

The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union
Summer 2022
theMU.org



CJ Hillman

Cover star: in demand session player and multi instrumentalist

Sustainable Touring

What musicians are doing to minimise their carbon footprint

Road To Recovery

How musicians are coping as the Covid crisis slowly subsides

contacts

Union HQ

General Secretary
Naomi Pohl

Senior Executive Officer
Horace Trubridge

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

Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
John Shortell

Head of Finance
Beverley Dawes

Head of Membership
Wasim Yunus

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

Live & Music Writers' Official
Kelly Wood

Sessions Official
Sam Jordan

Recording & Broadcasting Official
Michael Sweeney

Royalties Official
Jessica Craig

Education Official
David Barnard

Regional Offices

London

Regional Organiser: Jamie Pullman
30 Snowsfields, London SE1 3SU
T 020 7840 5504
E london@theMU.org

East & South East England

Regional Organiser: Paul Burrows
30 Snowsfields, London SE1 3SU
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

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

Union HQ

30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU

T 020 7582 5570
E info@theMU.org

w theMU.org
@WeAreTheMU

**Musicians'
Union**



Back To The Future

Editor Keith Ames reminds us that decent pay, equal rights and the live-music-versus-technology debate have graced the pages of *The Musician* since Issue 1, in July 1950



Photo: Ioanna Dudderidge

Keith Ames,
PR / Marketing Official
And Editor of *The Musician*

Welcome to the Summer issue of *The Musician*, in which we aim to provide you once again with an informative and engaging range of features, reports and profiles.

This is the 70th edition for which I have been Editor and I remain extremely proud to have been at the helm since the spring of 2005, when we established the successful publishing partnership with Future.

I wish to particularly thank my Consultant Editor, Neil Crossley – a journalist and singer-songwriter – who has worked alongside me on every issue since the relaunch of the journal 18 years ago. In fact, the whole team at Future, together with the freelance writers, photographers and designers we

commission, has been hugely instrumental in producing a magazine respected across the music industry and the trade union movement. I'm also proud to say the journal has won 'Best Publication' at the TUC Communications Awards three times.

The journal has been a regular feature of the MU's communications portfolio since 1949, when a Conference motion called for the MU to improve upon the comprehensive but somewhat dry *Musicians' Union Report* that had been distributed in the post-war years and which led with numerous minutes of meetings.

Issue No. 1 of the new venture was published in July 1950 and the cover boasted an artist's impression of the Royal Festival Hall, then nearing completion. Inside was a report on 'The Bournemouth Dispute' over wages for musicians contracted to perform during the summer season; a report on a demand for equal pay by female delegates at the TUC annual conference; an inspirational story on the demand by pianist George Shearing for the removal of the 'colour bar' in the USA; and a feature lauding the replacement of recorded music by live musicians in a regional dancehall.

If these subjects seem familiar, I can certainly affirm that during my years as an activist and MU Official, several themes surface again and again. These include the demand for decent pay and conditions for working musicians, the fight for equal rights for all, and the live musicians versus technology debate.

The More Things Change...

One innovation introduced in *The Musician* in the last decade has been the replacement



TO ACCESS AN AUDIO VERSION OF THE MAGAZINE PLEASE VISIT THEMU.ORG

of commercial advertising by editorial text. When I took over as Editor, half the magazine was taken up by ads. I remain delighted that we now deliver 52 pages of carefully selected material and I'd like to thank the Executive Committee for their unstinting support in backing this ongoing production philosophy.

Quality, Not Quantity


As we begin a new era under the watchful eyes of our recently elected General Secretary, Naomi Pohl, and EC Chair Alex Gascoine, from our new streamlined MU HQ premises in London, I wish to outline the future for the journal in the coming months.

During lockdown, the decision was taken to reassign as much money as possible to the Union's Hardship Fund, so urgently needed financial support could be given to those members most in need. This led to the journal

"The Musician delivers 52 pages of carefully selected material"

being printed twice a year, while a digital format completed the quarterly schedule in the intervening months. Our experience over the last two years has encouraged the Executive to maintain this approach and the magazine will now be distributed in print format twice a year.

We will continue to commission editorial for the website throughout the year and we always welcome your comments on the Union's communications. Please contribute to our Comms Survey when it becomes available, as the results of this research will be key in formulating future strategies.

In the meantime, keep your messages and letters coming, and good luck with all your musical activities throughout 2022. 

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“As soon as we started
gigging again, it hit me
that this is who I am”

Julian Jenkins, Fury



Photo: Joseph Branston. © MU



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Photo: FatCamera / Getty Images

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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. **p34**



Clare Stevens

Clare Stevens is a writer, editor and publicist, specialising in classical music, choral music and music education. She lives in the Welsh Marches. **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!* **p20**



Glyn Mon Hughes

Glyn lives near Liverpool and is a musician, writer, critic and lecturer, teaching in the UK and India. This issue, he focuses on music and wellbeing. **p24**



Henry Yates

Henry is a freelance writer from Gloucestershire who has written for titles as diverse as *Classic Rock*, *Total Guitar*, *NME* and *Record Collector*. **p12**



Tim Tucker

Tim is an author, journalist and musician. He gigs and records in Bristol and is currently researching the benefits of Web 3 for musicians. **p36**



Neil Crossley

An editor and writer whose features have appeared in *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* and the *FT*. Neil also fronts the band *Furlined*. **p16 & 40**



Polly Glass

Polly Glass is the features editor at *Classic Rock* magazine, and has also written for titles including *Metal Hammer*, *The Mail On Sunday*, *Prog* and *Delicious*. **p28**

Cover photo: Joseph Branston. © Musicians' Union 2022. Taken at The Deaf Insitute, Manchester



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

frontline

Summer 2022

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians

Naomi Pohl Elected As The First Female General Secretary Of The Musicians' Union

Naomi Pohl has been confirmed as the next General Secretary of the Musicians' Union, following the ballot of all MU members. The results of the election were announced on 7 March by the Independent Scrutineer. Naomi brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role, having worked full-time for the MU since 2009, with a range of senior responsibilities including three years as Deputy General Secretary.

"I am delighted and humbled to have been elected to the role of MU General Secretary," said Naomi. "It means a great deal that musicians across genres and disciplines have put their faith in me and I want nothing more than to deliver for them all. To musicians who have been under-represented by the Union in the past and saw this election as an opportunity for positive change, I am here to listen and make sure your voices are heard. I will make myself available and ensure I am present in the spaces where you work."

A Unifying Force

Naomi thanked all members who took the time to vote and contact her with feedback about the Union. "I also want to acknowledge our fantastic activists, staff and Officials. I couldn't hope to work with a more dedicated, passionate team of people. To all those who didn't vote for me, I hear that you want change. The Union is here for every musician,

Naomi Pohl brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role of MU General Secretary



Photo: Jonathan Stewart © MU

and I hope it can be a unifying force as we take on many challenges collectively – please reach out.

"After the toughest imaginable two years for musicians, there is plenty of work to do. We can improve pay for our employed and freelance members post-pandemic, tackle the impact of Brexit and fix streaming. We will also ensure we meet the objectives set out in the MU Equality Action Plan, in the UK Music Diversity Ten-Point Plan, and we will continue our vital work to eliminate discrimination and harassment from the industry. To secure the future of the profession, we will also launch a new music education campaign and move arts funding back up the Union's lobbying agenda during my term. I know these are issues that really matter to musicians."

"I am here to listen and make sure that your voices are heard"

Support For Members

Alex Gascoine, Chair of the EC, said: "It gives me great pleasure to congratulate Naomi Pohl on becoming the first female General Secretary of the MU... led by Naomi and supported by the EC, the Union will continue to focus on supporting its members, upholding all our collective agreements and ensuring musicians work in a safe and protected environment."

See p50 for the full Scrutineer's Report.

MU Motion On UBI Receives Backing

Young workers from across the trade union movement backed the MU's motion on universal basic income (UBI) at the TUC Young Workers Conference 2022. As reported in the Spring 2022 issue of *The Musician*, UBI would be a fixed monthly sum, paid by the state to all, without means-testing, and guaranteeing dignity and financial independence.

The motion was moved by Jermain Jackman, and it urges the TUC to conduct research into UBI for freelance workers, and work with the MU on a young members' UBI campaign. In a powerful speech, Jermain told delegates: "The Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions imposed had a huge impact on musicians' jobs with the lack of work, changes in people's behaviour, and ultimately feeling invisible when support from Government was rolled out. That's why this motion is about exploring the idea of UBI for creative freelancers – ensuring that we're looking at ways in which people, especially creative freelancers, don't fall through the gaps."

MCPS Marks Rise In Royalty Distribution

MCPS has announced the highest per-year distribution of royalties to its publisher, songwriter and composer members since 2009. Total distributions for the year ended 31 December, 2021 are £181.7m, a 15% increase of £23.8m over 2020.

The not-for-profit mechanical collection society, which is owned by Music Publishers Association (MPA), made the announcement in May and attributed the rise to growing demand for streaming entertainment services in 2021; robust distributions from international collections; increased consumer demand reflected by solid returns from both major and indie record labels; and consistent performance from broadcast revenues. MCPS CEO Paul Clements said: "We are very proud to deliver these excellent results for our members."



Photo: STUC-Fraser Band

MU Success At The STUC Congress 2022

Aberdeen was the setting for the Scottish TUC Congress in late April, where the MU was represented by Iona Fyfe, Neil Patterson and Rab Noakes. All spoke of the big challenges facing members and the three motions moved by the MU were passed by STU Congress delegates.

"It shouldn't come as a surprise, the social and economic changes from Brexit and Covid-19 have practically crippled the arts and culture sector," Neil Patterson told delegates in a speech moving Motion 17, which called on the STUC to support and encourage support for the arts, culture and entertainment sectors at every opportunity. Iona Fyfe moved Motion 18, which called

on Congress to seek support from MPs to support the Fix Streaming campaign and the aims of the Brennan Bill.

Fyfe was honoured with the STUC Equality Award, which celebrates her tireless advocacy for fairness, promoting the Scots language, and fighting misogyny and sexism in the music industry. "It's a great privilege to have received the STUC Equality Award with all praise and gratitude going to my colleagues within the MU," she said. The calling out of sexual harassment was the focus of Motion 64, which was moved by Rab Noakes, who called it "the scourge of many workplaces". For more on the STUC Conference, visit: [tinyURL.com/MUatSTUC](https://tinyurl.com/MUatSTUC)

Industry Stats

147,000

The number of performers and rightsholders paid by PPL as announced in its 2021 financial results.

44bn

The number of audio streams to date in 2022, according to market statistics in *Music Week*

5.3m

The number of vinyl album sales in 2021, according to the British Phonographic Industry – an increase of 10.6% on 2020 figures

For the latest news on how the Musicians' Union is helping you, visit: [theMU.org](https://www.themu.org)



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

Positive Signs For Overseas Touring

There is cautious optimism over two new developments that impact on UK musicians touring abroad. Firstly, the government has announced that UK hauliers working on concerts, sporting and cultural events will be able to make unlimited international trips.

These changes are the result of new dual registration laws from the government that will apply to haulage companies with a base in the UK and another abroad. The relaxation of some rules is good news for big hauliers, featured artists and MU members engaged to play on these tours. However, small haulage companies undertaking medium sized tours with only a small fleet are still bound by the cabotage rules. For more on this story, visit: tinyurl.com/mrxev5sb

In another development, the DCMS has clarified its advice for musicians travelling via the Eurotunnel. The MU intervened following reports of musicians in vans with ATA Carnets being categorised as 'freight' when booking to travel on Eurotunnel for work in the EU.

This created problems for musicians, as the limit on passengers in a freight cab is three-people. Following concerns raised by the MU on passenger limits, the DCMS confirmed the passenger limit does not necessarily need to be three people. For more information, please visit: tinyurl.com/2p96rz6d



Photo: Taylor Weidman / Bloomberg / Getty Images

MU Members Unite To Support Ukraine

The unfolding horror of the war in Ukraine has galvanised MU members to organise live concerts and recording projects to raise money for those affected by the conflict.

The MU expresses solidarity for the people of Ukraine and supports its members' actions in support of the country and its people. MU members who are raising funds include concert pianist Génia, who staged a concert in April at the Razumovsky Academy in London, featuring Ukrainian musicians and actor Bill Nighy. Even before the concert, Génia's fundraising work had already resulted in £7,334 being sent for medical equipment to Chuhuiv City Hospital in Kharkiv, the second-largest city in Ukraine.

Success For Motion To Tackle Racism

A motion responding to the *Being Black In the UK Music Industry* report has been raised and passed at the TUC Black Workers Conference.

The report exposed how systemic racism remains a barrier to career progression for Black musicians and negatively impacts their mental health. The motion was moved by MU Executive Committee member Millicent Stephenson. For full details, please visit the news section at: theMU.org

Member Honoured In Diversity Awards

The Musicians' Union congratulates Claire Mooney, current North of England member who also previously formed part of the North's Regional Committee, on her nomination for a Lifetime Achiever Award at the 2022 National Diversity Awards in association with ITV News.

Claire has also previously been recognised for exceptional service to the City of Manchester by Lord Mayor, Councillor Tommy Judge. Claire's work includes significant contributions to women's rights, workers' rights and tackling homophobia and social injustice across Manchester.

