possible with the right tech setup."


Other positives include an increase in numbers of students who might be too shy or embarrassed to attend an in-person lesson, snow days no longer meaning cancellations and, crucially, what was a local marketplace becoming a global one. Taylor urges other teachers to see this as career-changing moment to be seized – as he did 11 years ago. "This is a great opportunity," he says. "Nothing stays the same and the reason the human race is still here is that we've always adapted. I have students in 60 countries. I could never have done that any other way. This way, you can get across borders."

It seems inevitable, then, that we're looking not at a temporary adjustment born of necessity, but permanent changes to the ways teaching is delivered. "I think that's quite

likely," says Crofton. "I'm certainly going to carry on a blend of online and in-person after Covid. I had a perfect student, who moved to London, I was really sad to be losing him, and then I realised we could continue online. I have another who's moved to Toronto. The number of great students who've moved away and I wished I could have carried on teaching them. Now that doesn't need to happen."

Embrace New Opportunities

It's also important to recognise that opportunity has not knocked equally for all teachers. For many caught between employed and self-employed status, government support, guidance and training has been seriously lacking. It's those members who will need help as the pandemic stretches deep into its second year. "The way Covid has affected musicians has depended on where you were before it bit," says Crofton. "If you were in a good place professionally, financially, mentally and emotionally, you've probably been able to adapt. If you didn't have that stuff sorted, it can be really disheartening. It makes my heart sink to think how it's affected some people in our trade."

"The pandemic has revealed how insecure self-employment can be for musicians," says Walters. "We know that many music teachers in schools are engaged under what we'd call fake self-employment. Teaching is their regular job and they're managed as if they were employees, but without the benefits and stability of employment. Education about the differences between employment and self-employment is needed. We've developed a guide to employment statuses for music teachers, to be published in the spring. We are planning to accompany this with free training. It's so important that music teachers know their rights." 

about audio settings for Zoom and allow for extra time on the first lesson to get it sorted together. Another disadvantage is not being able to play at the same time, it's that old devil latency! Concentration and attention spans are not as good for online teaching either."

Digital Poverty

The effects of digital poverty are being exacerbated across education by Covid, too, and are particularly acute in music, with MU members reporting significant drop-offs in student numbers in deprived areas. "I'm very worried about that," says Crofton, who wants to see the introduction of a universal basic income. "There's always been a divide between haves and have nots with access to music. With Covid, it's intensified to the millionth degree."

"The students who don't have a kit at home, I just haven't seen them," agrees White. "I teach at two private schools and two state schools and, as you'd imagine, the kids in the private schools are more likely to have access to kits. I've been teaching some children for two or three years and they still don't have a kit – arguably they never will."

Life In Lockdown For UK Orchestras

Although many orchestral players were lucky enough to be furloughed, lockdown has still brought them many challenges

Report by Andrew Stewart

Britain's salaried orchestral players have fared better than most musicians since the arrival of Covid-19. Yet they too have faced major upheavals as the stop-start pattern of lockdowns took hold. The pandemic forced orchestras to close for business and then find new methods of working. In many ways the crisis has brought managements and players closer together, and has inspired fresh thinking that should serve orchestras well when life resembles normal again.

Jo Laverty, MU National Organiser, Orchestras, recalls initial concerns that orchestras would remain mothballed and become unviable. But furlough, she notes, bought time for independent orchestras to create Covid-secure workplaces. "We supported orchestras in getting back to work as soon as possible. I appreciate it's been worse for unemployed freelancers. But it was not great for contracted players to sit at home with nothing to practise for."

Jo and her colleagues arranged video meetings for MU members to voice ideas about working during the pandemic. "They were keen to discover what others were doing," she explains. "They wanted to start playing in whatever ways possible." The range of innovation, she adds, was impressive and has broadened since the first lockdown. Ulster Orchestra ventured into unknown

territory last July by recording a virtual performance of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro Overture* as part of their Let's Play at Home sessions on YouTube. Before they returned to work in August, several players gave open-air performances at care homes. "We've had to be creative," says Ulster Orchestra MU Steward Helen Neale. "I think the players have accepted the need for so much to be streamed online but we'll have to discuss fees for digital work at some point. Although our BBC work is incorporated into salary, there should be some recompense if we continue creating so much digital content."

Neale's band entered the pandemic with decent Arts Council Northern Ireland funding and regular BBC engagements. "I hope we're not in a bad place but you never know with public funding. We've done so much to make ourselves available in the community and I think we've made some local impact. I suspect orchestras in future will be quite different from what they were before Covid. But first we all have to get through this really difficult time."

Digital media was already on the cards at the Royal Scottish National Orchestra before Covid, placed there by its new chief executive, Alistair Mackie. He recognised the importance

"We've done so much to make ourselves available in the community"

Helen Neale, Ulster Orchestra MU Steward



The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in a dress rehearsal for their return to work

and potential commercial value of streaming concerts. "He hired a digital manager and an engineer and began to record performances before the pandemic," recalls Bill Paterson, the RSNO's MU Steward. "So we were ready with digital content when Covid took hold."

Home Work

The RSNO's contract includes a media buyout deal. "Having got over the grief from that several years ago, this part of our contract was practically unused before the pandemic," Paterson notes. Players recorded 'at home' projects last spring before a downsized RSNO returned to work to perform chamber versions of Mahler's *Seventh Symphony* and *Rückert-Lieder* at the Edinburgh International Festival. The orchestra subsequently filmed ten concerts for broadcast online, streamed at weekly intervals and still attracting views despite moving behind a paywall. "There's a spirit of cooperation in the orchestra," Paterson observes. "Players trust the management at the moment and vice versa." The RSNO's musicians accepted contract variations to allow greater flexibility.



Photo: Mark Allan



Photo: © Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra



Photo: © Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

Tammy Thorn (above) and Holly Randall (left): MU Stewards with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra

The comprehensive agreement, which temporarily suspended enhanced payments for chamber music and small ensemble work, has been reviewed once and is set for review again this summer.

Bill Paterson stresses the importance of his orchestra's Scottish government funding, which accounts for around 60% of its budget. "Things aren't so bad because of that. But we're still facing lost box-office income. I reckon we're looking at another year before we return to anything like normality. I'd say there's optimism and trepidation about that. I think it will be a slow start and there will be hard times ahead. But we'll get there."

Live Return

The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's management won the argument for waiting to bring the whole orchestra back to work after Britain's first lockdown. The strategy,

backed by smart use of the furlough scheme and temporary contract variations, enabled the BSO to schedule a dozen full-scale concerts between September and December in its regular Wednesday evening slot at Poole Lighthouse. Each performance, lasting 75 minutes without an interval, was streamed live and, until November's lockdown, performed to a socially distanced audience. The digital series included the UK premiere of Magnus Lindberg's *Absence*, concerto dates for principal players and British-based soloists, and symphonic works with heavy brass.

"It was exciting to play again," recalls BSO MU Steward, Holly Randall. "We had two weeks before the main series to get used to sitting two metres apart. Everyone was so ➔

View From The Union

"It's been heartening to see how orchestras around the country have adapted," says Jo Laverty, the MU's National Organiser, Orchestras. "They've created Covid-secure workplaces and become so innovative in their ways of working. The hope is that all the UK's orchestras get through this. We want to see furlough and the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) extended, even if it's only for those sectors that cannot get back to business as usual because of continued social distancing. To have supported so many people for so long only to put another cliff edge in front of them by cutting support before the economy starts to recover makes no sense. Furlough and continued public funding have definitely saved the orchestral sector so far."

“Employers must do everything to identify and remove a risk. If they can’t, they have to do everything possible to minimise it”

Morris Stemp, MU Orchestras Official

keen to get back to work. It brought the whole orchestra together and showed that management appreciates every player.” The band fell silent again during the third lockdown. “It was very disappointing not to start again in January,” Randall confides. “But there was also relief that we were not having to work while infection rates were high.”

Morris Stemp, the MU’s Orchestras Official, insists that managements should make workplace safety top priority, and says the MU has worked closely with the Union’s H&S consultant Roger Sutton to build the evidence base for Covid-secure working practices, mindful of employers’ duties under the terms of the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act. “We’ve collaborated with most managements since last March,” says Morris. “And we’ve now spoken with those who didn’t come to us at first. We saw a lack of understanding of what was needed to stay within the law. Employers must do everything to identify and remove a risk. If they can’t, they have to do everything possible to minimise it.”

Covid’s novel status meant that nobody knew how best to protect musicians from contracting the disease at work. “We’ve done a lot to build the evidence base about what is and isn’t safe and worked with each orchestra to produce risk assessments for every project,” says Morris. He is adamant that, whatever the mitigation measures undertaken by managements, players should always speak up if they feel unsafe. “You don’t have to do anything that you don’t think is safe. Perhaps your fears have already been considered and are being addressed. Or perhaps they need further mitigation.”