Dates For The Diary

14 June

What: The Music Royalties Panel with PRS and PPL. Royalty collection advice for songwriters and musicians.
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/2umvtyy5

18 June

What: TUC Rally to demand better living standards.
Where: Portland Place, London, W1B 1PR
Info: tuc.org.uk/DemandBetter

18 June

What: LGBTQ+ networking event for musicians.
Where: Aquum, 68-70 Clapham High St, London. SW4 7UL
Info: tinyurl.com/2p8w5csj

21 June

What: Royal Society of Musicians and MU Social Network event, for London members only.
Where: Online
Info: tinyurl.com/5n7meedb

01 July

What: Feldenkrais: Move Better, Feel Better, Perform Better, Holistic learning workshop.
Where: Online
Info: theMU.org

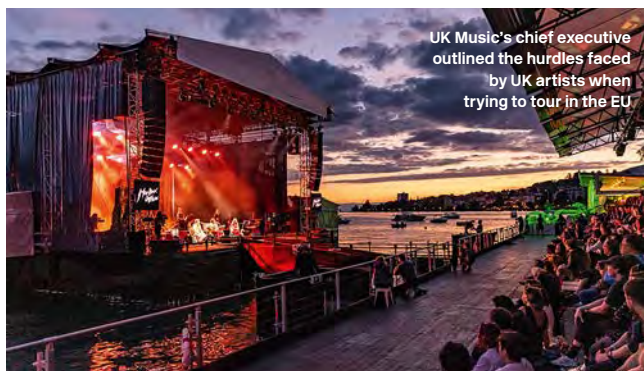
Your Voice

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

Touring Trials

"It's especially challenging for younger, emerging artists who are wanting to tour Europe." Last week, UK Music's Chief Executive @jnkogoodwin appeared before the @CommonsDCMS to give evidence on #PromotingBritainAbroad and discussed the impact of EU touring regulations.

UK Music @UK_Music



UK Music's chief executive outlined the hurdles faced by UK artists when trying to tour in the EU

Photo: Lionel Flusin / Getty Images

Equality Award

A huge honour to be awarded the STUC Equality Award on behalf of the Musicians' Union and presented by First Minister @nicolasturgeon **Iona Fyfe** @ionafyfe

United We Stand

Everyone should be treated with respect – at work and in society. Conversion therapy is damaging and abusive. Government must ban it for all LGBT+ people. Trade unions support all workers – we will not be divided. **Frances O'Grady** @FrancesO'Grady

Union Ally

Happy workers day, May 1st! I joined the Musicians' Union today. Yes, music is a profession, thank you. **Florie Namir** @florienamir

Working Together

Music peri teachers, music educators... Did you know that @NEUnion and @WeAreTheMU have a joint union membership scheme. Working together to defend music education as a right for all children.

Kevin Courtney #NEU NHS @cyclingkev

Support For Teachers

Too many young teachers are leaving the profession, being burnt out through excess workload and bearing the impact of cuts to the sector. The government is not supporting them anywhere near like is needed.

#TUCYWC22
TUC Young Workers
@TUCYoungWorkers

UBI Interest

Proud to be able to speak to @WeAreTheMU motion at the @The_TUC @TUCYoungWorkers conference on Universal Basic Income for Creative Freelancers. **Jermain Jackman** @JermainJackman

The Cheek Of It

Someone just tried to book me to play for a choral concert tomorrow evening near Sheffield – I live in London, they offered (nonnegotiable) £21 in travel expenses. Got to admire the shameless cheek of it I guess. #womeninmusic @WeAreTheMU #savethearts #LevellingDown **Karen Anstee** @kazanstee

 facebook.com/musicians.union

 soundcloud.com/musicians-union

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 Find us at theMU.org

 Follow us on Instagram @WeAreTheMU

 Email us TheMusician@TheMU.org

THE TEAM

Editor Keith Ames (MU)

Consultant editor Neil Crossley

Art director Chris Stenner

Art assistant Joe Burt

Writers Neil Crossley, Roy Delaney, Glyn Mon Hughes, Katie Nicholls, Will Simpson, Clive Somerville, Clare Stevens, Tim Tucker, Henry Yates

Production editor Owen Bailey

Head of marketing projects Chris Blake

Editorial director Lee Hart

Repro Gary Stuckey

Printed at Precision Colour Printing

See p2 for the contact details of Musicians' Union offices.



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A Unique Opportunity

Naomi Pohl, the new Musicians' Union General Secretary, outlines plans for returning to work, improving our culture for staff and members and – given we're all involved in music – listening more closely to each other



Naomi Pohl
General Secretary
Musicians' Union

In my first column as your new General Secretary, I thought I would take the opportunity to lay out my plans for the Union. I have discussed these plans with the Executive Committee and my colleagues within the Union and I will be visiting Committees to get their input in due course. I also received lots of comments and suggestions from members during my General Secretary campaign and this input has helped to shape my vision for the Union.

Coming out of the pandemic and post-Brexit, I believe the Union is more relevant to musicians than ever. We are at a crucial moment in the history of British music. We have a unique opportunity to move the MU forward and, at the same time, change how the music industry works for musicians.

We must get all musicians back to work, including our freelance members, and build back our agreements and pay as our first priority. This will be the primary focus of our industrial departments and Committees over the next two years. We are holding an internal strategy day which will bring together Officials who represent members across different areas of work, because I believe we need a joined-up approach. I want to look at conditions in particular; how musicians are treated at work. Once we've discussed a potential strategy, we will take this out to our industrial Section Committees to get their input.

Getting musicians back to work also means securing bilateral agreements with key EU territories post-Brexit. The MU will lead the way on this and will also establish itself as the go-to hub for international touring guidance. I believe we could provide more advice and guidance to musicians working overseas in general and this is something we will put some resources into shortly.

Focus On The Future

We will also secure a better deal for musicians and songwriters on music streaming; not just for today, but one which evolves for the future. I want to ensure we are a Union that not only keeps pace with the evolution of the industry we work in, but which leads and defines it. We need to get out ahead of technological change [see the 'NFTs For Musicians' report on p36].

We must organise better, involve more members in our work and ensure they feel reflected accurately in everything we do. Achieving this will be a key focus for me and I will make my presence felt throughout the Union and throughout the UK.

We must evolve the MU's Committees so they are genuinely diverse and fully representative of our whole membership. I will ensure that we are represented in the press and through our communications by a more diverse range of MU activists and bring forward more voices so that we are more reflective of the membership we serve. We will show that we are a Union that listens to all its members, an organisation that is genuinely member-led, where policy is developed in collaboration.

We will launch a new music education campaign this year, because all children deserve to learn music and our teaching members deserve proper pay and conditions. I will also work to move arts funding back up the Government's agenda post-pandemic [see the 'Road To Recovery' report on p12].

“We will focus on communicating the relevance of the MU to musicians who we don't currently reach. We will get the message out that we are changing”



Photos: Jonathan Stewart. © MU: Nomadsoul / Getty Images

This is no longer about short-term support and hardship funds, but a secure long-term future for the UK's creative industries and for our members.

Cross-Country Connections


I will increase our lobbying activities and will be personally involved in discussions with devolved authorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as Westminster. Once recruited, our new Assistant General Secretary will focus on our Regions and the devolved Nations. This should mean more attention on events and news across the whole of the UK. We can develop our presence and service to members in London, while also becoming a less London-centric organisation. For example, our National Officials needn't be London-based going forward.

Aside from our members, who are the Union, our staff are also our greatest asset. A stronger and bolder Union requires that staff and Officials are able to do their best work at all times. They must feel supported and informed and that their hard work and input is fully understood and appreciated by colleagues. In my role as Deputy General Secretary, I was working to improve the culture of the Union for its staff and Officials and this will continue to be a focus for me.

When it comes to recruiting members, we will focus on communicating the relevance of the MU to musicians who we don't currently reach. We will get the message out that we are changing and encourage younger musicians in particular to get involved.

In my campaign to be General Secretary, I promised to represent musicians wherever they are based, whatever their background and however they make music. Every musician

should feel the weight of the Union behind them and get the best possible service from us. The Union and the wider music industry should be safe and inclusive for all and I will keep fighting until this is the case.

I look forward to working with and on behalf of members over the coming years. Thank you to all those who put their faith in me, and to those who didn't I hope I will prove myself to be a great advocate and ally for you also. 

Road To Recovery

Almost one year after restrictions began to lift, how is the fallout from Covid affecting UK musicians on the ground? *The Musician* asks artists across a range of genres for their experiences and assesses the need for a fairer music industry

Report by Henry Yates

Last summer, as the music industry shutdown eased across the UK and the musicians still standing dusted off their instruments to play the venues still trading, you didn't have to search hard for sobering statistics. Having polled 929 professional musicians in August – a month after restrictions were lifted – the Help Musicians charity revealed that 83% still couldn't find regular work, 90% were earning under £1,000 per month, and 22% were considering leaving the industry. That October, UK Music's *This Is Music 2021* report made for bleaker reading still, finding 69,000 jobs – a third of the workforce – had been lost, while the industry's economic contribution had withered by 46%.

Playing along underneath these downbeat announcements was a background score of practical concerns and existential crises

amongst musicians taking their first uncertain steps back. "If music work did start, could I still be good enough?" wondered Louise Braithwaite, an acclaimed woodwind musician and teacher, in her presentation at the recent Post Covid Recovery Workshop For The Creative Industries In The West Midlands, co-hosted by the MU, University Of Warwick and TUC. "How much notice might I get? Would I accept music work I wasn't ready for and let myself down? Would contractors and colleagues change their view of my ability? Would my new care employer, under pandemic staffing pressure, grant me the time off?"

But almost a year later, on the brink of the UK's summer festival season, how has the picture changed for the nation's professional musicians? For now, in the absence of tax receipts and wide-angle survey results, evidence remains anecdotal, based on the

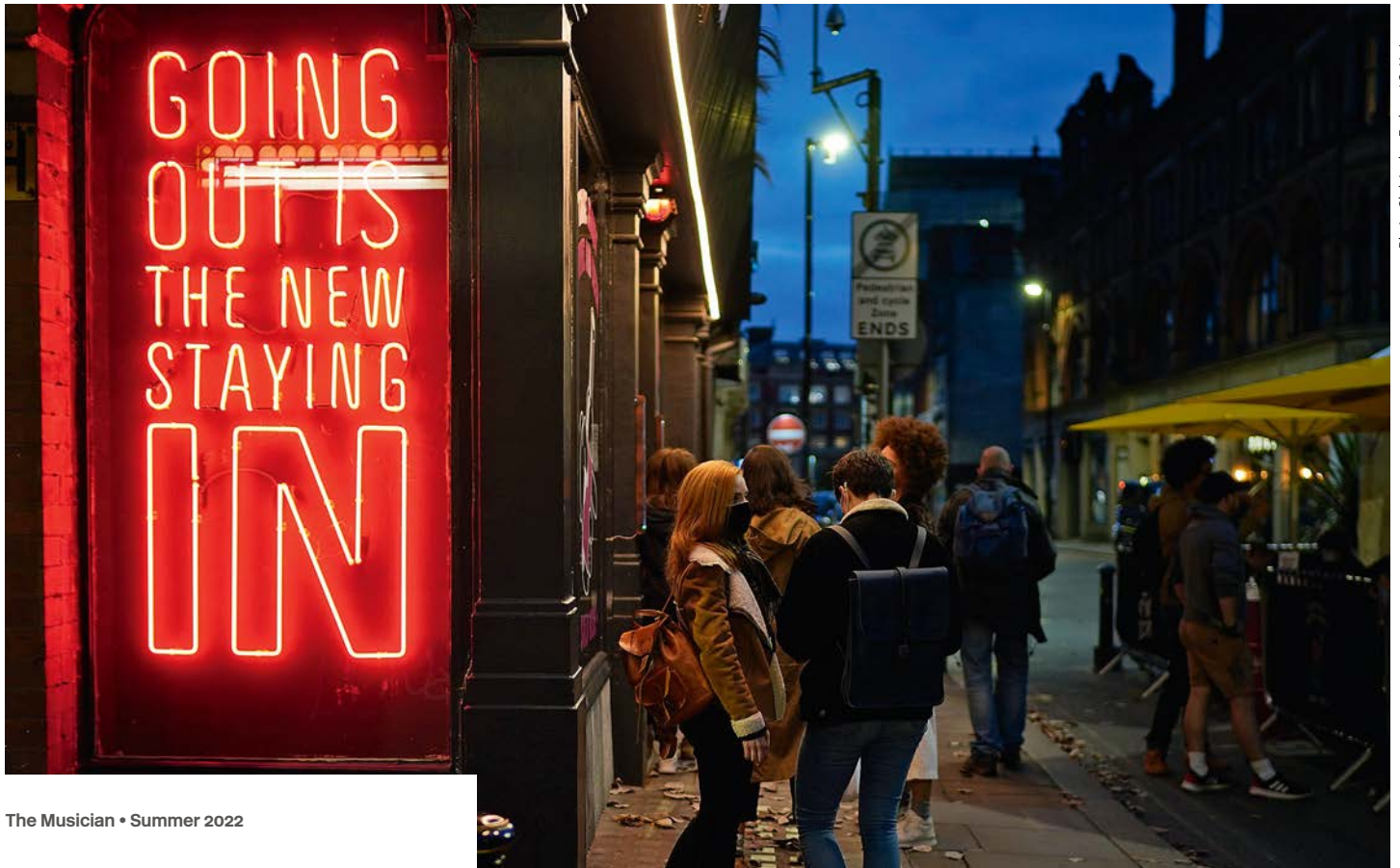


Photo: Christopher Furlong / Getty Images

Photo: Jessica Raphael Photography



UK musicians Louise Braithwaite (left) and Laura Evans (below) have concerns about the music-industry landscape after the pandemic



Photo: Rob Blackham

testimony of artists with myriad income streams. Yet a clear picture is emerging of a stoic industry meeting its circumstances head-on, while calling out to those in charge for further, and better, assistance.

Back To Life

With the recent *Music Creators' Earnings In The Digital Era* report suggesting that just 0.4% of UK artists make a viable living through streaming, the UK's live sector remains the cornerstone. On paper, at least, it is precarious: in January, the trade body LIVE reported that 25% of shows scheduled for the first three months of 2022 were cancelled or postponed due to Omicron. The ripples can still be felt, says Herefordshire-based slide guitarist Troy Redfern.

"Now I'm back out playing live, my income from touring has picked back up to pretty much pre-lockdown levels," he explains.

"The problem can be that more bands are desperate to book gigs than venues can take on, because so many tours have been knocked back several times. But in my opinion, the cost of living will have a bigger knock-on effect than Covid. Concert tickets aren't going to be a priority when you're struggling to pay your electricity bill."

The Welsh singer-songwriter Laura Evans believes the live sector – and its returning audience – must place more faith in performers to fully revive the industry. "I lost 80% of my work and income during the

pandemic, but this has been one of my busiest first quarters of the year yet," she reflects. "In terms of ticket sales for shows, though, I would definitely say that people are more reluctant to buy tickets in advance and that's a lasting fallout from Covid. This has a knock-on effect with promoters."

Even so, testimony from musicians on the circuit is generally positive, with caveats. "Gigs and live session work accounted for about 40% of my income pre-pandemic," says Bristol jazz saxophonist and teacher Craig Crofton.

"Since unlocking properly in the beginning of 2022, my phone hasn't stopped ringing. Lots of private functions and weddings making up for lost time, also venues wanting to attract punters back into their establishments. I'm on track to have one of the best years financially for gigs since I →

"More bands are desperate to book gigs than venues can take on"

Troy Redfern

Next Steps

MU Regional Organiser Stephen Brown says the Post Covid Recovery Workshop For The Creative Industries In The West Midlands is just the start.

"Giving a voice to freelancers in a room with those who influence and set policy – when we want to create more, better-paid, sustainable, longer term jobs and work with good conditions – was an ideal way to kick-start things. We've generated plenty of goodwill and need to build on that momentum, and will do so."

The MU aims to ensure that each region will host similar events to take the pulse of local recovery. Dr Sarah Watts is an MU member, noted clarinet player and Director Of Performance at the University of Sheffield, who together with Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is planning a workshop for the North and Scotland, preceded in the autumn by an online conference for freelancers.

"Following the opening up of venues and events," she says, "many musicians are still feeling locked down and locked out of the industry. Through The Keyhole will offer online workshops and talks looking at how to become a more resilient musician. Together with industry experts, the conference will offer sessions aimed at giving all freelance musicians the skills to develop and further expand their careers as portfolio musicians, whilst coping with the demands of being a professional musician."

For more event information, see: tinyurl.com/2p9d94vt

started as a professional musician. Maybe this is just the rebound and, given the cost of living crisis, we may see a contraction.”

For musicians who used their enforced downtime productively, meanwhile, the momentum has continued. “Before lockdown, we were playing really small venues and getting paid very poorly,” say the blues-rock duo When Rivers Meet. “It forced us to explore different opportunities. With the help of weekly livestreams, we were earning more at the height of the pandemic than before it. Now, after lockdown, our situation is completely different and we have our own headline tour.”

Lessons Learnt

Teaching provided a lifeline for many musicians during the pandemic, even if some of the artists we spoke to were ambivalent about continuing with the remote format. “It’s never quite the same as being in the same room,” says Chloe Josephine, lead singer with Portsmouth soul-rockers Brave Rival.

Of greater concern is whether school-based music teaching can return to pre-pandemic levels. In an Ipsos MORI survey of over 1,000 school leaders, it emerged that 56 per cent

“We can do more to help the public enjoy our work – and understand the process by which it is made”

Louise Braithwaite

of primary and 37 per cent of secondary schools had cut hours for certain subjects (“particularly music and PE”) in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. “It’s vital this shortfall is redressed,” says Crofton. “With the proven benefits children get from learning and being exposed to music at an early age, it’s a no-brainer. We need to get music out to the less privileged parts of our society as a matter of urgency, as it seems to be dwindling.”

Next Stage

With theatre bookings down by up to 50% over Christmas, and West End leaders projecting a “very tough” year in *The Stage*, the musicians in the pit share the concerns of the wider live circuit. In the experience of Marcus Bates – who plays French horn in the London production of *Wicked* – flagship shows have revived, while others are less healthy.

“I knew *Wicked* would continue. However, I’m definitely getting less work outside the show. That means less work for my depts and many of them are struggling,” he says. “One brilliant horn player in his late 30s has decided to go into another job.”

Right now, adds Bates, the industry must redress the cutbacks imposed on theatre musicians. “We were persuaded to sign a variation agreement to help our sector recover. Two pay rises were frozen and double pay for Sunday shows was taken away. The variation agreement ends in October and there is much resentment that audiences, and presumably profits, have returned to pre-pandemic levels while musicians continue to take a wage cut. To make West End musicians happy, give us RPI pay rises to make up for those lost – the MU estimates this to be around 15 per cent – and reinstate double pay for Sunday shows.”

Complete Overhaul

It’s one of many demands made by the musicians we interviewed. As outdoor shows become feasible and the virus recedes over summer, the months ahead could be make-or-break for the UK music industry. Which issues need to be addressed by those with the power to do so?

“Live venues need to be supported,” stresses Josephine. “In Europe, the governments subsidise live music, which allows the venues to exist. Whereas here, the government gave out grants to music venues, but it wasn’t enough. Because the venues aren’t supported, they have to really worry about their bottom line. Combine that with low ticket sales due to hesitancy from fans and you have this perfect storm where a venue or promoter will just cancel the show, rather than risk seeing if people turn up on the night.”

As MU Regional Organiser and the driving force behind the Post Covid Recovery Workshop For The Creative Industries In The West Midlands, Stephen Brown believes the welfare system for creatives needs a



Saxophonist and teacher Craig Crofton wonders whether the recent upturn in work may yet be curtailed by the cost-of-living crisis

Photo: Sofia Alvardia



Chloe Josephine, vocalist with Portsmouth soul-rockers Brave Rival, calls for the government to provide more support for live venues across the UK

Photo: Rob Blackham

Get Involved

As the industry moves beyond lockdown, the Union calls on its members to share experiences and shape the new normal. "We as musicians don't exist in a bubble, we rely on others and they rely on us," says MU Regional Organiser Stephen Brown. "So, widening out participation and creating a movement for change is vital. It has to be grassroots-led, not top-heavy. We must see how we can democratise things to improve opportunities, work and equality, and get best practice as the norm, not the exception."

By making their voices heard, adds Stephen, members can help shape the proposals put forward to power. "Although it is yet to be decided, I would push for the idea of a best-practice manifesto that we can promote, get the TUC and unions behind it, then present it to government, councils, funders and others, to sign up to and make happen. It can be done," stresses Stephen, "and we should be optimistic we can do it with this, too. Members should appreciate they are part of a wider movement... they can affect change. This is the great thing about being in a union. You are not on your own and together, we can achieve more than we can as an individual. We can make people sit up and take notice."

complete overhaul. He points to the fact that 46% of Midlands freelancers, including MU members, received no government Covid help. "I feel the government response was not good enough. We have no better situation now than we did before Covid for too many members, resulting in them leaving our industry... and there's no government plan, it seems, to address these fault lines."

The University Of Warwick's Chris Bilton, who worked alongside Stephen on the event, agrees. "During the first lockdown especially, there was talk of 'building back better'. Now, as we're coming out of the pandemic, it seems like we're going back to the same unfair and destructive patterns and the picture for individual creatives, including musicians, remains quite bleak. The main conclusion from our event was the need to improve the contractual and working conditions of artists and musicians. This means not only calling out bad practice, but also trying to find examples of good employers and showing how better treatment and fair pay can benefit both sides."

At the root of a fairer future industry, adds Braithwaite, is changing the perception of the creative sector. "We tend to under-publicise

the wider benefits our activity brings to the economy. Every performance supports other jobs and innumerable suppliers: restaurants, hotels, digs, travel, logistics, advertising, hardware, construction, security, front of house, bars, administration, tourism... I'd like musicians to be able to present a consistent message to the public and government about this.

"There's an assumption that money for the arts is paid to 'luvvies' and disappears into a black hole without touching the rest of the economy," she concludes. "People don't perceive that their favourite film score is made by people just like them, who work hard for a living. We can do more to help the public enjoy our work – and understand the process by which it is made." **mu**

For artist information, see louise-braithwaite.co.uk, thelauraevans.com and braverival.com. Craig Crofton is Director of the Bristol Young Jazz Ambassadors and works with the Earthsong music charity – see more at craigcrofton.co.uk

Pedal POWER

CJ Hillman is one of the finest session players in his field, valued by artists for his tasteful playing and for always serving the song

Profile by Neil Crossley

Many musicians have had life-changing moments in their childhoods when a particular artist, band or a song sparks a sonic epiphany and inspires them to pursue music as a career. For the young Chris 'CJ' Hillman, such a moment occurred when he heard Tom Petty's debut solo album, *Full Moon Fever*.

"I heard the album as a young child," he tells *The Musician* via a Zoom link from his new home in Altrincham, Cheshire on a Monday afternoon in February. "My dad bought it new in 1989, so it was always around. I think this album directly inspired me to become a musician and has always been there throughout my career, as with a lot of Petty's music. Looking back, I guess it was the jangly guitars, great songs and album artwork that inspired me."

The sight of Petty's Rickenbacker guitar on the front cover also entranced Hillman. However, it was with another instrument – the pedal steel guitar – where he would really make his mark.

Country Cadence

Over the last decade, Hillman has established himself as one of the UK's leading Americana session musicians, recording and touring with artists such as Billy Bragg, Ethan Johns, Yola, Laura Marling and Robert Vincent. As the global live music industry opens back up, his star is firmly in the ascendant.

Chris Hillman grew up in Stoke-on-Trent, where his father worked in the Potteries industry. It was his

dad's interest in bands such as the Eagles and Poco that in turn sparked young Chris's passion for 60s and 70s country bands, and the pedal steel guitar. "I always loved the sound," he recalls. "I always knew of the sound from when I was young."

He started playing guitar at the age of nine and by his teens, he was shaping up into a guitarist of real note. He undertook a BTEC course in Music at the University of Salford and started playing with numerous rock bands. "I started listening to heavier music for a while, but then discovered Jenny Lewis and her band while in college. They had a lap steel player in the band and after seeing them live in Manchester, I decided I wanted to make the leap from six-string guitar to steel guitar."

When his 21st birthday came around, Hillman decided on a pedal steel guitar as a present. "I was listening to a lot of Daniel Lanois at the time. It was so interesting hearing the ambient nature of it and it also had that kind of country tone to it."

Out On Tour

The move to pedal steel would transform his career. By 2010, Hillman was living in Chorlton, Manchester, teaching one-to-one guitar tuition from home and doing a lot of "wedding-type gigs". But his real ambition was to go out on a major tour with an artist or band who wrote their own material.

Fortune came knocking in 2012, when he was working with Canadian singer Gabriel Minkin, and they supported a band called The Dreaming Spires at the Betsey Trotwood pub, in Clerkenwell, London. The Dreaming Spires were fronted by American singer-songwriter, Sid Griffin, who got chatting to Hillman and mentioned that he had a friend who was looking for a pedal steel player. Hillman said he was →

"I decided I wanted to make the leap from six-string to steel guitar"





Hillman is a six-string player, too, and always takes his trusty Rickenbacker on tour



interested and sent over some examples of his playing for Griffin to pass on.

Weeks later, out of the blue, Hillman received a call. "It turned out it was Billy Bragg," he recalls, still sounding just as excited a decade on. Bragg was looking for a pedal steel player for a forthcoming tour of the US, Canada, Europe and Australia to promote his 2013 album *Tooth & Nail*. Hillman would also contribute Dobro, guitar and mandolin. Within weeks, he was packing his case and embarking on a tour that exceeded his wildest dreams.

"We started in Colorado. We did the first gig there, the Gothic Theatre and then down to Albuquerque. And then Mesa, Arizona and then we went to LA... and then it was all up the West Coast. Across down through Iowa, down to, like, Nashville and then we kind of rounded up back into Canada through New York and

everything. And Bill was great. He'd be like, you know, 'check this out, check that out!'"

The tour continued through Europe and Australia, with highlights including the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury and the Sydney Opera House. "It was just like a year of ticking everything off that you'd ever wanted to do," Hillman recalls. As the newest addition to the band he was, by his own admission, very much the novice. "Instantly, I felt like I was trying to keep up. But we used to record all the rehearsals, so I'd go back and then I'd be overly self-critical and just be like, 'right, what doesn't feel quite right?'. With that band, it was really more like a behind-the-beat kind of feel. Once that clicked, I was okay."

The Right Thing

When asked about his pedal steel inspirations, Hillman cites Buddy Emmons, who instilled in him a desire to do a "pedal steel guitar jazz thing". But the pedal steel player he really idolises, he says, is Greg Leisz. As fate would

have it, Leisz played pedal steel on Bragg's *Tooth & Nail* album, so when Hillman was brought in for the tour, the parts he had to learn were Leisz's. "To me, he is like the perfect pedal steel player – he just plays the right thing at the right time."

It's a description that could just as easily be applied to Hillman himself. His playing is a masterclass in how to serve a song, adding melodies and textures that enliven and enhance. Whether he's playing an NPR *Tiny Desk Concert* in Washington DC with Billy Bragg on lap Dobro slide, contributing a soaring, impassioned pedal steel solo on Robert Vincent's rousing rendition of *So In Love* on the revamped *Old Grey Whistle Test*, or demonstrating how to play a B-Bender-type lick on a Telecaster via his Patreon page, Hillman is a skilful, empathetic musician. So much so, he was awarded the Instrumentalist

“Play pedal steel like
Greg Leisz and guitar
like Johnny Marr”

Left, top: Hillman mixes plastic and metal fingerpicks. Left, bottom: His Patreon site has guitar lessons

Meeting Johnny Marr

Despite being known for pedal steel work, Hillman is still equally enthused by the electric guitar. “I take my Rickenbacker on tour all the time,” he says. “It was always kind of like, ‘play pedal steel like Greg Leisz and play guitar like Johnny Marr.’”

Soon after joining Billy Bragg’s band, Hillman met Johnny Marr, by chance, while browsing for vinyl in Kingbee Records in Chorlton, Manchester. As Hillman flicked through the albums, something in his peripheral vision caught his eye. “I knew it was Johnny Marr because of his shoes,” he laughs. “I think they might have been his signature-brand PF Flyers. They just looked much cooler than anybody else’s shoes that I knew. I looked up and it was him.