Quick Action

The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra’s MU Steward Paul Turner is acutely aware of his good fortune to work for the BBC. “We’ve been on salary throughout, while freelance colleagues have seen their work decimated,” he notes. “But it was still a big shock to be told to stay at home.” He joined forces with Orchestra Director Simon Webb to create work within the terms of the BBC/MU national agreement. “The Union also acted very

quickly. The stewards in all the orchestras got together with Jo and Morris to discuss this unprecedented situation. Simon was very grateful to the MU for its flexible and creative response. The key thing was that nobody was compelled to record online work, because quite a lot of it is complicated to do at home.”

With its season cancelled, the BBC Philharmonic turned to resources within the orchestra. It harnessed the talents of four players who happen to be skilled arrangers, organised small groups and ensembles, and supported musicians to record content at home. Double-bassist Pete Willmott’s medley of iconic sports show themes, recorded by players in isolation, proved an instant hit with BBC Radio 5 Live audiences and set the benchmark for recordings of David Bowie’s *Sound And Vision* for BBC Radio6 Music and the Great Northern Playlist, a collaboration with local radio across the orchestra’s region.

“By working across the BBC networks, we’ve moved way beyond our regular audience,” comments Paul Turner. He and his colleagues moved millions of BBC Breakfast viewers with *Four Notes – Paul’s Tune* – music originally improvised at the piano by Paul Harvey, a former music teacher living with Alzheimer’s, and orchestrated by BBC Philharmonic bassist Daniel Whibley. The orchestra also created substantial education projects, such as *Pick A Part*, a bespoke app that allows people to play along or conduct music performed by a string quartet comprising BBC Philharmonic musicians. “*Pick A Part* worked incredibly well and gave people a feel of how classical compositions are put together,” says Turner.

New Ideas

Organising public concerts has proved easier for orchestras that own their home halls. The Royal Northern Sinfonia turned the concourse at Sage Gateshead into a space for chamber music concerts and opened its main auditorium to socially distanced audiences in August, while the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra redefined areas of Liverpool’s Philharmonic Hall for Covid-secure rehearsals and public performances. Sophie Appleton, the RNS’s MU Steward, recalls how management sought ideas from players during the first lockdown. “It was a good move to discover what we could do immediately,”



The BSO performing at Poole Lighthouse in the Autumn of 2020

Photo: Mark Allan



Photo: RSNO

The Royal Scottish National Orchestra ensured that its spaces were set up for social distancing before it returned

she notes. "We put things online like Tune That Name, where people played pieces backwards, performed for our neighbours, and organised an end-of-season concert. I think we were the first orchestra to perform to an audience after lockdown with an open-air concert at a bowls club."

"It's important we protect people's contracts and timely to look at this, given how streaming and digital content have accelerated in recent years," comments Appleton. "The question is one of how much extra income streaming will deliver. Our management has decided to review this whole area in partnership with the players, rather than impose new duties on us. We've had some very fruitful meetings already and received training in new media over the past six months, so we can help shape what could be a more progressive future."

Mental health concerns

Dave Rimbault, MU Steward at the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, underlines the value of open communication. He cites the RLPO's collaborative approach to mental and physical health and desire to counter the

negative effects of being away from work for months. The orchestra has responded to concerns about wellbeing by producing a back-to-work plan, complete with webinars on performance anxiety and support for returning to a changed workplace.

"I'm pleased management recognised our concerns about players' mental health," comments Rimbault. "They've also been very good so far on Covid health and safety." He notes how two-meter spaces have been marked out in Philharmonic Hall's green room and music Room, to protect players while warming up or rehearsing. "We should also remain mindful of the long-term implications of any contract changes made during the pandemic and be careful not to sleepwalk into situations where working terms and conditions regress. There's a balance to be struck between what we need to get back to work now and what people will accept in future." **mu**

The Value Of Live Music

"As terrible as lockdowns have been for our profession – and they've been really terrible – they've demonstrated how important live orchestral music is to so many people," says Paul Turner, timpanist and MU Steward, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. "We've never been more relevant or reached a broader audience. It's shown what can happen with simple ideas if the will is there. And it's certainly been there with us and so many other orchestras. The big thing to come out of this has been to show what can be achieved when people work together for the common good."

"We've connected with people in so many ways during the pandemic. I believe there will be a massive outpouring of public support when audiences are able to return to live performances. But we've got to make sure orchestras are here for them when the time comes, and that will need more help from government."

The Rise of UK Hip-Hop

From the margins to the mainstream, UK hip-hop has exploded in recent years and risen to evermore creative and commercial heights

Feature by Yemi Abiade

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UK hip hop is at an all time high. In 2020, the British Phonographic Industry (BPI) reported that, of all single track consumption in 2019, 21.5% came from the hip hop and rap section, up from 20.9% in 2018, making it the second most consumed genre in the country after pop. Within that genre itself, 42.2% of consumption accounted for came from British artists, setting up UK hip hop for a mammoth 2020, during which it continued to grow in stature. Despite live shows being halted for the foreseeable future and sizable chunks of artist income down the proverbial drain, artists have buckled down, worked on their craft and kept their release schedule rolling. It now speaks volumes, according to the BPI's 2020 report published last month, that

Hip hop acts such as Dave, Aitch, AJ Tracey, Headie One, J Hus and KSI, to name just a few, are achieving hundreds of millions of streams each year in the UK and beyond and are growing their global profile.

Evolution

UK hip hop's current success is incredible when you consider its humble beginnings. Emerging in the early 1980s, America was a key point of reference for this country's fertile communities, who met up at house parties and nightclubs for cultural exchange. Consequently, the first generation of MCs, such as Dizzy Heights, Bo Kool and Derek B, rapped in American accents in simplistic rhyme schemes and over production ranging from the funk-leaning sounds exhibited by Afrika Bambaataa to Run-DMC inspired drum-heavy production. Rapping in an American accent was a mechanism when very few British MCs existed to strike familiarity with fans of US rap.

Crucially, later MCs like the London Posse and the Demon Boyz would use their natural speaking accents when rapping, the first step towards the autonomy we see today. This would lay down the path that the likes of Roots Manuva, Blak Twang, Ty, Skinnyman, The Streets and The Mitchell Brothers would walk by the turn of the century. Lyrically adept and braggadocious on occasion, they injected their own personalities, stories and consciousness into their raps, addressing the ills of society often over mellow, sometimes melancholic production made on software such as Fruity Loops and eJay. The culture was growing, but the advent of grime in the early noughties would change everything. A wholly British invention, the new sound fused UK garage, dancehall and jungle to create full throttle instrumentals at 140 BPM, spawning legendary MCs such as Dizzee Rascal, Wiley, Skepta, Kano and D Double E, who brought a mixture of intense flows, vivid storytelling and lyrical prowess seldom seen before.

The Present Day

UK hip hop has continued to splinter into myriad new sub-genres, such as UK rap, UK drill and Afroswing. Most recently, UK drill, a combination of trap, UK rap and US drill music, has taken grime's mantle as the sound of the streets, trading tongue-twisting lyricism for ominous road tales over rampant, energetic and domineering production. From this scene, the likes of Headie One, 67, Digga D, Loski, Unknown T and Skengdo X AM have emerged as fixtures. Meanwhile, Afroswing fuses the vibrancy of Afrobeats with the grit of UK rap for danceable, chart-ready anthems by the likes of NSG, MoStack and Hardy Caprio.





Headie One performs
at the Brixton Academy
in November 2019

“We’ve been blessed with some of the most exciting music over the past year alone”

Joseph ‘JP’ Patterson

Which brings us to the present day, in which artists are playing their part in a burgeoning movement. Commercially, the likes of Stormzy (twice), Dave and Nines have now reached No.1 in the UK Albums Chart for their albums *Gang Signs & Prayer* and *Heavy Is The Head*, *Psychodrama* and *Crabs In A Bucket* respectively, while South Londoner Dave’s 2018 single *Funky Friday* became the first UK rap song to enter at No.1 on the Singles Chart.

Stormzy made further history in 2019 when he became the first British rapper to headline the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury Festival, a watershed moment transcending the rap scene itself. UK rap has also been recognised to a greater degree critically; Skepta and Dave both picked up the prestigious Mercury Prize for their albums *Konnichiwa* and *Psychodrama* in 2016 and 2019. The likes of Stormzy, Kano, J Hus, Ghostpoet, Little Simz, Loyle Carner and slowthai have also been nominated. In 2018, GSAP became the first British rap album to win the BRIT Award for Album For The Year, followed in 2020 by *Psychodrama*.

Joseph ‘JP’ Patterson, editor-in-chief at *Complex UK* and *Trench* magazine, and an authority on UK Black music, is revelling in this golden moment for the scene. “From UK drill and Afroswing to road rap, we’ve been blessed with some of the most exciting music over the past year alone,” he says. “Artists have been able to work on their craft a lot more during the lockdown season, which has helped to boost what they were already doing before it. What’s also exciting is that most of the artists getting mainstream recognition haven’t created music for that. They’re doing it their own way, and this is what they have attracted, which is how it should be.”

For east London-based MC Barney Artist, who has been making music since 2013 and recorded and released his *Lofi Lockdown*

Barney Artist is thankful for the doors that UK rap artists before him have opened, and has taken the opportunity to keep productive in lockdown

Photo: Chux

project last June during the UK’s initial lockdown period, the scene is in a healthy state, in more ways than one. “Things like the internet and streaming have given opportunities to artists that weren’t there back in the day,” he explains. “Someone like a Loyle Carner can now sell out Ally Pally in five minutes, and it’s not because the music is any better than a Skinnyman, but because it is more readily accessible to his audience. That’s helped someone like me massively because now I can do shows internationally that I might not have been able to do a decade ago. There’s a lot more live instrumentation, there’s a lot of us working with musicians now, which wasn’t the case back in the day. Artists are working with singers on hooks more, experimenting with different genres. The core elements are still there in terms of rapping, but it’s less on the cypher side and more artistic now.”

Monetisation In Lockdown

As the internet has allowed music to travel on a global scale, artist success has been proliferated by the ability to generate revenue worldwide, via touring, merchandise and a closer proximity to brands. The confines of Covid-19 have dealt a significant blow to earnings however, though a number of major artists have been able to secure considerable

The Impact Of Soundcloud

The advent of the music platform Soundcloud in 2007 would provide a future base for a new class of UK rap artists to come into their own, with the freedom to lay down and upload their music with complete autonomy. This helped fuel what is remembered by some as a golden age for the underground from 2014 to 2017, where UK rap artists would build a new brand of UK hip-hop: alternative, experimental and free of constraints.

North London rapper Lex Amor, who began uploading music onto Soundcloud in 2017, remembers this time well. “There were no barriers to your creativity and sharing your creativity,” she says. “I think that is one of the most important things – the fact that you can make something in your room, you can upload it without barriers and now it’s available to the world like that. The ease of that creativity and sharing is what’s really exploded that scene, because there’s autonomy now. There’s no need to be waiting in an office to get somebody to play your music or radio. You could take it into your own hands.”



Loyle Carner on stage at the BBC Radio 6 Music Festival at Camden Dingwalls, London in March 2020

Photo: Jim Dyson / Getty Images



Lex Amor is making music that encourages power and upliftment

Photo: Robin Niedjadio

result, over \$40m has been generated for artists and labels in just under a year, a major boost for the industry at large.

North London artist Lex Amor has been unable to perform live but has homed in on utilising Bandcamp to push her music further. "It's been a tough time for a lot of the scene, especially for people I know that are session musicians and touring musicians," she says. "Those people that can't necessarily rely on a back catalogue or whatever comes in from streaming. For me, it was about finding innovative ways to commodify what music we had left. It was really important for me to get physicals and make them available to buy. At this stage, I've tried to build a team and get enough people around me so that we find ways to create sustainable models. So that everybody's shopping and everybody's nibbling something at least."

The Impact Of Black Lives Matter

In the midst of sustaining an income and keeping creativity intact, the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement last summer sparked worldwide protests. In the UK, the music industry replied in kind, with music executives Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang initiating #TheShowMustBePaused, wherein music company operations around the world were halted for a day, in solidarity with BLM. Meanwhile, artists such as Che Lingo (*My Block, Black Ones*) and Treat MBM (*Black Lives Really Matter (Make A Change)*) felt

immediately empowered to explore the notion of blackness in their art. For Barney and Lex however, the emotional weight of watching the movement build in real time understandably put their creativity to a grinding halt. "I didn't feel like wanting to write a song about what being Black was," Barney explains, "because I was knackered. It was exhausting having to relive trauma, witness guilt, 24 hours a day. What we were seeing was nuts."

Lex Amor was similarly affected: "I wasn't able to move for like two weeks," she says. "There was a dark cloud over me, but I realised, at this point in my life especially, that I'm trying to actively be more concerned with making music that encourages power and upliftment. I've had to ask myself some real questions about where I want to place my stories, how I want to frame my stories, and how I want to represent myself."

The Future And Beyond

In spite of wider world issues, the UK rap scene continues to consolidate its meteoric rise over the years. As new and established artists begin to reap the benefits of their hard work, mediums such as social media and the internet and what feels like rapid globalisation, they are not only finding their lane but appealing to their audiences. Commercial and critical success has followed, and it is now commonplace to find a single or album from a rapper near the top of the charts not only in the UK, but around the world.

Artists have taken control of their own destiny, thereby reaching a creative zenith that has reaped commercial, critical and financial gain, even in the midst of a pandemic in which they have had to regroup, recalibrate and ultimately, endure. The future promises more of the same as the scene grows in stature, undeterred by expectations and poised to be as dynamic as it can be.

"I see more greatness," Patterson says. "I thought the indie rock/pop cycle was going to happen straight after the grime resurgence (in 2014) but that hasn't been the case. Black music is still dominating the music industry and I can't see it dying down anytime soon." **mu**

partnerships. Skepta has teamed up with drinks giant Havana Club for his own rum branding, while Wray & Nephew has worked with UK artists including D Double E, P Money and Trillaly Banks over lockdown.

Elsewhere, music platform Bandcamp initiated its Bandcamp Fridays initiative last March, in which the service waives its fees every first Friday of the month so musicians obtain a higher percentage of sales revenue. As a



Before buying any bowed string instrument always try it in the acoustic setting where it will be played

Photo: Izzet Keribar / Getty Images

BUYING AND SELLING : INSTRUMENTS

For professional musicians, buying and selling musical instruments can be a challenging and time-consuming process. Neil Crossley examines the options and assesses how to ensure you get the best outcome with the minimum hassle

In mid-April 2020, as the reality of the first lockdown began to take hold, some musical instrument retailers in the UK began to notice a wholly unexpected trend. Shops that had shifted their sales operations online saw a surge in demand for everything from guitars, ukuleles and saxophones to workstations, USB mics and mini grand pianos. "In March, we were disaster planning," says Lee Anderton of Andertons Music Co in Guildford. "But in April and May we had our best two months ever in the history of the business."

Twelve months on and business is still brisk. While sourcing a new instrument could be the last thing on many pro musicians' minds right now, the desire for a good deal on new and used gear is still driving the market, even in these uncertain times. Buying or selling an instrument requires an investment of time, dedication and research. The used instrument market in particular is littered with instances of people either getting ripped off or failing to get the price that their instrument warrants. With this in mind, it's well worth taking note of a few key factors that will optimise your chances of a successful purchase or sale. By empowering yourself with knowledge of the instrument and the market, you can maximise profit and minimise disappointment.

Online Options

One of the most popular methods of instrument sales is through dedicated online sites. The auction site eBay is safe, secure and has a huge audience, although the fees and charges can be high. Another option is Facebook Marketplace, an efficient site featuring focused communities of like-minded musicians and producers.

Gumtree is also a popular option and particularly useful for buying and selling locally. But one of the most respected sites is Reverb.com, a dedicated marketplace launched in 2013 that transformed from a small team of musicians above a Chicago drum shop into a global community where millions of players buy and sell new, used, and vintage music gear.

Iain Butterwick, EMEA territory manager at Reverb.com, is all too aware of best practice when it comes to buying and selling instruments online. One of the challenges of buying from a global platform, of course, is that buyers won't get to actually see or play the instrument before purchase. Consequently, buyers really need to empower themselves with information, he says.

Find Out More

"My first piece of advice for buying online is to not be afraid to ask questions," says Butterwick. "If you're curious about how the instrument sounds, what it feels like in your hands, or even what the parts look like close-up, just ask. Sellers want to help you feel confident about buying gear from them and are more than willing to give you more information or pictures."

Butterwick strongly advises buyers to negotiate, as many sellers will accept offers on used gear, he says. "Around 15-20% off the original asking price is the sweet spot for a reasonable offer," he says. "And always check the return policy. On sites like Reverb that feature many different sellers, shops are able to set their own return policies, so it's important to make sure you understand the return policy before you purchase."

"Around 15-20% off the original asking price is the sweet spot"

Iain Butterwick, Reverb.com

Honesty Is Key

For musicians looking to sell their instruments online, it pays to provide potential buyers with as much information as possible. Honesty is key, so any dings, cracks or general faults should be photographed and detailed in the listing. "An important best practice when selling is to take clear, well-lit photos of items from all sides and angles, and to take close-up shots of any and all blemishes," says Butterwick. "It's all about transparency: you should provide as much detail about your item as possible in the item description and make it come to life to help buyers picture themselves with the gear."

It's worth noting that Reverb.com has tools that help sellers to assess the condition of their items. It also has a price guide that provides real time data on what prices instruments are being bought and sold for on the site. There are also real people at the end of a phone line if you need them. "Reverb has an entire team of musicians that can provide you with assistance," adds Butterwick.

Physical Transactions

According to a recent report by US publication *The Music Trades*, online sales now account for more than half of all musical instrument transactions, and this is set to increase. →

"Don't buy an instrument without researching the seller, the instrument and obviously the price first"

Nigel Pulsford



DOING DEALS IN THE COVID CLIMATE

Buying and selling face-to-face in the age of social distancing obviously has its challenges. Even when restrictions are eased, it's well worth ensuring the buyer or seller shares your concerns over social-distancing and PPE, and then makes a plan of how the instrument can be tried in a safe environment within the home.