“I had met Johnny briefly [before] at Salford Uni when he was there as an honorary Professor. I had gone down with my Rickenbacker six-string which he briefly played, which was pretty mind-blowing as an 18-year-old.”

“He said he remembered meeting me and was pleased to hear I was working with Billy Bragg. He produced Billy’s *Don’t Try This At Home* album, so we talked about that for a little bit. He gave me a few pointers and was asking how Billy was. I remember asking him about that riff on *Sexuality* and he said, ‘oh yeah, I had a kind of slapback thing going on’.

of the Year at the Americana Music Association (UK) Awards in both 2017 and 2019.

His work with Billy Bragg really established Hillman as a session musician of note and he never looked back. By then, he was calling himself ‘CJ’ rather than ‘Chris’. “I use CJ so I don’t get mistaken for Chris Hillman from The Byrds – which still happens on a regular basis, even though there’s an age difference of 43 years,” he says.

Country Cruise

Via Billy Bragg, Hillman met Joe Purdy and returned to Los Angeles, recording two albums – *Eagle Rock Fire* and *Who Will Be Next?* – with the American singer-songwriter, and touring extensively. In 2014 and 2015, he also accompanied Purdy on the Cayamo Cruise, a live music event in the Caribbean on a cruise ship crammed with A-list stars from the country music scene.

In 2017, a meeting with producer, engineer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Ethan Johns at the UK Americana Awards led to Hillman joining the house band and Johns’ own act, the Black Eyed Dogs. Johns would also call on Hillman when he produced Laura Marling’s 2020 album, *Song For Our Daughter*.


“They wanted something different,” recalls Hillman. “It wasn’t ‘turn up and do a kind of country thing’, it was ‘just be you’. There’s a lot of people who are exploring different avenues

with the pedal steel, and it’s great because I think if we all just kind of sat around playing country music, it wouldn’t move on.”

In recent years, Hillman’s playing has also graced the Grammy-nominated music of Bristol-born singer-songwriter Yola Carter. “It’s great to see an artist go from doing small gigs... she’s the first artist I’ve played with where I’ve seen the whole career trajectory.”

Playing For The Song

When asked what makes a good pedal steel player, Hillman cites empathy for the song and the importance of listening. “I think what makes a steel player is knowing when not to play, definitely,” he says. While guitarists will generally be kept busy playing chords when not playing solos or licks, pedal steel entails restraint and moments where “you just sit there doing nothing”, he says. “It’s so tempting [to think] ‘oh, I’ll just add a little bit.’ And then sometimes also, people might look at you like, ‘why are you not playing anything?’

“But it’s just about using your ears and, you know, playing to the music. And also just working hard at it, really. It’s easy to get complacent and yes, you can. You’ve always got to be looking and pushing yourself on.” 

To find out more, please visit: cjhillman.com

The Time Is Now

As Covid-19 restrictions dissipate but the environmental crisis grows, *The Musician* looks at the artists engaging in sustainable practices and the challenges they face as they return to touring

Report by Katie Nicholls

In 2019, there was a surge of environmentally focused protests as Extinction Rebellion blocked Waterloo Bridge and Greta Thunberg met with party leaders in Parliament. When *The Musician* reported on how musicians were responding to the crisis in its Autumn 2019 issue, there was undoubtedly a sense of urgency, alongside a good dose of optimism.

Music Declares Emergency was formed to galvanise the music industry to “accelerate collaboration and ambition to meet critical targets” and Massive Attack commissioned The Tyndall Centre of Climate Change to write its Roadmap to Super-Low Carbon Live Music. Unfortunately, however, in under a year, this momentum had stalled.

The pandemic had shifted the landscape dramatically and the music industry had been devastated by lockdown restrictions, pushing ecological concerns onto the back burner.

The climate crisis is, of course, no less critical as a result of Covid-19. In fact, reporting in 2022, the International Energy Agency (IEA) revealed that, “global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions rose by 6% in 2021 to 36.3 billion tonnes, their highest ever level,” largely because “the world economy rebounded strongly from the Covid-19 crisis and relied heavily on coal to power that growth.”

“We worked with all aspects of the Bring Me The Horizon tour to help reduce emissions”

A Greener Festival

Despite the pressures experienced by those working in the music industry post-Covid-19, Music Declares Emergency’s list of ‘declarers’ continues to grow, with over 6,000 artists, organisations and individuals adding their voice to the ever-growing hum. Meanwhile, bands are beginning to test out new models for touring. Coldplay have committed to ensuring their Music of the Spheres outing is their most sustainable yet, while Massive Attack were planning to put some of the recommendations of the Tyndall report into action with their 2022 tour, before the stint was cancelled due to serious illness.

Testing Sustainable Practices

In September 2021, Bring Me The Horizon, with support from various partners, took their Post Human tour to arenas to test out more sustainable practices, reducing their touring production emissions by 38%, with measures that included renewable fuel for trucks, plant-based catering and energy-efficient equipment.

“The O2 were delighted to collaborate with all the other partners on this important project to build back a more sustainable touring and live music industry,” said Steve Sayer, VP and GM of The O2, of the Post Human tour. “Venues are a big part of the live ecosystem and we are keen to learn how we can further reduce our footprint as we develop our plans to get to net zero.”

Scott Graham from A Greener Festival, who worked with Bring Me The Horizon on this project, told the MU, “we have been really successful in taking the knowledge and experience from our 15 years working with music festivals and applying that sustainability expertise to a growing range of different live events... our work with the Bring



A joint Greenpeace and Extinction Rebellion rally at Glastonbury 2019

Me The Horizon tour was a recent success story, where we worked with all aspects of the tour and helped reduce emissions. We are taking the lessons from that into other tours and events.”

Less Than Zero

It is, of course, hugely commendable that these major artists are testing out new models. However, the Tyndall report recommends that proactive action not only needs to be implemented by the music industry but that it is, in fact, critical that it aims to better the UK government’s target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. “If the live-music sector is not ahead of the curve on these targets, it will still be affected by measures to tackle this issue nationally and globally,” it reads, warning that it will be the grassroots music scene that will suffer most if the big hitters don’t lead the way. “We recommend that the sector act collaboratively

From The MU To You...

The MU worked closely with The Herron Brothers to secure Arts Council funding and urges its members to get involved.

"We need to look at how we can get greener with everything the whole industry does," says MU Midlands Regional Organiser, Stephen Brown. "Last year's MU Conference saw a motion agreed from the Midlands Region to do just that, including how we in the MU can facilitate that and go greener ourselves, too. While making strides to make touring more environmentally sustainable is vital, it should be about how the whole music ecosystem needs to respond and develop. Everyone from arts funders who can dictate policy to those they fund, through to commercial organisations, need to be involved."

"Musicians, too, need to see more and better-paid work in their own localities to offset the need to travel hundreds, if not thousands, of miles just to make a living. I'm sure there are loads of musicians who would welcome this. I don't think we can separate this from the cost-of-living crisis either, because for me, this is about justice – economic and social – but without climate justice, our goals to make our industry more environmentally sustainable will be that much harder. The good news is we are starting to look at these big issues and come up with solutions and members can be at the forefront of this and the ideas exchange involved. Indeed, on that point, I'd urge members to let us have their thoughts and ideas about it."



Photo: Kristian Buus / In Pictures / Getty Images

Coldplay have committed to touring more sustainably



Photo: Frazer Harrison / Getty Images

to support smaller venues and festivals that may struggle to meet improved regulation and standards to be well positioned for the net-zero transition."


Doing It For Themselves

Derby-based guitar-pop duo The Herron Brothers (aka siblings Paul and Steven) are pioneering change from the ground up, with an ambitious project named Future Proof, which aims to achieve a 100% carbon-neutral album and tour. "On a grassroots level, we see our friends and contemporaries jumping in diesel vans and going off on tour, people who are normally environmentally aware, and we became conscious of the disconnect," Paul tells the MU. "For every Massive Attack trying to do something good, there'll be 100, 200, 300 bands underneath that level who probably make more of a carbon impact, so we thought we could have some influence. From the grassroots level, no one is doing it and it's not just about touring, it's about the whole 360-degree project. Could we possibly write, record, promote and tour while selling the →

The Way Out

Massive Attack have openly published the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change's Roadmap to Super-Low Carbon Live Music so that it is accessible for everyone to read. It can be found at tinyurl.com/2mahctjv. The report takes a broad look at the status quo with recommendations for improvement from all the players working in the music industry, as well as audiences (who are the largest contributor to surface travel emissions), with practical steps to reducing carbon footprint. Targets include reducing emissions from buildings to zero by 2035; at least matching UK grid electricity emissions at outdoor shows from 2025 onwards; reducing surface travel emissions to zero by 2035 and limiting total sector aviation emissions to a maximum of 80% of 2019 levels.

"We hope that this roadmap can help to catalyse change by outlining the scale of action required and how this maps across the different elements of a tour," says Professor Carly McLachlan, Director of Tyndall Manchester, who led the research. "To reduce emissions in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change, touring practices need to be reassembled differently as the industry emerges from the significant challenges that the pandemic has created. This starts from the very inception of a tour and requires the creativity and innovation of artists, managers, promoters, designers and agents to be unleashed to establish new ways of planning and delivering live music tours."



Robert Del Naja of Massive Attack has called out the government's lack of a plan for a cleaner music industry

traditional merch? Would we be able to do that carbon-neutrally? What we didn't want to do is make this music only available online," Paul continues. "We wanted to keep it traditional, to prove that you don't have to completely rewrite how bands do things in order to be carbon neutral."

Among a host of other measures, the band will not be producing vinyl, while recording will be done entirely at the home studio having switched to GEUK, the UK's only 100% renewable energy supplier. The band will travel in a hired electric van while adopting a 'silent stage' approach – essentially reducing the amount of equipment they bring with them. Boss and Roland are on board to help with equipment and GAK will be supplying an electric drum kit and pedals that run through the PA. No amp required. CDs will be made from recycled material and T-shirts will be produced by an environmentally and socially conscious company.

"You don't have to completely rewrite how bands do things in order to be carbon neutral"

Paul Herron

Derby University's DE-Carbonise programme will be supporting and tracking the project. The Herron Brothers will be documenting the process with a film and podcasts recorded at every stage, alongside an eventual 'toolkit' of information and contacts for other grassroots musicians to access, putting them in tune with recommendations from the Tyndall report that sharing knowledge is an essential part of the roadmap.

Sharing And Learning

"There's already a great deal of good practice and examples to learn from and upscale, as well as organisations and networks within the sector that seek to support sharing and learning," the report reads. "It is clear that the creativity that can be unleashed to



Bring Me The Horizon managed to reduce their touring production emissions by 38% on 2021's Post Human tour



The Herron Brothers are attempting to operate as a traditional band while remaining carbon neutral

Photo: iC Things Photography

reduce emissions is one of the sector's most significant assets."

In 2021, UK Music reported that there were 69,000 fewer jobs in the British music industry than in 2019, a drop of 35%, and that live music revenues dropped by 90%. Understandably, environmental concerns have been put aside during this crisis. "One of the challenges is getting people to engage," Steven from The Herron Brothers points out. "If you're a venue who has been annihilated by Covid-19 and is now struggling to pay back the debts accrued and we go to them and say, 'hi there, we'd like to talk about your carbon neutrality!'... or trying to work with vinyl producers and just trying to get them to engage... it's not number one on everyone's priority list."

The British government has yet to step up to the challenge of supporting the music industry through the transition to net zero. "Our sector is operating in a government void," said Massive Attack's Robert Del Naja when the Tyndall report was released. "Where is the plan for investment in clean battery technology, clean infrastructure, or a decarbonised food supply, for a live-music sector that generates £4.6 billion for the economy every year and employs more than 200,000 people? It simply doesn't exist."

Facing The Challenges

The rising cost of living, energy and fuel are set to further increase the pressure on an already strained industry, although Scott from A Greener Festival believes this could also "focus the mind on energy and fuel use. Can tours save money by optimising routes, managing down truckloads, buying locally?" he asks. "What opportunities are there to use renewable energy, or less impactful fuel

types? Can tours engage with their audience and reduce their travel costs by promoting more use of public transport?"

It's not just financial issues that can be problematic. "Tours can be quite complex, and with so many different organisations and teams involved, from production crews, promoters, venues, catering and the audience themselves... it's a challenge to try and get everyone on board with the same vision and objectives around becoming more sustainable," says Scott. "It doesn't have to be a difficult sell, though. Everyone is becoming increasingly aware and motivated to operate more sustainably, so setting that vision and putting sustainable policies in place up front can really make a huge difference in terms of the tour's environmental impact."

Future Proof

Music Declares Emergency's campaign – #Nomusiconadeadplanet – is a call to arms to both the industry, and the audiences that benefit from it, to create the change that's needed. "Individual actions might not add up to much without systemic change," says MDE, "but they can help pave the way by modelling the world we want to see and opening up more conversations to make a noise."

"The Future Proof project is, in its essence, a question," concludes Steven. "Is it possible to do this? If the answer is, 'no, it's not, but we tried our hardest,' at least there's an outcome and it might give people the incentive to do something more." **mm**

The Power Of Musical Healing

Music plays a vital role in wellbeing and there is a wide range of help out there for music teachers and musicians

Report by Glyn Mon Hughes

When historians assess the beginning of the third decade of the third millennium, they might sense a global change in values. They may talk about an international health panic, governments seeking solutions to seemingly insoluble problems, financial chaos and social disruption. They may also talk about how employers suddenly saw the health and wellbeing of their workforces as something more important than simply ticking a box on a random form.

But is wellbeing *really* seen as something important? A report, published in April by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, found that while many organisations remain committed to supporting their workforces, there is already evidence that this bright light of enthusiasm is starting to fade and activity is on the wane. That's before the pandemic has officially been declared over.

That decline in care for employees' wellbeing, however, might not be the case for the young people and communities that MU members work with. Chris Walters, National Organiser for Education, Health and Wellbeing at the Musicians' Union, senses there is something 'zeitgeisty' about this whole area right now.