Masks and hand sanitiser are a must, and once an instrument has been played it should be cleaned appropriately. The products required for this very much depend on the instrument so do your research thoroughly before reaching for the anti-viral spray. For example, nitro cellulose finishes on guitars are particularly sensitive. Some cleaning products that can be used on the mouthpiece of woodwind instruments should not be used around the pads, and any amount of excess liquid can be damaging for wooden instruments in general.

Ideally, instruments that are being tried by potential buyers should be quarantined between use. While it may not be possible, it's worth noting that some instrument shops receiving part-exchanged instruments will place them in a quarantine area for 72 hours before sanitising them.

NB: Don't forget to check any local Covid-19 restrictions that may apply to you.

Photo: Courtesy of Peach Guitars

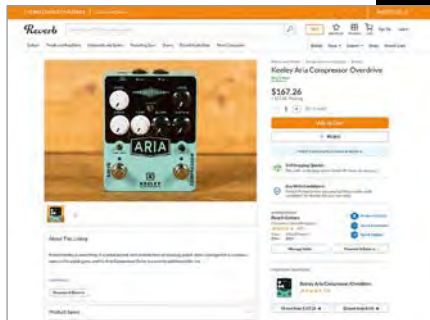
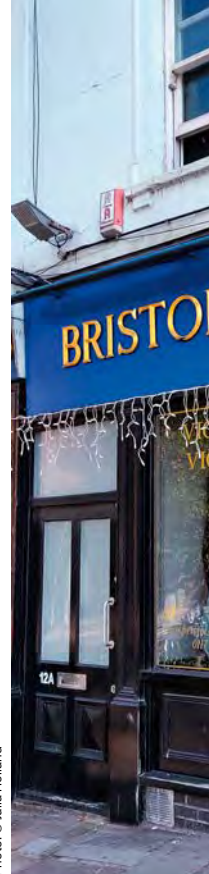


Photo: Courtesy of Reverb.com



Above: Iain Butterwick of Reverb.com strongly advises buyers of instruments to ask questions and to negotiate
Right: The Bristol Violin Shop caters for a diverse range of string players from south-west England and Wales

Photo: © Julia Holland



But for some, physical transactions are still the preferred option. For the online seller, advertising an instrument, negotiating its sale and arranging shipping can be a time-consuming process. For the buyer meanwhile, ensuring they get the instrument they want at the right price and in one piece can be equally challenging. Many relish this process. But for others, it may be something they'd rather hand over to someone else.

Professional musicians may prefer to sell their instruments via a trusted and specialist shop or dealer. The shop's fee – commonly a 20% plus VAT mark-up – reduces the profit, but handing over the responsibility for the sale can have substantial benefits, particularly when it comes to vintage instruments.

A Matter Of Trust

"People tend to trust shops more than people," says Nigel Pulsford, guitarist with 90s rock band Bush and former owner of Vintage 'n' Rare Guitars in Bath. He suggests buyers should really do some groundwork before parting with their money. "Don't buy without researching the seller, the instrument and obviously the price first. Without taking a guitar to bits it's very hard to ascertain what is original and what isn't. But when you buy from a reputable shop they can guarantee the originality of the instrument."

The same level of provenance applies if you are selling through a shop. "So suddenly your instrument is being endorsed by the shop that

is selling it for you," he says. "The beauty of selling through a shop is that they can take the stress out of the deal for you."

Nick Woodward, partner at the Bristol Violin Shop, advises anyone buying a bowed string instrument from a shop to always try it in the acoustic setting where it will be played. "If a shop or dealer won't let you take it away to show a teacher or to try it in the acoustics you are used to – an orchestra, a pub, a church or whatever – then I would avoid them," he says. He also cautions against buying online. "You can buy a new guitar or metal flute online and be pretty sure of what you are getting. Bowed string instruments are a whole other thing."

Get It In Shape

For anyone selling an instrument through a shop, it pays to ensure that the instrument is in good playing order before you turn up at the counter. "We will only sell instruments that are set up to our standards and have refused to sell some that have not been," says Woodward. This is a view echoed by Pulsford. "It's worth making your instrument look presentable before you bring it to a shop,"



he says. "Give it a clean up, change the strings and make sure it plays okay. Turning up with something looking grotty, feeling sticky with rusty strings won't endear you to the shop and will be reflected in the price as someone at the shop will spend time cleaning, polishing, setting up and restringing the guitar."

Be Realistic

Pulsford says people who sell instruments via a specialist retailer need to be realistic about what they hope to achieve.

"It's worth considering how desirable the instrument is. Some guitars can sit in a shop for five years without a buyer taking any interest in them. If you've got a vintage Les Paul or Strat in original condition you'll probably sell it very quickly. Something more modern can take longer. There's no hard and fast rule. If you want to sell it quickly then it needs to be priced attractively, and unfortunately that means selling it for less."

Insurance Obstacles

There is a common assumption that anyone selling an instrument through a specialist instrument retailer is automatically insured for any damage or loss on the premises. This is not always the case. The seller should always be insured and keep the policy running until

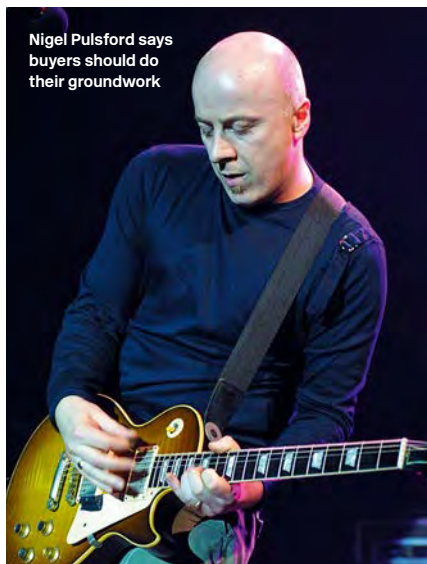


Photo: ullstein bild / Getty Images

the instrument is sold and they have received payment. The MU's preferred broker Hencilla Canworth confirms that MU instrument insurance, underwritten by Allianz Insurance PLC, covers theft or damage except if stolen by shop staff. However, some policies may not give sufficient protection. In 2020, the MU received reports of a few members losing their instruments without payment after a shop went into administration.

One member, who asked not to be named, advises all musicians selling instruments via a shop to check their insurance policies. "Before you even put one foot inside the shop, the insurance needs to be rock solid. Make sure you're covered for all eventualities. I was perhaps very trusting and I didn't check it. I just presumed."

Put The Work In

There is no one singular approach when trading instruments. As Nick Woodward says, buying or selling through a specialist retailer, privately, online, or even at an auction all have their benefits and downsides. But whichever route you choose, the chances are that the greater your commitment and diligence, the better the outcome. That way, you're more likely to secure a sale or purchase at a price that satisfies both parties. **mu**

Top 5 Tips

Best advice for buying and selling

1

Be Honest

If the instrument has any dings, cracks or structural faults then detail them in full along with relevant close-up photos of them. Withholding such details will only lead to problems.

2

Always Ask

If you are a buyer don't be afraid to ask questions about the instrument. Any decent seller will be happy to provide you with more information and photos.

3

Get The Price Right

If you are selling, then ask around and search online to gauge the most realistic price. If you are buying, then always negotiate. Remember, 15-20% off the asking price is the sweet spot.

4

Play It If You Can

Make every effort you can to actually play the instrument before you buy. Nothing beats getting a feel for how it plays and sounds.

5

Make An Impression

Make sure your instrument looks good and plays well before you sell it. Repair any faults, change the strings, reeds and so on. Give it a clean and a polish.

TOP TIP

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Always ensure you research the seller, the instrument and the price. If you are buying online check the feedback ratings and reviews of the seller.

Tools Of The Trade

Louise Braithwaite explains how to maintain her complex woodwind instruments

Report by Clive Somerville

As principal cor anglais and co-principal oboe with Orchestra of the Swan since 2005, Louise Braithwaite has had a diverse and enriched career. She has worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company, performed as a soloist on BBC Radio 3, and even made an appearance in the BBC Radio 4 series *The Archers*. Louise's outreach work, performing to those in care in the community, receives huge praise, and she guest-lectures in performance and pedagogy at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

Louise was 10 years old when her interest in playing an instrument was first piqued. "I fell over a strange box in the loft," she recalls. "I opened it to find my mum's old Buisson oboe, which she hadn't played since school. I wanted to find out how it worked, and six weeks of experimentation later, some lessons were found for me."

She later tried out the oboe's bigger cousin the cor anglais on a county music course, encouraged by a tutor to "have a go" at it. "Years later, after I finished my postgraduate course, I was able to buy a good quality instrument and it really took off for me."

Taking care of two of the more intricate members of the woodwind family is a labour of love. "The reed is the most crucial part," says Louise. "Enzymes in saliva attack reed cane. Moisten them in fresh water before you play, and rinse them after playing: they'll last longer."

"Use cork grease to lubricate the tenon and socket joints"



Photo: Jessica Raphael Photography

Louise keeps a comprehensive range of items in her gig bag

Flush them through with warm water every so often to keep them clean inside," she advises, and have two or three reeds on the go at once, so you're not replacing an old reed with a brand new one, before it has 'settled'.

"Whether you have a wooden or synthetic oboe, you need to dry each section thoroughly after playing. Use a mop or a pull-through on a weighted cord. Put it through from the widest end of the bore of each joint, but don't pull it all the way through because you'll get it stuck and/or squeeze the moisture out inside the narrowest part of the instrument. Use cork grease to lubricate the tenon and socket joints, the cork of the oboe reed and the crook of the cor anglais. Not doing this is the most common reason for a trip to the repairer or a ruined reed. I've used lip balm in emergencies."

Both instruments' keys are fixed to rods with tiny screws, at different tensions, which Louise says has spelled disaster on occasion. "Oboes are very sensitive to changes in temperature and humidity. Screws expand and contract, causing the keys to become dislodged or fall off, and screws can roll away. I was playing live in a concert when this happened to my Principal's oboe, dislodging a key and stopping the oboe from working at all. It simply seized up during a solo. We had to stop mid-performance. I handed her my oboe

and she continued playing (beautifully, I might add) while I fixed hers on stage. Check your screws and rods are secure before and during a session and use a drop of fine-grade key oil on pivot points to prevent them sticking."

For foreign travel, her instruments, if not the reed knives and mini-screwdrivers, can be taken as hand luggage. But however far you're travelling, she says, forethought is key. "Make sure your case actually fits your instrument. You don't want it moving around inside the case. And check you've closed it properly. My oboe has fallen out before now as I've picked the case up. To reduce temperature changes in transport or from air conditioning, wrap the whole case in something like sheepskin. And at home, store it away from heat."

Custom earplugs are essential items in Louise's gig bag, "as I sit right in front of the trumpets. I got them through the MU's Hearing Passport scheme and they're great". She also uses clingfilm to seal reed edges, Rizla papers to absorb condensation under keys and a crochet hook to reposition key springs which can sometimes catch on fluffy clothes. "I also have nail varnish to repair reed threads and snags in concert tights!"

For more information on Louise and her work please visit louise-braithwaite.co.uk

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

Reviewers: Roy Delaney
& Jack Fittes

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for 2021, together with links for more information on the featured artists



SARAH VISTA

45

Photo: Nick Tucker

The self-proclaimed outlaw songstress Sarah Vista has been twanging her way through her own dark and dangerous take on country and western music for a good few years now. Her debut release *I Wish You Hell* was a vitriolic clarion call that announced her cowgirl stylings to the world.

This might be country, but it's more spaghetti western flavoured than the meek Americana that so many hat-wearing acts are plying these days. The stetson here is firmly doffed at the purveyors of the southern country song, from Loretta Lynn to Marty Robbins via The Man In Black himself, with a little bit of Wanda Jackson thrown in for good

measure. Indeed, Lee Powell from *UK Rock & Roll* magazine described her music as "a unique blend of Morricone-esque western soundtrack style sounds and brooding, blood-soaked balladry" and we reckon that he's not too far off the mark. Her *Sunday Saloon* film review channel is also a thing of absolute cinematic beauty.



» SARAH VISTA Songs From The Silver Screen

Inspired by her own *Sunday Saloon* show, Vista set herself to covering some of the finest songs from Western movie soundtracks, including great takes on *River Of No Return* and the Lee Marvin classic *Wandrin' Star*. sarahvista.com

jazz



>> **SHEZ RAJA** Tales From The Punjab

Virtuoso bass player Shez digs deep into his rich South Asian heritage to create possibly his most heartfelt recording to date, with help from musicians the calibre of Ahsan Papu, Kashif Ali Dani and Zohaib Hassan.

shezraja.com



>> **JOHN POPE QUINTET** Mixed With Glass

Kicking off with triumphant horns on the beaty opener *Plato*, double bassist John might be the band leader, but he certainly shares the glory around on this selection of incredibly cool jazz numbers.

johnpopebass.co.uk



>> **MO FOSTER & FRIENDS** In Concert

A live album by session legend and prestigious bass player Mo. Here he plays a selection of jazz gems, alongside his crack hand-picked band of Jim Watson, Chris Biscoe, Nic France, Ray Russell and Corrina Silvester.

mofoster.com



>> **KENDON / RYALL SEXTET** There Will Be Time

A smooth and laid back collection of original compositions, topped out with a fine cover of the old standard *Night And Day*, that showcases Imogen Ryall's honey-rich vocals.

www.imogenryall.com

electronic folk pop



>> **TENDER CENTRAL** The Garden

Describing themselves as folktronica, but covering an even broader range than that suggests, Tender Central are a collaboration between Ben Howard and cellist India Bourne, and weave fine folksy sounds, with a blues visitation by Matthew & the Atlas on *Ashes*.

tinyurl.com/tenderc



>> **THIRD GIRL FROM THE LEFT** Oxygen

Dreamy downtempo pop songs recorded at the artist's home studio in Devon over lockdown. The title track evokes memories of the Sneaker Pimps and Hooverphonic, while the rest of the EP is a much more folky affair.

thirdgirlfromtheleft.com

rock



FELIX AND THE SUNSETS This Will Change

Written in tribute to Black Lives Matter, this Leith-based psychedelic band hit Santana mode in this driftly mantra to a better world.

felixandthesunsets.bandcamp.com



SVARC HANLEY LONGHORN 20/21

Hooked from track one. This trio continue to carve their own corner, with what can only be described as moody, psych, future jazz-rock. The drums will get you.

svarchanleylonghawn.com



THE BLUE YELLOWS A Minute In The Sun

A good old fashioned wigout rock act, with busy and fractious compositions and sixties tinges. The summery title track and the jangly *Just Like Nero* stand out.

blueyellows.co.uk

STAND OUT

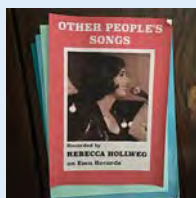
This month's highlights include a welcome return from some British prog rock veterans, and a collection of smooth and soulful covers by a master singer



GRYPHON Get Out Of My Father's Car!

This comeback album from these seventies prog legends is as brilliantly eccentric as you'd expect. After the deeply funky title-track opener it skips through madrigals, folk fusion and glorious tea dance shuffles. Truly ace!

thegryphonpages.com



REBECCA HOLLWEG Other People's Songs

A soft contentedness is at the heart of this classy selection of covers. A journey of love and heartbreak, but one that comes from a warm place of reflection. Her takes on *Wonderful World*, and *Everybody's Talkin'* are ones to look out for.

rebeccahollweg.com

instrumental

» **MARICI SAXES**
Origin

To celebrate ten years in the music business, this anniversary release by the popular saxophone quartet features music from a planet of diverse locations including China, America, Scotland and The Balkans.

maricisaxes.com

» **HUSSEY MARWOOD**
Drive

The well-loved musical adventurers Ivan Hussey and Steve Marwood combine their cello and guitar expertise on a broad range of genres and styles, encompassing everything from jazz to Latin to classical.

tinyurl.com/husseymar

» **PAUL TAYLOR**
Via

Frantic, skittering bursts of improvised piano ebb into more gentle melodic chimes before exploding back into the most urgent life all over again. Not an easy listen, for sure, but a worthwhile one for those willing to take the journey.

gigmit.com/paul-taylor

singer/songwriter

» **ANDREW VAN GARRATT**
Ride Into The Sun

A stompy selection of big and bold bubblegum pop rock songs. Andrew offers infectious choruses, crunchy guitars, and instantly brings great Californian bands the likes of Red Kross and Weezer to mind.

andrewvangarratt.com

» **LUKE JACKSON**
Of The Time

Haunting melodies, perky confessionals and rousing calls to arms sit side-by-side, all glued together by Luke's sweet, almost ghostly voice. Songs like *Refrain* and *Tiny Windows* will rip your heart out while others will warm it up again.

lukepauljackson.com

» **EVE WILLIAMS**
Scratch The Surface

Painfully honest songs about Eve's own tumultuous life. From childhood illnesses to near fatal accidents and family strife, her pain and experience powers through her voice and into the songs.

evewilliamsmusic.com

Folk

» **PATTERSON DIPPER**
Unearthing

A considered approach to folk. Patterson's voice is rich, familiar and grounding without forced drama. The instrumentals are clean and complex. *King of Poland/Waterwitch* will take you on a broad musical journey.

pattersondipper.co.uk

» **MOSSY CHRISTIAN**
Come Nobles And Heroes

This hugely talented young musician, singer and dancer draws on the musical traditions of the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire lands that he knows, while playing virtuoso fiddle and anglo concertina. Fine stuff!

nicksites.net/mossy

» **KIM EDGAR**
Held

Usually busy playing with her band Cara, Kim began to crave human interaction during lockdown so wrote this album as a form of musical hug. Her warm, friendly voice oozes out across these intimate songs. Album opener *Lower* and the deeply personal *Absent Father* tug at the heartstrings.

kimedgar.com

acoustic

» **RON JAPPY**
Vincular

A fiddler from the North East Coast of Scotland, Ron takes the skills learned in a decade as an accompanist and arranger to craft a debut album full of fine regional folk touches and some rocky edges.