"What really struck me is that, more than ever, members of the MU's Education Section

"You can go to BAPAM with any physical health query"

Chris Walters



Photo: Peter Muller / Getty Images



Photo: Westend61 / Getty Images

are talking about involvement in health and wellbeing work – and it is all funded work," he says. "Some of this is funded through Pupil Premium, with one project funded through Creative Scotland. Other things seem to be funded by grants from here and there.

"What I find fascinating is a new critical mass of MU members doing this work in education. Whether it is work they were doing before – relabelled 'health and wellbeing' because it is fashionable – remains a question. But there is no question some of it is different from what has been done before."

However, these newfound opportunities don't necessarily translate to improved health and wellbeing for the teachers and musicians

delivering this work. "They are rushing around and cramming in so much, often on an hourly paid basis," notes Walters. "We also have the dimension of clinically vulnerable teachers being worried about getting properly ventilated spaces in which to work, as there is a feeling the pandemic is behind us when it really is not."

Power Of Music

The fact this area is gaining considerable traction is underlined by the appearance of *Power Of Music*, a new report from UK Music in conjunction with Music for Dementia. This report shifts the debate far beyond health and safety, considering issues wider than whether a musician has a decent chair to sit on, for example, or whether they are exposed to overly loud noise. In her foreword, Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries spoke of turning



Instant Calmer

Alison Gordon is a professional violinist, based in Ealing, West London. She also meditates and has a mission to get others to join her in what she regards as an essential tool to improve mental, and physical, wellbeing.

“Everyone has their life, but what they do with that life is dictated by that voice in their head. It tells you how to live your life and what your place is in the world,” she explains.

“I aim to help change the dialogue with that voice and get you to live your life with more clarity.”

Prior to lockdown, she was undertaking workshops country-wide but, since March 2020, has migrated online. Her sessions for MU members, funded by the Union, take place weekly and can attract as many as 88 participants, or as few as four.

“I have a theme each week,” she says. “I talk for 10 minutes, then invite questions. There follows a 25-minute guided meditation and a further question session.”

Numbers increased through recent lockdowns and her ‘oasis of peace and calm’ helped people cope with everyday stresses.

“Colleagues knew I meditated and a friend decided to learn how to meditate,” she adds. “He was bowled over and found the experience life-changing. He suggested that the MU provide these sessions and they took to it instantly. It is an incredibly valuable service.”

“our attention to the long-term rehabilitation of our personal wellbeing, local communities and national health”.

The report is targeting government, business and the general public with the message that music matters when it comes to wellbeing and can improve the lives of those suffering with dementia, depression and other debilitating conditions. The report suggests the appointment of a Power of Music Commissioner to implement the opportunities put forward, a suggestion which has received the backing of Dorries. Other recommendations include support for frontline workers to gain better training in the role of music in health and care, a major public awareness campaign around the whole issue of music in wellbeing and extra funding to make music accessible, through new partnerships between government, industry and philanthropy.

Some organisations have already embraced the notion that wellbeing is a good thing. The MU, for instance, provides a range of wellbeing services. There’s a close

relationship with Help Musicians, which runs Music Minds Matter, an always-open helpline and counselling service for anyone working in music, including teachers. It also works with the Music Support charity, which offers help mainly for those suffering addiction issues.

“When we talk about wellbeing, it is primarily about mental health, since this is the area where people report that they are struggling,” says Walters. “But we do offer help with physical problems. There are Feldenkrais workshops every week and a weekly meditation session [see boxes for more on these services]. The Musicians’ Hearing Health service offers a Harley Street hearing check with protection tailored to the needs of the patient, all for under £40, which includes a discount for MU members.

“Then there’s BAPAM – the British Association of Performing Arts Medicine – which is funded by the MU and offers free health services to musicians. That can range from physiotherapy if you have RSI, health support counselling, vocal health, performance anxiety and so on. You can go to them with any physical health query and you can usually get an appointment quicker than you can at the doctor’s and they will be able to tell you straight away →

Communal music activities, such as choir singing, can help improve the mental wellbeing of people of all ages

Photo: Maskot / Getty Images



Body Moving

A chance drop-in session at a music course that featured the Feldenkrais Method led to violist Emma Alter becoming a professional practitioner in the therapy.

Now offering a weekly online workshop to MU members, Alter says Feldenkrais is essentially a 'motor method' for learning. "Movement is a very basic block of learning," she says. "We learn to walk, we learn to talk organically. Nobody tells us how to do it.

"Feldenkrais used movement to learn to improve the way we move, think, feel, sense. When we think of musicians, movement is at the core of every single technique. If we can improve the efficiency and the efficacy of the movements that we make, then we become better musicians.

"We use this idea of moving gently, and certainly for beginners, of reducing effort and reducing tension and using more of the system. If my shoulder hurts, then the solution to the problem is not where the problem is, but it is elsewhere in the whole system. Feldenkrais realised that every action we take bodily has an emotion attached as well as a physical sensation and movement.

"We can use sessions to self-care, to self-soothe and for many people it has been a godsend."

whether it is something they can help with." The range of wellbeing activities undertaken by musicians in their respective communities could possibly surprise many people.

Pull At The Harp Strings

Harpist Xenia Horne began to play in libraries in 2016. "I was aware that many isolated and anxious people gravitate to these spaces to feel connected without having to interact, particularly," she explained. "When I play, people of all ages and backgrounds gravitate to the music."

During lockdown, these sessions moved online with participants noting that they felt physically calmer. One person who suffered atrial fibrillation said that her symptoms had subsided after she joined a session.

Xenia also takes her harp into early years sessions, using music and singing to create

calm, connected spaces as well as focusing on maternal wellbeing in a project run in conjunction with the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. That project brings together expectant parents in gallery spaces, encouraging exploration of the collections through musical play using aspects of music therapy, improvisation and relaxation.

Many people would say that children have suffered disproportionately during lockdown, with missed social interactions, lack of teaching, examinations cancelled and the loss of many other facets of school life that are usually taken for granted. Liz George teaches music at Hillside Primary School in Walsall, a large, ethnically diverse school where 50 languages are spoken.

"We have adopted the Thrive Approach, which not only supports the social and emotional development of all children, but also helps to manage distressed behaviour," she says. "Music activities, alongside other arts and crafts activities, are used as part of Thrive



“I tell new mothers, ‘you are your baby’s own rock star’”

Yvonne Wyroslawska


important for me as a teacher, as it means I can function and provide a safe space for learners at this difficult time.”

Active Participation

Discussions around mental health are no longer carried out *sotto voce* and people are prepared to talk. Yvonne Wyroslawska works predominantly with early years, particularly under-fives and their families. She specialises in child development – language, literacy and social skills – through music. Based in Dunblane, she has received a grant from Creative Scotland for her work in this area.

“Mental health can be talked about and we need to do that now, more than ever,” she says. “I became aware that more parents were bringing their children to classes and that they were taking time to relax and think about their own wellbeing. I also found a study which said that singing in groups with newborns relieved post-natal depression. That brought home how important music really is.”

She now runs special groups for new mothers and their babies, where adults are encouraged to improve their breathing techniques for relaxation and babies are encouraged to bond with each other. “There’s plenty of information about music education training,” she added, “but there’s not that much about wellbeing and we need to make time and space for that. There’s also research around music listening, which is largely inactive, while singing requires physical and emotional participation. Naturally, actively participating makes any activity even more powerful.”

“Most of my classes involve singing and I tell new mothers, ‘you are your baby’s own rock star’. It doesn’t really matter how good your singing is to your baby!” 

For more information on the MU’s Mental Health Support resources, see: tinyurl.com/yc5dusk8



Above: Whole-class music lessons improve wellbeing
Left: Harpist Xenia Horne plays to adults in library spaces, to parents and to early years groups

encouraged to notice how they are feeling before and after singing, thus developing self-awareness of how music can affect mood.

“While weekly whole-class music lessons are vital as part of a broad, balanced curriculum, the impact on pupil wellbeing and self-esteem is of equal importance,” added Liz. “Children with lower abilities in English and maths are not taken out of music lessons for intervention sessions, as in some schools. These children can become the most accomplished singers, composers and players, giving a boost to self-esteem which can carry over into other aspects of their lives.”

The notion of wellbeing in school is underlined by Joe Galuszka, composer, conductor and arranger who also teaches music at a specialist school in Bristol. “I teach children with autism, aged from 10 to 18, who really value the exposure to music, as they suffer from many challenges such as ADHD, ASD, emotional trauma and behavioural problems,” he says. “Wellbeing is important, as the children can flourish in a busy curriculum post-pandemic and regain self-esteem, which worsened over the lockdowns. It’s also

to help children learn how to regulate their behaviours. Activities such as simple call-and-response rhythms in one-to-one settings have helped children feel calm and safe in times of stress or anxiety. This has been essential to some of our children post-pandemic, and has helped to rebuild social skills they were unable to maintain in lockdown.”

Sing A Song Of Self-Esteem

Singing assemblies have a noticeable impact on the mood and energy of both pupils and staff at the school, and children are

Unleash The Fury

With fourth album *Born To Sin*, West Midlands metallers Fury are back after the pandemic with a renewed love for making music. Here's the story behind their rise...

Profile by Polly Glass

Switzerland has a special place in Fury's hearts. Last year, the British metal five-piece found themselves at UrRock Musik Festival in the small, historic town of Sarnen, surrounded by mountains and overlooking the picturesque lake of the same name. So far, so genteel. Except, of course, Fury weren't there for the Alpine vistas. After almost two years of streamed shows, four days of high-voltage noise and giddy, in-the-flesh excess ensued. With their loud, fast and furious brand of fun, they made new fans easily.

"We're not afraid to dance around and make fools of ourselves," grins bassist Becky Baldwin, looking casually stage-ready over Zoom with her liquorice-black locks, eyeliner and tattoo choker.

"We ended up in the dressing room of [Indian hard rockers] Girish And The Chronicles," recalls woolly-hatted frontman/founder Julian Jenkins. "We were consuming multiple bottles of rum and whatever else. I think we must have sung every metal song. We were just in full voice, drumming on things, singing... we were going for about three hours like that, I think."

Speaking from the same sofa in Birmingham, the two friends quietly confound stereotypes in a genre where women are often expected to be at the microphone (or simply not present). For Becky, such preconceptions have long been par for the course. "I've been in bands where they're female-fronted and people say, 'you must be like Evanescence or Nightwish,'" she says. "And we say, 'no, we're doing *this* kind of metal, we sound like Iron Maiden!' And they're like, 'you can't, there's a girl singing!' It's very frustrating."

From Bristol To Birmingham

In 2017, still scattered across the country, the group underwent a full line-up change (having first formed in Julian's hometown of Worcester in 2011). Becky was a natural new addition, having previously stood in at shows for Fury's old bassist. Based in Bristol at the time – where she studied at BIMM – she'd carved out a commanding reputation in line-ups including punk groups and a metal covers band.

"Becky was and is the most prominent bass player, certainly in the underground scene," Julian enthuses. "She's an incredible bass player. She's an incredible person, really easy to get along with, we had a very similar ethos when it comes to rock 'n' roll. Plus, she's the most professional person I know."

Julian moved to Birmingham in 2019 to live with his girlfriend, Fury backing vocalist Nyah Ifill. Becky followed in late 2020, during lockdown. "My other band, Hands Off Gretel, is in Sheffield," she says, of the grunge-punk mavericks she also plays bass for, "so I'm closer to them now, which is really useful. And it's a really cool city."

It's all led to their fourth album, *Born To Sin*; a meaty, hooky gumbo of classic heavy metal and dramatic sensibilities. Think Iron Maiden, Metallica and Dio, but with a hearty, soulful dose of theatre from Julian's vocals. The sort of thing Jim Steinman might have come up with, if he'd spent more time hanging out with metalheads at Comic Con. →



“Becky was and is the most prominent bass player in the underground scene”

Julian Jenkins



Top: Becky Baldwin and Julian Jenkins. Below: Jake Elwell (guitar) and Tom Fenn (drums)

“Soon as we started gigging again, it hit me that this is who I am”

Julian Jenkins

Heavy Metal Storytellers

Fuelled by a heady combination of action movies and Iron Maiden records, songwriter-in-chief Julian likes to tell stories through songs. “I love storytelling,” Julian says. “It could be a story about flying through space, or a casino in space... a lot of space songs.”

There are real-world moments, too. The moody *Who Are You?* is about reconnecting after lockdown. “That’s sort of about getting back to live music,” Julian explains, “and seeing people again, and the line ‘who are you?’ is basically saying, ‘maybe you didn’t take the time to get to know people as well as you should have before.’ But now we’ve got a new appreciation of friends and family.”

Long Time Coming

Julian grew up flitting between great-grandparents, grandparents and his mother (his parents split up when he was born). During this time, he ingested an odd cocktail of Simply Red, Michael Jackson and Jean-Michel Jarre, quietly developing an ear for ambitious instrumentals and big melodies.



In high school, a friend gave him Metallica’s seminal *S&M*, a 1999 live album with the San Francisco Symphony orchestra. “My mind was just blown,” he says. “I listened to that CD obsessively that night, and the next day went to school and said, ‘we’ve got to start a band!’ I need to be able to create music, feelings, whatever it is they’re doing.”

Undaunted by the fact that none of them played an instrument, Julian and a small gang started jamming in one friend’s coal shed for the entire school summer holiday, playing Metallica tunes and writing their own songs. He never looked back.

Meanwhile, down in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, Becky’s gig-going parents brought classic rock and pop into the house. An oddball from the outset, even as a teenager, Becky didn’t like ‘cool’ music.



“I was kind of a weirdo with no friends,” she chuckles. “I liked Michael Jackson and ABBA and my parents’ music. I felt very ‘othered’ by the kids around me.”

Hearing Alice Cooper for the first time, at a local carnival, was a turning point. The sound of Poison blasted through speakers, while dancers dressed as skeletons; Becky would be forever hooked on the marriage of horror, drama and hard rock. “And also it was welcoming of weird people,” she says. “That’s where I found my place.”

Gender Cliches

Heavy metal may have come a long way in terms of balance and diversity, but it’s still a mostly testosterone-fuelled world, where bands are expected to look a certain way. “As a woman, people do often assume that you’re there for merch, or that you’re someone’s girlfriend,” Becky says. “Or they assume you’re the singer.”

Fury are back playing live with a vengeance: especially since the pandemic prevented them from touring their previous record, 2020's *The Grand Prize*



For Becky, a Musicians' Union member who handles much of the band's management, it's especially frustrating – not to mention patronising. “Sometimes they think I'd be difficult to deal with,” she says levelly, “or that I'm inexperienced or don't know how to book gigs, or don't know how deals are normally done... and I'm like, 'I've been touring constantly for the last 10 years, I know what I'm doing.'”

“If it was one of the male members [of the band], they'd maybe give them more of the benefit of the doubt about certain things,” she continues, “but they read a certain tone when I say it. Maybe I'm not putting enough smiley faces in my emails or something! I feel like you've got to think about it so much more when you're a woman; because if they feel like you're telling them how you want something, then you're being 'bossy'. I guess you'll never know if that's actually how that person's attitude is, you just kind of get a sense for it, or you see what they post online.”

Business Brains

Between the two of them, Julian and Becky have held down a wealth of jobs to fund band life. Becky gives music lessons and makes jewellery with bass strings. As well as bar work, years ago, she spent a summer in the factory where her father works. This convinced her to pursue music full-time, in whatever way she could.

“A lot of people look down on cover bands and I'm like, 'let me just cry into my cash...’” she laughs. “Or teaching. I don't care. As long as I'm not having to work in a factory smelling of oil! It's so monotonous, and Heart radio plays the same five songs for nine hours a day.”

So far, it's working. 2022 brings more shows, including their first proper European tour. Unsurprisingly, Brexit-induced red tape is complicating matters, in particular merchandise imports, Carnets and tour visas.

Like many of their peers, Fury have little-to-no crew, so it's all on them to make it work. “There's so much stuff like this to figure out,”

Equality For All


Becky joined the Musicians' Union in 2011. Her lecturers at BIMM in Bristol had recommended membership so she could access advice about finances and more. A few years later, she was wrangling with gender prejudice on an arts job site and reached out to the MU. This led to her joining its Equalities Committee.

“There was this website that you could apply for various jobs from,” she recalls. “I was looking at the bass-player roles and an alarming number of them said 'male applicants only'. If you registered male or female – and you're forced to choose male or female – you can't contact that person at all. All the ones that were 'anyone can apply' were unpaid projects, but the ones that were guaranteed money were all male-only. This is discrimination on so many levels. There was a Beyoncé tribute show, and it said 'male only applicants'. She famously has an all-female backing band!”

“There have been several times I've contacted the MU to look over a contract,” she continues, “and at the start, a lot of it was for networking; I was quite new to the Bristol music scene, there were social events, you could go on free courses. I think it's a great thing.”

Becky breaks into a laugh, “and we're not naturally this way inclined!”

And that's the reality; the vast majority of today's rising bands, heavy or otherwise, have to be that bit more savvy in order to thrive, compared with their predecessors. They learn the business of it because they must, in service of the music they love – and you can't be in such a world if you don't love it.

“Our first gig back was Bloodstock, after almost two years,” Julian recalls. “As soon as we started gigging again, it hit me that this is who I am. This is what I love doing.” 

For more info, visit: furyofficial.co.uk

New MU Deal For RCO Members

The organ is alive and well in the 2020s. And if you play it, MU membership is now cheaper than ever

Report by Clare Stevens

The first week of April this year was a bit of a marathon for organist Richard Gowers: a Brahms Requiem in the Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir on the Saturday; online Evensong for the Royal School of Church Music on Monday, followed by a trip to Northern Ireland for a lunchtime recital in Portrush on Tuesday and a gala recital in Belfast Cathedral with past winners of the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition on Wednesday, including a new work by Grace-Evangeline Mason dedicated to victims and survivors of the Troubles; back to London as soloist in the Poulenc concerto with the Orion Orchestra in Cadogan Hall; then off to Venice to play for a Palm Sunday Mass and a concert of Venetian choral music.

If that wasn't enough, the next week included a switch to piano with mezzo soprano Hannah Bennett for the semi-finals of the Kathleen Ferrier Awards at the Wigmore Hall, as well as Holy Week services at the church in Pimlico, where he is Director of Music.

The mix of roles is typical for a skilled organist with good contacts, and younger players such as Gowers are becoming more and more adventurous in how and where they choose to work.

“Many of our members are astonishingly professional musicians with exceptional skills”

Sir Andrew Parmley

Claire M Singer, for example, trained as a composer of acoustic and electronic music, including for films and installations, and is largely self-taught as an organist. She has developed a reputation for her experimental approach to the instrument, using it to explore rich harmonic textures and complex melodic and rhythmic patterns, often inspired by the dramatic landscapes of her native Scotland. She has established the Organ Reframed festival at Union Chapel, Islington, to focus on commissioning and presenting innovative music that reimagines the organ for both artist and audience.

James McVinnie took the more conventional church-based route to the profession, but has diversified into working in a wide range of genres, with musicians such as Philip Glass, Angelique Kidjo, Nico Muhly and Darkstar. He has recorded for Bedroom Community, Orange Mountain Music and Warp Records; and this season's premieres included *Infinity Gradient*, an hour-long work for organ and 100 speakers, written for him by Tristan Perich, and Gabriella Smith's new concerto exploring the relationship between humans, forests and fire, commissioned by the LA Philharmonic.

Organ-ic Future

It's all a far cry from the traditional image of an organist, often considered a breed apart from other musicians. But that perception looks set to change, thanks to a new partnership between the MU and the Royal College of Organists (RCO), offering organists and choral directors who are RCO members 50% off the MU's annual membership.

The relationship emerged from conversations between the MU's National Organiser for Live Performance, Dave Webster, and organist Sir

Organists are not only still very much in demand on stages and in communities, many are taking the instrument in fascinating new directions

Andrew Parmley. The two rekindled a 20-year-old friendship when Webster attended a seminar on the future of music run by Parmley during his time as Lord Mayor of the City of London between 2016 and 2017.

Shortly afterwards, Parmley was appointed as Director of the RCO. Recalling his childhood, when the local school music teacher was also the church organist and conducted the choral society and/or the amateur operatic society, he was keen to re-establish organs and organists at the centre of their communities.

He emphasises that the RCO has a broad remit, catering for home organists, cinema organists, those who play for Masonic ceremonies and keen enthusiasts: “People think we're a religious organisation, but we're not, hence our strapline – the first stop for every organist.” The drawback to this, however, is that organists can often be perceived as keen amateurs, as indeed many of them are. “But many of our members are astonishingly professional musicians with exceptional skills, and I wanted to find a way of



Organists On The Screen

Like everyone, organists and choir directors were forced into the virtual world during the pandemic, with some unexpectedly rewarding results. Dr Emma Gibbins, director of music at Newport Cathedral, South Wales, explains her foundation had a headstart, because a former sound engineer on the clergy team had helped them to set up a livestream for the enthronement of their new bishop just before the first lockdown, so they knew how to do it while everyone else was struggling.

The RCO had planned to throw open the doors of town halls, Masonic temples, schools and churches in April 2020, inviting the public to hear organs being played in an inaugural #NationalOrganDay. This too went online, and was so successful that the following year it turned into a series of magazine-style online broadcasts, entitled *The Organ Show*, and leading up to #InternationalOrganDay.

The intention is to inspire non-organists to engage with the instrument, seek out organ music and events, to learn to play, and to support the work of the RCO in developing new generations of musicians and enthusiasts.

The presenters include Anna Lapwood, who has recently been announced as one of the Royal Albert Hall's Associate Artists and has a huge following on social media, including TikTok, where she posts engaging photos and sound clips from her late-night practice sessions; and Anna Hallett, who is still in her teens but runs her own online magazine, *The Organ Manual*, for aspiring players like herself.

making that clear to the outside world. Putting them in the same company as the MU's 32,000 members seemed a good way of doing that."

Deserved Recognition

The new offer differs slightly from the MU's other joint memberships, says MU Assistant General Secretary Phil Kear, "where you become a member of either organisation and get the other half price. In this one, you join the RCO and get MU membership half-price, but with exactly the same benefits and services as any other members."

Advantages for RCO members will include support with issues such as securing adequate pay for their work, which is often a problem, especially when dealing with churches that may have limited resources, or with wedding couples who request difficult or unfamiliar pieces of music, yet have no appreciation of the time it will take to learn.

"Our Royal Charter means we can't recommend fees and rates of pay, but the MU can offer advice on that, and on issues such as streaming rates and Employment Law," says Parmley. "We can also benefit from the

MU's lobbying on the current difficulties with international travel."

The life of an organist can be solitary. On the plus side, there's a vast repertoire of music from many centuries to explore, via an instrument that has intense power yet can also be played so quietly, the sound shimmers in the background. But the challenges include having to practise in the dead of night in beautiful but freezing buildings, on an instrument that may not be well maintained. Unlike pianists, they may not always be able to adjust the height of the bench they sit on, though a campaign led by the Society of Women Organists is tackling that problem...

Bearing all that in mind, Andrew Parmley concludes that: "It's great for RCO members now to have the comfort of a relationship with a major national body, which has a professional workforce that's recognised as such. Organists can now feel, 'I'm a professional too, I'm part of the MU.'" 🎹🎹🎹

Voices In Symphony

The Association of British Orchestras' new Advisory Council will turn the workforce into a sounding board

Report by Andrew Stewart

Corporate governance reviews rarely set pulses racing. Yet the process promises to deliver a significant boost to the Association of British Orchestras in the shape of its Musicians' Advisory Council (MAC). The newly constituted body, to be chaired by Royal Scottish National Orchestra timpanist Paul Philbert, will offer strategic advice straight from the orchestral workforce. It grew from an idea tabled by former ABO board member Chi-chi Nwanoku and promoted by her successor, Catherine Arlidge. In short, the advisory group will uncover contracted and freelance players' thoughts, suggest ways in which its workings could be improved and consider the sector's future development.

Following his appointment as ABO Chair in November 2020, Simon Webb, Director of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and a former professional cellist, pushed for the creation of an advisory group comprising musicians. The MAC eventually emerged from the organisation's governance review: stalled by Brexit and Covid, but needed more than ever, thanks to their heavy impact on the performing arts. "We want to embrace musicians much more," says Webb. "They are by far the biggest constituency of our membership. We wanted there always to be a musician on the board, but that raised questions about representation. The governance review opened up

"As an organisation, we want to embrace musicians much more"

Simon Webb

recruitment to the board to people from all levels of their respective organisations. We asked that musicians be nominated for board membership by their orchestras; in the past, this was something open mainly to chief executives. That was a strong statement, to say the musician's voice is equally as valid as the chief executive's voice. It sounds obvious, but it's not how the sector always behaves."

Ideas From Everywhere

Simon Webb is determined to position the ABO as a 'thought leader'. Smart ideas, he says, are not the sole preserve of senior orchestra managers; the ABO wants to hear them from elsewhere, too. The MAC will provide a channel for those ideas, delivering them to the ABO board and helping the organisation to build on the good work it did during the pandemic. The next step is to recruit council members from ABO orchestras and its associate organisations.

"I felt it was so important for there to be some kind of student representation on the council," says Paul Philbert. "They are the future of orchestras. I also wanted to acknowledge the plight of the freelancer. Covid exposed the disparity in the way people are treated and the economic divisions that exist across society. When the world stopped in 2020, many freelance players suddenly had no income; since things have gotten going again, they've jumped in at short notice to cover for players who have Covid. So many concerts would have been cancelled without them."

The MAC will recruit up to 15 members from around the country and represent orchestras of all shapes and sizes. It will meet a calendar month before ABO board meetings and lead a session at the annual ABO Conference.



Photo: Mark Allen

Paul Philbert MBE



Timpanist, Royal Scottish National Orchestra; Chair, ABO Musicians' Advisory Council

"I've long been frustrated by the 'them and us' approach of musicians and managements. Although I've spent much of my career abroad, my experience of British orchestras suggests this polarised culture is strong. I hope the increased involvement of musicians in the ABO, something I'm very passionate about, will help to dissolve the mystique of the them-and-us way of thinking. And I hope this will allow us to see that we're all working towards the same goals and trying to solve the same problems. The more we talk together about existing and future challenges and ambitions, the more we can achieve."

Photo: Martin McCready, Uprfront Photography



The Chineke! Orchestra and its founder Chi-chi Nwanoku, who tabled the idea of the Musicians' Advisory Council



Photo: Mark Allen

Simon Webb



Director, BBC Philharmonic Orchestra; Chair, Association of British Orchestras

"The UK's orchestral musicians are not all of a type. That's why we're so determined the MAC reaches all parts of the profession and that it also hears from those who aspire to be part of the profession after college. Student representation is really important, so we're encouraging conservatoires and youth orchestras to become active associate members of the ABO. As ex-governor at Chetham's School of Music in Manchester and governor of the Royal Northern College of Music, I've been struck by how articulate and brilliant the students are. We need to take their voices and thinking into account in our decision-making."

Jo Laverty, the MU's National Organiser Orchestras, welcomes the ABO initiative. "The MU Orchestras Section is made up of just over 3,250 musicians working for ABO orchestras across the UK in either an employed or freelance capacity," she says. "To have our members' voices represented on the MAC and heard by the ABO board should be an invaluable help in creating better working environments and culture for our musicians. Outside the MU's annual pay negotiations with the ABO, there has not been a forum of this kind for our members to input directly into how operational and artistic decisions affect those doing the work on the ground." Jo also stresses the importance of the input from members working as Extras and Deputies across ABO orchestras, deeming it "vital".