ronjappy.com

» **GREG LARKIN**
A Thousand Ghosts

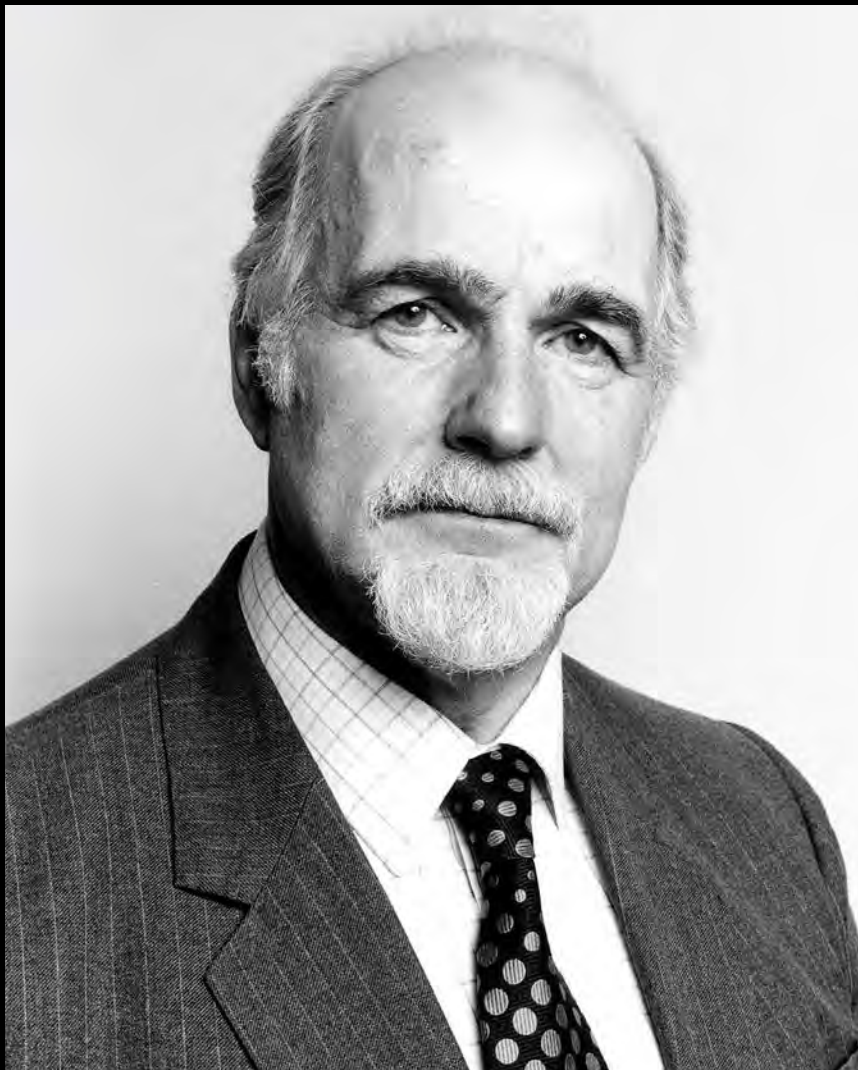
Greg's percussive guitar and ear for musical pathos offer light and shade throughout this hypnotic and unusual set of sparse instrumentals.

greglarkin.bandcamp.com

» **HONEY & THE BEAR**
Journey Through The Roke

Lucy and Jon Hart's latest features eleven delicate folk compositions and a shimmering version of the old favourite *My Lagan Love*.

honeyandthebear.co.uk



John Morton

1930 – 2021

A tribute to the former Musicians' Union General Secretary, who has sadly passed away

Tribute by Jack Fittes

John Morton was a union man. A man whose life was led by morals, belief systems and by an educated and well-informed mind. Born in Wolverhampton, John was one of three brothers cared for by his mother while their father served in the First World War. He spent his time playing piano in his brotherly trio, weightlifting, and teaching himself about distant lands and cultures. John took his weightlifting very seriously, competing and placing in competitions across the UK. It is hard to avoid the symbolism of a young man who trained himself to carry great weight growing into a union leader – supporting the needs of others and carrying the weight of many troubled times on his shoulders.

Early Activism

Upon taking an apprenticeship as a printer, it didn't take long for dreams of a more musical life to lure John away, and he left to join a swing band shortly afterwards. In this world, John found his place, carving his role as a leader and a man of knowledge and care. He joined the MU in 1946 as an active member, snowballing into his appointment as Branch Secretary and becoming a member of the Executive Committee. Shortly after John's appointment, the Union became much more active in the fight against racism, most notably in its boycott of the Scala Ballroom in Wolverhampton's over its colour bar policy. After a sharp victory overturning the policy, the spotlight was turned to South Africa, with MU members asked not to play there in 1957 – a move that was ahead of the curve.

John decided to end his full-time employment at the Union but remained on the Executive Committee, moving to a teaching position on industrial relations at Solihull College. Later, he was encouraged to stand for General Secretary and was victorious at the first ballot. This laid the tracks for a life-long commitment to leadership. In the following years John not only led the union, but led with personality, imprinting his own agenda in a constructive and meaningful way. A profile in *The Observer* in 1980 gave him the title 'The Great Thinker' for his influence at that time.

This route saw John and the MU engage much more actively with issues of law. In England this battle was most notable at the Performing Rights Tribunal (now known as the Copyright Tribunal) where John represented the Union

John (right) and his direct predecessor as MU General Secretary, Hardie Ratcliffe



Photos: MU Archive, Flourishes: Ingram Publishing / Getty Images


and set terms with independent radio station owners. John had initially been against the idea of local independent radio and therefore made it his duty to secure a healthy and fair framework for artists.

Union Man

One of John's most active campaigns was fought against the BBC in 1980 when it tried to disband five orchestras in the lead up to The Proms – a move that would have put 172 musicians out of work. The MU spearheaded strikes lasting two months, isolating the BBC from its position as an internationally renowned curator of the arts and leaving The Proms themselves in limbo. With John and his close eye for law at the helm, the MU called the BBC out for skirting their own procedures for consultation with the Union, as laid out in the agreement between the two. The MU also kept an eye firmly on the bigger picture – seeing the move by the BBC as a shift in tide towards employing freelance musicians and getting full-time orchestras slowly off its books. According to a BBC Radio show from the time, the Union believed that these five orchestras were a scapegoat for their financial troubles and that these troubles were an excuse to enact a long-planned policy shift. After two months of strikes that attracted

support from a wealth of celebrities, players and television personalities the two parties reached a compromise which saved three of the five orchestras. The Union hailed the victory as “the strike that changed history”.

But it was not only with the MU that John won hard earned battles. He was also instrumental at the TUC, spending time on the General Council from 1974-85. After a year away, John returned in 1986 and topped the ballot with 1.2 million votes. *The Guardian* described him as a “consensus man”. John used this platform to ensure copyright was at the forefront of agendas both at home and abroad, becoming the President of FIM (International Federation of Musicians) between 1973-2002. His championing of copyright saw him work with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), proving he was a man of standing not only in union leadership, but in international policy too.

The MU's current General Secretary, Horace Trubridge said of his predecessor “John's forensic and detailed knowledge of copyright and performers' rights was second to none. He imparted his wisdom and knowledge with great clarity and a good dose of humour too!” 

“John was a diplomat, a performer, an entertainer, a father, a husband, an intellect...”

A tribute from John's daughter Magda

John Morton was one of three musician brothers. They played together at an early age with John on piano, Paul on trombone, and Bernard on trumpet. His father was a sign painter who served in the First World War and his mother was dedicated to raising the three boys. John had many passions growing up including music, travel, and weightlifting. He competed and placed in amateur weight lifting competitions in the north of England. John had three children, Lesley, with his first wife, and Magda and Nicholas with his second wife, Ellen, with whom he remained happily married until her death in 2019. He was a dedicated and kind father, with great patience and calm. Many will remember him for his humour. He was captivating and would enthral audiences with his lengthy and intricate jokes. John was a diplomat, a performer, an entertainer, a father, a husband, an intellect, and a caring and generous man. He was admired and revered by many and will be missed by even more.

A tribute from his friend John Patrick

John was a towering figure for the MU and within the wider Trade Union movement for over 30 years. His dedication and work for the benefit of the music profession remain unsurpassed. I was extremely fortunate on two counts. First that he was General Secretary during most of my tenure as Chair of the EC, as his calm demeanour and sheer intellect made any problem solvable. And second because his was the staunchest and truest friendship I ever had. I will miss him very much both professionally and personally and consider myself incredibly lucky to have known him so well for so long. Rest well old friend.

Funding The Future

Assistant General Secretary, Phil Kear, explains how the MU political fund provides invaluable help for members

Two pence in every pound. That is how much each member who is signed up to the MU's political fund contributes from their annual MU membership subscription. It's no secret that the fund has taken a hit in recent years. The introduction of the Trade Union Act in 2016 meant that union members were subsequently required to positively opt-in to make political fund contributions, and as a result the percentage of MU members contributing to the fund saw a significant drop from 76% in 2015 to just 57% in 2019.

Still, there is a huge amount of invaluable work that comes as a result of the contributions that are received. As a trade union there is something of a false expectation that the entirety of the MU's political fund is used to support the Labour Party. In reality, less than half of the fund is spent on Labour affiliation fees, with the larger share being used to undertake other political activity vital to the protection of MU members' rights and livelihoods.

Lobbying Successes

Lobbying politicians on behalf of our members is something that the MU does every day and it really yields results. Historic achievements include: the introduction of the Live Music Act; UK Copyright Term Extension; European Parliament legislation to make it easier for musicians to take their instruments on

"Lobbying politicians on behalf of our members is something the MU does every day"



planes; the Digital Economy Act; The Beijing Treaty, which secured audiovisual rights for performers.

More recent successes include: achieving a DCMS Select Committee inquiry into the economics of streaming through our #FixStreaming campaign, which, if we are successful, could lead to a new permanent unwaivable right to payment for musicians from streaming of commercial recordings on platforms such as Spotify; the introduction, and ongoing extension, of financial support for freelancers (SEISS) during the COVID-19 pandemic; the creation of the Cultural Recovery Fund for businesses suffering financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including those that engage MU members; passing of the EU Copyright Directive in 2019. It is vitally important to note that, under the Trade Union Act 2016, we are forbidden from committing any MU funds (other than those we receive through individual member donations specifically to the political fund) to lobbying or any of the other valuable political work outlined above. Without member contributions to the MU political fund, the MU's part in the above achievements would have been reduced.

Looking forward, alongside the ongoing Economics of Streaming Inquiry and its outcome, the effect of the double blow of

Freya Ridings at Latitude 2019. The political fund helps the MU to lobby for the safe return of such festivals



Brexit and COVID on the music industry – and specifically on the wellbeing and livelihoods of our members – continue to be the main focus of our lobbying efforts.

Plans For The Future

Our current asks include: reciprocal short-term freedom of movement between the EU and UK, post-Brexit, for musicians, kit and support teams, to allow touring of respective territories to continue; extension of SEISS and furlough beyond April for sectors that cannot return to work; adjustment to SEISS to ensure that some of the previously excluded people can be covered in any new rounds of funding; in line with Scotland and Wales, open up the second round of Cultural Recovery Fund (CRF) money to freelancers; Treasury, DCMS and ACE to top up project funds from the remaining CRF as a way of investing in musicians; a government-backed insurance scheme for summer festivals and other events.

If you aren't currently contributing to the MU's political fund, please consider making that change. The more we receive, the greater chance we have of achieving these aims, for the good of all our members. **mu**

Phil Kear

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.

Live Performance Section

Dave Webster
National Organiser
Live Performance
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5512
E live@theMU.org

Music Writers' Section

Kelly Wood
Live & Music Writers' Official
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7582 5566
E writers@theMU.org

Orchestra Section

Jo Lavery
National Organiser
Orchestras
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5571
E orchestral@theMU.org

Recording & Broadcasting Section

Geoff Ellerby
National Organiser
Recording & Broadcasting
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5555
E rb@theMU.org

Education Section

Chris Walters
National Organiser
Education, Health
& Wellbeing
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5558
E teachers@theMU.org

Theatre Section

Dave Webster
National Organiser
Live Performance
60–62 Clapham Road
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5512
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

#BehindEveryMusician



Important information – please read

Musicians' Union Delegate Conference 2021

- Delegate Nominations
- Conference Motions

**Musicians'
Union**



Musicians' Union Delegate Conference 2021

The MU's Delegate Conference will be held online on 20 and 21 July 2021. Conference receives a report from the Executive Committee on its activities since the last Conference, considers Conference motions and amendments originating from Regional Committees, discusses and decides matters of policy and determines rule changes.

Conference Delegates

Any member who has been in membership for one year at the time of nomination may stand for election as a delegate for their Region. However, Retired (Free) members are not eligible to attend conference as delegates, nor to nominate other members. Nominations for Conference delegates must be made in writing by another member of their Region.

As well as attending the online Conference itself, delegations are expected to meet (also online) in advance of the Conference in order to reach a position on Conference motions, which best reflects the views of members in the Region they represent.

Each Region is entitled to one delegate for every 500 members at 31 December 2020. A ballot will be held should the number of nominations exceed the Region's entitlement.

Should you wish to stand for election as a delegate, please complete and forward a nomination form to your Regional Organiser. Completed forms must include the signatures of both the candidate and a proposer.

Photocopies will be accepted, as will scanned copies submitted via email. Acknowledgement of receipt will be provided on request.

Nomination forms should be sent to your MU Regional Office as set out below:

Scotland & Northern Ireland Region

Acting Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union,
2 Woodside Place, Glasgow G3 7QF
or by email to: barry.dallman@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 12 April 2021.

North of England Region

Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union,
61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY
or by email to: matt.wanstall@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 15 April 2021.

Midlands Region

Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union,
2 Sovereign Ct, Graham St, Birmingham B1 3JR
or by email to: stephen.brown@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 22 April 2021.

Wales & South West England Region

Regional Organiser, Wales & SW England Musicians' Union, MU HQ,
60-62 Clapham Road, London SW9 0JJ
or by email to: andrew.warnock@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 14 April 2021.

N.B. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Wales & SW England members should send their Conference related documents via MU HQ.

East & South East England Region

Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union,
1a Fentiman Road, London SW8 1LD
or by email to: paul.burrows@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 21 April 2021.

London Region

Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union,
33 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PE
or by email to: jamie.pullman@theMU.org
to be received no later than midday on 14 April 2021.

For full details of standing as a Conference delegate, please refer to Rule IX. MU Rules can be found from page 66 in your Members' Handbook 2020/2021 or on the MU website at theMU.org

MU Delegate Conference Nomination Form 2021

I, (print name)

Membership number

accept nomination as a candidate to the MU Delegate Conference for the delegation
of the following Region (circle Region as appropriate).

Scotland & N Ireland / North of England / Midlands / Wales & SW England
East & SE England / London Region

Signed (candidate)

Date

Proposed and nominated by (print name)

Membership number

Signed (proposer)

Date

Please return the completed form to your MU Regional Organiser

Motions to 2021 Delegate Conference

As a result of the call for motions published in the winter 2020 edition of *The Musician*, a number of motions have been considered and accepted by Regional Committees.

Members are now invited to propose amendments to these motions, which are set out below. The motions are printed as received.

Amendments must be supported by five members of the same Region (names and membership numbers must be provided) and should be sent in writing to their Regional Office by the date given below.

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 12 April 2021 and sent to: Acting Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 2 Woodside Place, Glasgow G3 7QF or by email to: barry.dallman@theMU.org

North of England

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 15 April 2021 and sent to: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY or by email to: matt.wanstall@theMU.org

Midlands

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 22 April 2021 and sent to: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 2 Sovereign Ct, Graham Street, Birmingham B1 3JR or by email to: stephen.brown@theMU.org

Wales & South West England

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 14 April 2021 and sent to: Regional Organiser, Wales & SW England Musicians' Union, MU HQ, 60-62 Clapham Road, London SW9 0JJ or by email to: andrew.warnock@theMU.org
N.B. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Wales & SW England members should send their Conference related documents via MU HQ.

East & South East England

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 21 April 2021 and sent to: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 1a Fentiman Road, London SW8 1LD or by email to: paul.burrows@theMU.org

London

Amendments to be received no later than midday on 14 April 2021 and sent to: Regional Organiser, Musicians' Union, 33 Palfrey Place, London SW8 1PE or by email to: jamie.pullman@theMU.org

Motion 1

London Region

Universal Basic Income

During the pandemic, freelance musicians have had very little support from the government at a time when a significant portion of their income has been lost. MU stats show 38% of our members have not been able to access any government support during the pandemic and that 19% of our members are considering leaving their music careers due to the financial instability caused by the pandemic. One desperately needed solution is the introduction of a universal basic income.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) is the principle of giving a fixed amount from the government to every citizen. If musicians could access UBI they could have support during their creation process between records, shows or other related engagements. UBI would support musicians through periods of illness where they are unable to undertake work and would work alongside other key welfare support packages to ensure everyone is on a level playing field, so disability benefits, child benefits etc. would still continue.

Conference notes the 'Intermittence Du Spectacle' provided in France whereby if musicians fulfil minimum required hours of work a year, they can be protected in periods without work and recognises that this may be an interim solution.

Conference urges the Executive Committee to express full support for the introduction of UBI and to campaign for its introduction throughout the United Kingdom.

Motion 2
North of England Region
New arenas

Conference notes with dismay that in some areas, millions of pounds are being spent on new arenas, while older buildings which could be successfully repurposed face dereliction or demolition.

Conference calls on the MU to work with other interested parties such as the MVT and local Music Boards to lobby for refurbishment of such existing buildings, prioritising and recognising the local arts scenes and infrastructure, thereby saving a great deal of money which could be used for cultural or educational good.

Motion 3
North of England Region
Climate emergency

Current scientific consensus suggests that the future ability of Planet Earth to support all life is threatened by human damage to the climate and ecology. Conference requests the EC to develop strategies for the music industry and contribute to strategies in the creative and leisure sector, to tackle both the immediate emergency and the generic long-term transformation to a carbon neutral existence and environmentally sustainable future.