Orchestral Harmony


The MU's Freelance Orchestral Committee Chair Fergus Kerr notes players' committees and other representative mechanisms have long enabled orchestral musicians to inform their respective orchestras' planning decisions. "Freelancers and students,

however, have rarely had any direct input at this level. I welcome this initiative and look forward to seeing positive outcomes." Louise Braithwaite, FOC Vice Chair, amplifies Kerr's point. "The Freelance Orchestral Committee welcomes the ABO's commitment to seek out the voice and expertise of freelancers, employed colleagues and students, through its MAC. MU members have a wealth of experience and are keen to support the development of the secure, sustainable and healthy industry we all wish to see."

Simon Webb notes that the council's chair will always be a musician and take a seat on the ABO's board. "It's so important to ensure that musicians' voices from across the sector are heard at board level, which is why we've opened its membership to employed members of orchestras, freelance players and student musicians. The MAC will support the ABO in communicating with musicians."

Webb highlights the advisory body's crucial role in broadening the ABO board's view of the orchestral profession. Constructive dialogue between orchestral musicians and managements, he says, will help determine

how the sector weathers today's economic shocks and shapes decisions that will affect the next generation of players.

"We hope the MAC will provide fresh perspectives and a different set of voices," says Webb. "I'm sure it will challenge the ABO's board as well as informing its decisions. The long-term objective with this council is to give the creative force in our sector more of a voice and model how that can influence the executive and the board. Let's see how it evolves. Paul Philbert as chair has enormous respect. He's a creative soul and I look forward to seeing where he takes this." 

NFTs For Musicians

Bored Apes, blockchains, HODLers and fungibility... the world of NFTs can seem indecipherable from the outside. Yet the technology behind the phenomenon has real potential to change the music industry, as *The Musician* finds out

Report by Tim Tucker

If you've heard of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) at all, it's most likely in a negative context. For most people, they bring to mind vastly overpriced 'jpeg' images, crazy valuations and Ponzi schemes. But there's an alternative view; one in which NFTs are ushering in unprecedented opportunities in a new creator-led economy.

Let's deal with definitions first. NFTs are digital files, such as images, audio, photos and videos. Music NFTs can be songs, albums, videos, visual artworks, ticket stubs, merch, tickets — there aren't any restrictions on what can be tokenised.

They are called 'non-fungible' because they have digital identifiers, or 'metadata', that makes each one unique. So, if a band releases 5,000 NFTs of the same song, each is distinguishable from the others. Owning a unique digital file makes it more valuable for collectors and fans, just like owning unique physical items.

Advocates claim this new technology is nothing less than a revolution that will change the way musicians and other creatives build a following and make money. We are certainly in the early days of this movement, but over the past year, mainstream artists such as Kings Of Leon, Grimes and Snoop Dogg have already started exploring the potential of NFTs.

Jonathan Oudekerk is the co-founder and business development executive at SmartLabel, a service that helps musicians distribute music and create NFTs. He sees two main opportunities for musicians in this space. "Firstly, artists can directly fund their operations, like their next song promotion, studio recording, or collaboration, by selling or giving NFTs to their fans. Secondly, they can find new friends all around the world."

New Kids On The Blockchain

Of course, artists have always been able to sell music direct. But it's the technology behind the blockchain that's creating new possibilities. The blockchain is a public ledger, distributed digitally, and it's here that cryptocurrencies and NFTs are held. On the blockchain, files are kept on multiple computers, meaning that no single person or corporation can control them. Banks, governments, record companies and streaming services become irrelevant.

"It's very hard to get discovered on Spotify, for example," says Oudekerk. "You need to be in the release radar. 60,000 songs are loaded on Spotify every single day. 95% of those are never going to get more than 1,000 streams. The chances of getting discovered on Spotify are comparable to winning the lottery twice, or getting hit by lightning four times. But now upcoming artists have new channels in the crypto space — social media platforms such as Discord, Twitter Spaces and Clubhouse

"Upcoming artists have new channels in the crypto space"

Jonathan Oudekerk



Photo: Serg Myskhovsky / Getty Images

Photo: Mark Horton / Getty Images



Above and right: Grimes and Chief Keef have high-profile NFT projects
Below, right: Jonathan Oudekerk helps musicians create NFTs

Photo: Scott Dudelson / Getty Images



What Is An NFT?

NFT stands for Non-Fungible Token. 'Fungible' currencies can be replaced by any other similar currency unit. For example, a pound coin is equal to another pound coin – they are all equivalent in value. 'Non-Fungible' items are unique. If a band releases 5,000 NFTs of the same song, each is distinguishable from the others. It's a bit like first pressings of The Beatles' 'White Album', where each had a different serial number printed on the sleeve. That means every one of them is unique, even though they're copies of the same album. This creates value: Ringo Starr auctioned his pressing of No. 0000001 for \$790,000 in 2015, making it the most expensive vinyl LP of all time.

The 'token' part of the name refers to the fact that NFTs are digital files existing on a blockchain, which is the same technology used for cryptocurrencies. Like cryptocurrencies, NFTs are verified and secure; they provide authenticity of origin and ownership. Unlike physical objects like paintings and trading cards, it's impossible to 'fake' an NFT.



– where they can showcase their NFTs and reach a completely new audience. Artists are making more money than they ever made streaming on YouTube and Spotify."

Even more exciting is that, unlike standard digital sales, the details of ownership of NFTs are built into the blockchain, so it's completely transparent. "That means you have a direct connection to the fans, you can establish a deeper relationship. If fans pay you \$1 or \$10 for an NFT, you know who those fans are."

This direct connection solves one of the other key problems related to streaming platforms and even physical sales: you never know who's listening to you and you can't

reach them or reward them. With NFTs, all purchases are recorded on the blockchain and you can reach out to those purchasers directly, avoiding 'middle men' such as record labels or streaming platforms.

"When people buy your NFTs, you know who bought them," says Oudekerk. "You don't have a mediator like Spotify or a record label, you can develop the fans in ways that you couldn't before. And you can reward people for that. With smart contracts built into NFTs, for example, you can offer the first 100 people who backed you a 50% discount if you give a concert, or 1% of all your revenue from tracks you release. Now you can really kickstart your career, and the people who back you will benefit from it, too."

But if NFTs are just digital files, aren't they easy to pirate? For example, what stops anyone from downloading for free those jpegs or mp3s that people pay money for?

"We encourage that," says Mark Panay, founder of Simpleweb, who has been thinking about the potential of digital ownership for years. "When you own a digitally manufactured item, it's good when people pirate it, because it increases the value of the original. You can make facsimiles of it all day long, but you don't have the original →

Web 3 Explained

NFTs are considered part of a wider movement, known as 'Web 3'. If Web 1 was the introduction of the internet in the late 1990s, and Web 2 refers to the social-media revolution of the early 2000s, then what is Web 3?

There is no unanimous agreement, but the main principle behind Web 3 is based around 'decentralisation'. The theory goes that, in this new iteration, control will move away from 'big tech' corporations. In the current Web 2 phase, these companies run the platforms and derive most of the value created on them, both in terms of data and revenue. But with blockchain tech, files and data are stored on distributed computers, not on one central platform. Other core concepts of Web 3 include:

Trustlessness: The blockchain is a public ledger. Data changes are verifiable by the entire network. There are no gatekeepers or third parties. Financial transactions, NFT sales, etc, occur between two people directly.

The Metaverse: This refers to alternate, immersive realities that occur in the digital realm. Online video games contain similar elements, but many believe the real Metaverse has yet to arrive.

DAO: A Decentralised Autonomous Organisation is a group of people bound by contracts created on a blockchain. Some believe in the Web 3 world, record companies, publishers, even bands and orchestras may be represented by collective DAOs.

"[NFTs represent] a paradigm shift in intellectual property"

Mark Panay

proof of ownership. An NFT is that proof of ownership."

It soon becomes clear that, if NFTs have a future, it will require a shift in mindset for artists and musicians brought up in a world of free streaming. "It's a paradigm shift in IP," says Mark Panay. "Take the Bored Ape Yacht Club NFTs. You've got 10,000 Apes with different traits, which is what makes them unique. They're collectibles, and some more than others; maybe only five have a headscarf, for example. With the Bored Apes and other NFTs, depending on the smart contract, you can own the intellectual property, too. You can make a T-shirt with it, you can make a million T-shirts, and do whatever you want with it. Not only that, the original creators get a cut of the resale, and you can track the royalties."

Smart Contracts

The concept of 'resale value' is a huge step for creatives. With the digital accountability of blockchain technology, and the smart contracts that can be built into NFTs, creatives can drive ongoing revenue as a percentage, whenever the original NFT is sold on to new buyers. If the value goes up, the percentage goes up. These opportunities extend even further through licensing.

"The Bored Apes team now have a Hollywood script in the works," says Mark Panay. "Some of the owners might get their NFTs licensed as characters in a film, creating more revenue streams for them. All from this little jpeg."

The digital art sector has paved the way for more creative business models using NFTs, and we're now seeing the potential for musicians starting to open up. Mainstream artists like Timberland and Deadmau5 are releasing limited-edition NFTs, including tracks, artwork, videos, avatars and other digital media. Selling NFTs directly to fans means you receive over 95% of the income, after fees have been paid to the marketplace, and you can bundle other incentives to increase loyalty. Legendary rapper Nas recently sold NFTs of tracks that included

Photo: Gary Miller / Getty Images



a contract for a share of the streaming royalties, which provides an investment for the purchasers and encourages them to promote the songs on streaming platforms.

The decentralisation inherent in NFTs also offers benefits in the live-music space. "NFTs are also tokens, which could be used anywhere," said Mark Panay. "So I could say, 'if you've got one of these particular NFTs in your wallet, I'll allow you into our club, or give you access to an exclusive website'. And if you allow me to connect to your wallet, I could drop a token for my next live event in there."

This ability to 'air drop' new digital media to existing NFT owners offers new ways to reward fans. "After the event, you can then produce digital merchandise in the form of more NFTs, maybe a selfie on the stage, or a clip of a video. You could limit them to 500, which makes them scarce and valuable. And if those fans sell them on, the original artist gets a cut of the sale price every time it's sold."

From Web 2 To Web 3

The shift to this new vision of the music business is in its early stages, but Jonathan Oudekerk thinks there will be a transition. "It's not that we are advising musicians to skip Deezer, Spotify, Napster, Shazam and YouTube. You should also put your music out there, because if you aren't there, people



Left: The Stones have teamed with Coinbase
Above: Snoop Dogg is an early NFT adopter
Below: Kings Of Leon had an NFT song played in space



Photo: Stephen J Cohen / Getty Images

Photo: Terry Wyatt / Getty Images

aren't going to find you. But once you're on those platforms, then you can start with new ways of selling your music and new ways of finding fans around the world. And that's Web 3, that's crypto music and NFTs. Right now, it's really an addition, an add-on. In three years, though, you might not need those streaming platforms anymore."

MU General Secretary, Naomi Pohl is positive about the potential for NFTs to provide payments direct to artists, given some of the issues musicians face with music streaming. "Blockchain has been discussed for a number of years in the music industry as being potentially transformative, particularly when it comes to data and royalties, but until the launch of NFTs it didn't appear to have really materialised. NFTs now promise fairer royalties for musicians and direct payment. The less third parties sit between artists and their income, the better, in my view. However, whether NFTs are here to stay remains to be seen. As with any other technological advancement in the music industry, I hope musicians will be the ones to benefit."

Despite their early promise, the MU advises all musicians looking at NFTs to tread carefully. The Web 3 world is currently unregulated, and there are numerous potential scams out there. There are also barriers in terms of usability, as it's not easy to create and distribute NFTs right now, and most people don't have the necessary crypto wallet to buy them. NFTs have also been criticised for the energy cost and carbon footprint associated with validating blockchain transactions. However, a growing community of artists encourages the experimentation and decentralisation that NFTs allow, and this is supported by blockchain services that can allegedly greatly reduce the environmental impact.

Experts believe NFTs will not become mainstream until the complexity is overcome. For example, if Apple built into the iPhone an app that made setting up a crypto wallet easy, that could open the floodgates for mainstream adoption. Perhaps in the future we won't even be calling them NFTs, but something more user-friendly. In the meantime, while the exact future of this opportunity remains unclear, it's definitely a space to watch with interest. **mu**



Busker Charlotte Campbell says many more people pay using her Zettle than via her QR code

A GUIDE TO: CARD READERS

Whether you're busking or selling merch after a gig, the card reader is now a vital tool in the modern musician's kit. Neil Crossley asks various artists for tips on how to choose and use these devices so they keep you busy earning...

Nothing has fuelled the transition towards a cashless society quite as effectively as the global pandemic. Covid resulted in a 35% drop in cash transactions during 2020 and it's a trend that has held steady, with only one in six payments now involving cash. For musicians, cashless payments now far outnumber those by cash and the card reader devices used for transactions have become a vital tool in musicians' gig bags. Armed with a card reader, the musician can ensure they never miss out on a potential payment.

The real appeal of card readers is their flexibility. Using only a smartphone, a downloadable app and a relatively cheap card reader (between £20–50), users can take payments from anywhere there is a wifi network. For some devices, a mobile phone network alone will suffice. Most card reader providers charge no monthly fee, but take a charge per transaction, which can vary from around 1.5–3%. Payment can be made via chip and pin or contactless, including Apple Pay, Android Pay and Samsung Pay.

POS Systems

Transactions are just part of what card readers offer. Some devices' point-of-sale (POS) systems can help you to manage your inventory, providing a strong visual interface and the ability to drill down for accounts data and stock checking. Some

"I wanted to set it to 50p, but you can't. £1 is the minimum"

Peter Thomas

also offer advanced security features that claim to help protect you from cyber breaches and data theft.

Among the first musicians to spot the potential of card readers were buskers. Many are of course professional musicians who use their busking as much as a shop window for live bookings as they do for the money they earn on the street. One big challenge for buskers has been finding a card reader that will enable people to pay while the busker is playing, rather than having to wait for a break between the songs to activate a transaction for the person who wants to make a donation.