The strategies should consider that:

- No one should lose their livelihood during or after the transition to a carbon neutral existence.
- Those affected by the changes should not suffer diminished employment conditions, opportunities, prosperity and happiness.
- Socio-economic equality needs to be safeguarded and promoted.

Motion 4
North of England Region
To consider joining ArtsMinds

The 2020 public health emergency has meant that many musicians have had no work or music related activities. This has highlighted the need for mental health support.

Conference requests the EC to consider MU joining ArtsMinds - a collaborative initiative involving BAPAM (British Association of Performing Arts Medicine), Equity, Spotlight and The Stage. This would combine many resources available for performers and creative practitioners facing mental health issues.

Motion 5
North of England Region
Post-Covid Recovery Task Force

Conference realises the difficulties for musicians over the past 18 months in respect of the cessation of live work and most studio recording work due to the Covid pandemic. Conference also recognises that many musicians have 'fallen through the cracks' of government schemes and are either living on very low incomes or are destitute.

Given the challenges that musicians now face across the UK in coping not only with devastating effects of the Covid pandemic on work prospects but also with a deep economic recession and the limiting touring impacts of Brexit, conference asks that the MU lead a Post Covid Recovery Task Force of MU officials, activists and representatives from music industry bodies and the FEU to create a viable strategic plan to lobby government effectively for musicians post 2021 and to empower and support them back to work.

Motion 6
North of England Region
Casualisation of the Music Education Workforce

Conference notes that over the last few years the terms and conditions of peripatetic music teachers have been diluted by many music services and hub lead organisations across the country.

Whilst some colleagues are still employed on teachers' terms and conditions, others are now self-employed, on a 'zero hours contract' or in some other position where their employment rights have been eroded.

This has come into sharp relief during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some peripatetic music teachers have been furloughed, others have felt the need to work when it may not have been entirely safe to do so, whilst some who have not been able to work have lost income because of their contract or employment status.

Orchestral colleagues have benefited from the collective bargaining skill and experience of the Musicians' Union to get them the best outcome possible through collective bargaining for contract amendments.

If we do not fight for the status of peripatetic music teachers there is a danger that it will become more difficult to recruit and retain the high-quality music educators that children and young people deserve.

Conference calls on the EC to consider ways in which the MU can become a recognised union with music services and hub lead organisations to fight for fair terms and conditions, and employment status for this valuable and specialised workforce. Also, working with Music Mark and Arts Council England, to create template contracts and lobby for them to become a requirement of hub funding agreements going forwards.

Motion 7

North of England Region Music Education

Conference notes with concern that music education has been under pressure in state schools for years and that this pressure and the associated inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Conference calls on the EC to campaign around access to quality music education for all.

In particular focusing on:

- Reversing the trend in many primary schools to rely on point and click websites to deliver music education rather than a skilled workforce.
- Defending the place of music in the curriculum as schools look to 'catch up'.
- Reversing the decline in music uptake at GCSE and A-level.
- Ensuring access to instrumental lessons regardless of ability to pay.
- Taking similar steps in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland whose systems are different but experience similar challenges.

Motion 8

North of England Region Alliance for Full Employment/Economic recovery and Culture

Conference resolves to support the aims of the "Alliance for Full Employment" and work with other supporters to achieve them. Furthermore, conference recognises that the culture sector has an equal role to play in Britain's economic recovery as any other sector.

Bold measures - including generous public funding - to create new cultural opportunities for people in communities right across Britain needs to be part of a wider economic recovery package. Economic recovery from Covid-19 gives us an opportunity to develop practical initiatives - nationally, regionally and locally - to ensure participation in cultural activities is taken for granted by all in equal measure, regardless of social class and ethnic background.

Motion 9

East & South East England Region Tax relief

Conference requests the Executive Committee develop and implement a strategy to lobby government to introduce tax relief and/or benefit strategies for individual freelance professional musicians as practised in other countries.

Motion 10

Wales & South West England Region Webinars

We ask conference to look at the idea of more webinars to be published on the MU web site.

Conference notes that the MU has done a huge amount of work and currently has a wealth of information and resources available on the MU website for members to access. Conference calls on the Union to explore the idea of expanding our resources further to include more information that can be accessed by many who find visual and audible learning easier and more accessible.

Since March 2020 we have been getting used to using these formats more and more. Many are finding this a convenient and user-friendly way to access information, training and advice at a time that is convenient for members. For members who find traditional forms of learning more difficult, webinars (pre-recorded or recordable) allow listening and watching at a pace that works for all. We ask conference to look at covering subjects such as contracts, risk assessments, copyright, PPL/PRS, and so much more in a format that members can access at their own pace.

Motion 11
Scotland & Northern Ireland Region
Support Acts

Conference requests the MU takes a fresh look at fees for support acts.

Gig fees are a recurring theme in live-music activity, and we acknowledge that the issue of payments to support acts can be an especially complex one, given the variety and size of occasions and venues where artists might be considered as 'support'.

We also acknowledge that support acts can benefit from selling merch and that they are entitled to 20% of PRS royalties from each show.

Nevertheless, we also believe that a support act provides an identifiable service to a show/ tour and should receive direct remuneration instead of having to rely on other sources of income to make their performances financially viable.

Whilst merch sales and PRS royalties might benefit support acts playing in large arenas, they do not often generate significant income in smaller venues. Nevertheless, in those venues, support fees are often only around £50-£100. This is the same amount as was the case 40, or even 50 years ago.

Consequently, we propose the MU devise and publish some 'best practice' guidance for engaging support acts. Whilst this guidance might stipulate a variety of rates to reflect different gigs and venue capacities, its primary purpose would be to uphold the central principle that a musical performance is a valuable service - and one that engagers should be prepared to pay fair rates for.

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Motion 12
Scotland & Northern Ireland Region
Maternity Birth Grant Support

Conference notes that having children poses unique challenges for self-employed musicians. Many self-employed and freelance members aren't eligible for Statutory Maternity Allowance, and most need to take considerable amounts of time off to care for new-borns.

This often causes musicians to 'fall off the radar' and lose engagements or students to more-available musicians. The financial implications of this coupled with the cost of providing for children can place a huge financial burden on parents.

The costs and impact of multiple birth-pregnancies:

The MU currently provides maternity or parental grants of £250 to members each time they have a child, without limitation. However, in cases where the pregnancy results in multiple births, still only one grant of £250 is payable - even where both parents are actively engaged in their child's care and are full members.

The current rate of UK multiple-births pregnancies is only around three per hundred. Given that they are relatively uncommon, the amount of the grant, and the size of MU membership, a change of policy on this issue would offer significant help to members who have multiple birth pregnancies at a relatively low cost to the Union.

Conference therefore urges that this policy is changed to provide £250 maternity/parental grants on a 'per-child' basis in the case of multiple births.

In addition, Conference asks the EC to review and consider expanding maternity benefits to assist musicians in continuing their music careers. These enhancements could include subscription holidays for the period of maternity leave (1 year), pausing membership without breaking the membership continuity, and increasing the amount of the grant.

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Motion 13
Scotland & Northern Ireland Region
BBC Concerns

Conference calls on the Union to be ever vigilant with regard to the overall conduct of the BBC.

Recent behaviour, including the, as good as, censorship by way of silencing staff on social media, insistence on political impartiality, increasingly disadvantageously poor employment conditions and other restrictive measures, including the acceptance of the unachievable responsibility for the over-75s free licence-fee concession, point to an unattractive future in the way the Corporation is managed.

The recent issue over the refusal to pay the group Amaraterra for a proposed appearance on the 'Strictly' spin-off 'It takes two' highlights, yet again, a reluctance to pay creative people adequately even though current fees, particularly in radio, are not generous.

Notwithstanding the complexities of the MU's relationship with the BBC, the biggest single employer of musicians in the UK, we call on the Union to call out any such conduct as and when it's in evidence. We request the inclusion of such concerns on the agendas of discussions with the BBC as often as possible.

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Motion 14

Midlands Region

Climate emergency

MU members are currently facing a unique set of challenges, one of which is the existential threat of a global climate catastrophe.

The MU is one of the organizations featuring on the "Music Declares Emergency" declarers list. As part of the declaration, it has pledged to "making our businesses ecologically sustainable and regenerative".

Amidst a global climate and ecological emergency, the MU has a unique opportunity to put the question of the environment at the heart of its agenda and lead the way within the music industry by taking action on its pledge.

In an effort to enable members to keep making music by avoiding a global climate and ecological catastrophe, we propose the following:

1. That the MU seeks specialist independent advice and works out a clear, binding, organization-wide environmental policy.
 2. That the MU seeks specialist independent advice to review its internal practices and, where possible, mediates any adverse effects of these on the environment.
 3. That the MU seeks specialist independent advice to come up with ways to promote sustainability within the music sector.
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Musicians'
Union



MU POLICY

Please note these Motions do not represent current MU policy. They will be debated at Conference by the elected Regional delegates.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE

The Conference Standing Orders Committee will examine all published motions along with any subsequent amendments for the purpose of clarification for Conference.

The Executive Committee has not proposed any MU rule changes for consideration by Conference 2021. 