In The Moment

Some buskers use printed-out QR codes or URL links for people to photograph on their phones and then access once they are back at the office or home. But as busker Peter Thomas says, it's all about getting the donation from the passer-by at the moment they are inspired to give, rather than having to click on a QR code, fill out a registration and finally make a payment. "It's really about seizing that moment there and then," says Thomas, a musician and actor, whose regular busking pitch is the bottom of the Northern Line escalators at King's Cross. "Because by the time they're back at their desk, they've kind of forgotten. That's my experience."

Thomas is one of the Transport for London busking reps who are currently looking into the various cashless payment options for buskers. The MU London Regional Office is also involved in these discussions. There are numerous card readers out there, such as SumUp, Zettle, PayPal.Me, Square and Ko-fi. But there is one that appears to have found particular favour among buskers, simply

because it enables them to receive donations while they are actually playing. This is the Zettle, formerly known as the iZettle and now owned by PayPal. Back in 2016, non-profit organisation Busk In London began working with the company to develop a device that would facilitate buskers' needs. The device was launched in May 2018 at Waterloo Station alongside a performance by Passenger.

In many ways, it seems similar to other card readers, with one notable exception: a downloadable piece of software called the Repeat Payment feature. This requires the busker to set a fixed fee that they feel is appropriate. "I wanted to set it to the smallest amount," says Thomas. "I wanted to set it to 50p, but you can't. £1 is the minimum. Then I talked to other buskers and they said, 'no, no, no, definitely £2. People will give £2!'"

Their Own Devices

Once set to a figure, the busker can then activate the device to receive fixed payments for that amount every time someone makes a contactless transaction. Meanwhile, the busker is free to perform, secure in the knowledge that anyone who wants to make a donation can, without the busker having to stop performing to process it.

"That piece of software keeps the Zettle awake, but it also means you can set the Repeat Payment function," says Kate Jones, programme director of Busk In London.

"All the audience member or punter needs to do is to tap their card or any other payment and that's it. So it's similar to putting your →

“I hope one day that one card reader can work in all territories”

Emily Barker

Photo: Emilie Sandy

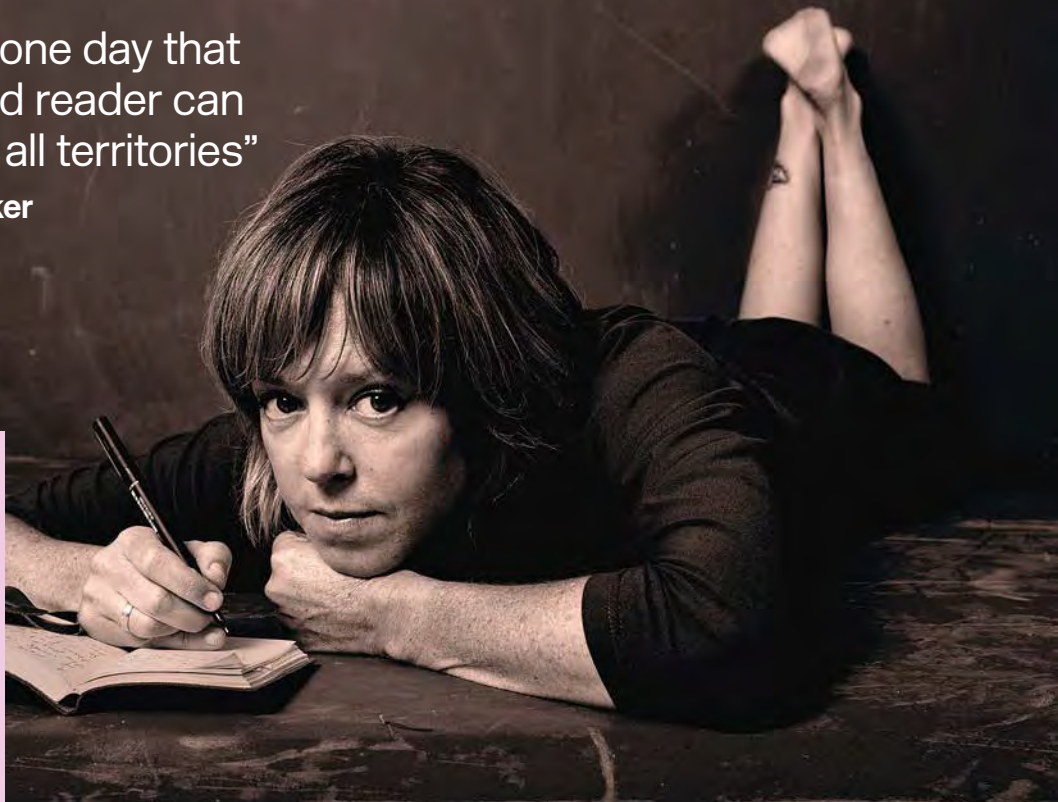


DRILLING DOWN

One useful – but sometimes overlooked – function of some card readers on the market is the facility to drill down into your inventory to access account data and check availability of stock. This is all vital info to have at your fingertips when running your business while out on tour, and of course, anything that reduces admin is welcome.

“I really like the interface function,” says Emily Barker of the SumUp Air device. “I have each product assigned a price and picture – the cover art of the album, say – which makes it really quick and easy to use. It also means either me or my manager can easily access data for accounting, and keep on top of stock levels.”

It’s a view echoed by her manager, Howard Mills. “From a business management perspective, it means no more hassling the artist, tour manager or merch manager for reports,” he says. “I can log in to the account and see the sales as they come in. The reports I get are in csv format and have all the detail I need for VAT returns, royalty accounting, sales analytics, stock/inventory control etc. The SumUp app also allows the recording of cash sales alongside card sales, so all merch sales are in the same report – no need to keep a separate note of cash sales.”



hand in your pocket, pulling out a couple of pound coins and chucking them in the case.”

Singer-songwriter Charlotte Campbell, who regularly busks on London’s South Bank, uses the Zettle and says it gets “far more traffic” than her QR code.

“I genuinely feel it is the most innovative, in terms of card readers out there. If you’re a musician and you then stop playing in order to take a card payment, that can really interrupt your performance. It’s not quite as magical!” She also acknowledges that setting a fixed fee in advance is not as natural as people paying what they feel. “Yeah, I think it’s a shame... and there’s a part of me that feels that is lost,” she says.

Merch Sales

Of course, it’s not just busking musicians who benefit from card readers. They are also an essential tool for touring musicians who are selling merchandise. British blues-rock guitarist and songwriter Jack J Hutchinson says there was a “growing desire” for card payments pre-pandemic, but that this shot up when he resumed touring in October 2021. “When we finally got back on the road, people had reservations about handling cash, so

there was a clear switch to card payments,” he says. Now it’s more like 90/10 weighted towards card transactions. We see a lot of people using their smartphones to make the contactless payments as well now,” he says.

Hutchinson uses a PayPal reader, which he has used on over 200 shows. He pays a 1.5% flat fee per transaction. “It’s paired with my iPhone and the PayPal app, which has a really nice interface and is easy to use. All the items are individually listed on the screen with a small thumbnail. So it features my album covers, T-shirt designs, keyrings etc.”

He advises any musicians using a card reader for the first time to try it out in advance. “Make sure that you do a few trial runs, particularly if you’re handling the transactions yourself. The first show I tried to use the card reader at, I had a few issues synching between the reader and my phone, and before I knew it there was a massive queue of people waiting to buy stuff while I was faffing around. I think we lost a few sales that day!”

One World, Many Readers

Australian singer-songwriter, musician and composer Emily Barker has also experienced a significant increase in cashless payments post-pandemic. 80% of her merch transactions are now by card, compared to



Photo: SumUp

Both singer-songwriter Emily Barker (far left) and blues-rock artist Jack J Hutchinson (left) have embraced the card reader as a must-have when selling their merch at their live shows

Photo: Morag Farley

30% in early 2019, when she began using her own card reader. "Obviously, I didn't want to miss out on any sales, so I got myself a SumUp card reader. I went for SumUp because I could use it in the UK and was about to go on tour in America. It also works there. Recently, I had to get a different one for Australia. I went with Square for that territory, having asked fellow musicians what they favour."

SumUp charges 1.69% per transaction and one-off prices for the physical device start at £29. Barker says using card devices in remote locations or basement gigs can be a challenge, as there is often no wifi or 3G. She uses the SumUp Air version of the device, which connects via Bluetooth to an app on a phone or tablet that connects to the internet.


The reader can only connect to one phone or tablet at a time, but as long as someone downloads the app and has the account login, they can use the reader. "For example, we had a friend help out with merch sales at the recent Union Chapel show," says Barker's manager, Howard Mills. "They downloaded the app, logged in to Emily's account and then connected to the reader."

Barker advises any artists who tour internationally to check what card readers work best in each territory. "I hope one day

that one card reader can work in all territories rather than having to have different ones in each," she says. "It would also be good if you could charge in local currency, but currently you need to work out the equivalent and charge accordingly – which usually involves an explanation to the customer."

Card Times Ahead

There's no doubt that most musicians on the live circuit now need a card reader to process payments. There are many reputable card readers out there; the key is to do your research, check out reviews and speak to other artists to decide which card reader best suits your needs and budget. It's an evolving market and increasingly competitive, so look for offers and take full advantage of them.

As with any tech, ease of use is paramount. The last thing you need is to spend hours troubleshooting to try and resolve arduous setup or incompatibility issues. Take time to find the card reader that works best for you and your business, so that you can get on with the main job at hand. 

Top 5 Tips

How To Find The Best Card Reader For You

1

Do Your Research

Seek out reviews of card readers and ask other musicians what they are using and why. Work out exactly what you want it to do for your business and be driven by those specific needs.

2

Cost

You should be able to buy a decent card reader for as little as £30. Most will charge just transaction fees of between 1.5-3%. But don't base your choice of card reader on fees alone.

3

Ease Of Use

Whichever card reader you decide on, make sure that it's easy to use. If it's too difficult to set up or work with, or takes too long to process transactions, then it probably isn't worth your time.

4

Durability

It doesn't matter how great the tech is if the device falls apart after a few gigs. Make sure it's solid enough for the job.

5

Other Territories

If you tour in other countries, make sure in advance that your card reader of choice will work in those territories. You may need to source additional card readers for other countries.

TOP TIP

TRY IT OUT FIRST

Always ensure that you do some trial runs with your card reader before using it for real, to learn how it works and to iron out potential problems.

Statutory MU Notices

Important news for members...

Members are advised that the following statutory notices are no longer sent to members by post, and are now 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.

Those members who wish to receive paper copies of these communications should contact their Regional Office.

The publication of the above notices will also be brought to members' attention by email. It is therefore important that members ensure the Union has their latest email address on file.

Please visit and log into our site at theMU.org to check your details.

Members are also reminded that the Rules of the Union are available to access at any time on the MU website.

To submit an album for review, please send links to your recordings and PR material to: 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.



Reviewer: Roy Delaney

reviews

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for Summer 2022, together with links for more information on the featured artists



BEV LEE HARLING

45

Photo: Georgie Scott

To call Bev Lee Harling a versatile musician would be an understatement. She toured Europe extensively with the East Sussex Youth Orchestra before switching in her teenage years from classical to jazz, achieving a BA Hons Degree in Jazz at Middlesex University before breaking out into a diverse, varied musical career.

Since graduating, Bev has worked with artists such as Talvin Singh and Ray Davies, played venues such as the Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Royal Opera House and composed music for film and theatre. *Little Anchor* is her first album in a decade. She won acclaim from Gilles Peterson and DJs across the board with her 2012 debut

LP, *Barefoot In Your Kitchen*. But here, the gifted singer, violinist and composer returns with 12 beautiful musical pieces recounting a very personal story of the years since. "Sometimes dark, sometimes frivolous, always engaging and human spirited," is how she describes her music, and we could not put it better ourselves.



➤ **BEV LEE HARLING**
Little Anchor

Bev's versatile voice envelops us in a warm blanket of sound on this collection of inventive and creative songs inspired by raising her young family. It's a spacious, intimate sound, which enhances the album's real emotive power. beveleeharling.com

acoustic



» **LIAM WARD & MALCOLM THORNE**
You Are My Medicine

The boys deliver some perky acoustic blues with just guitar, blues harp and voices – but despite the sparseness of the production, the listener remains enthralled across the five winning tracks.

liamwardmusic.com



» **NEIL COUSIN AND THE JULIA SOUNDS**
Upside Down Valhalla

String-driven storytelling abounds as Neil's warm, believable voice weaves fascinating tales alongside his sidekicks Isi Clarke and Dave Jackson.

neilcousin.com



» **ALNA**
Streets Of Gold

Self-described as a purveyor of soulful folk, Alna's warm and wistful vocal threads through her delicate acoustic songs like a leaf floating in a gentle breeze, while her Lithuanian accent adds an unusual cadence to what is an already beautiful sound.

alnamusic.com



» **SIMON MAYOR & HILARY JAMES**
When Summer Comes Again

Evoking timeless summer evenings spent basking in the verdant British countryside, Hilary's gentle voice lures you in before Simon's twinkling mandolin envelops you.

mandolin.co.uk

alternative pop



» **ERICA NOCKALLS**
Dark Music From A Warm Place

An interesting selection of songs from this Wonder Stuff stalwart. Be it the dark beats of songs like *The King Of Want* or *Eiffel's Eye*, Jah Wobble's throbbing bass on *I Know*, or the ethereal *Build Me A Ship*, this is a collection just brimming with ideas.

ericanockalls.com



» **JO ASH**
Matinee

Jo's unique vocal style pulls you from the dramatic to the painfully fragile, often within seconds. And at times on this disparate selection of songs, you feel as though you've been immersed in some kind of musical play about the singer's life.

joashmusic.com

rock



» **OYSTERBAND**
Read The Sky

These folk-rock fixtures have lost none of their songwriting punch. Each and every tune here will have your hands in the air as you sing along happily.

oysterband.co.uk



» **THE GREG MCLEISH GROUP**
Hooked On You

This travelling bluesman cut his teeth touring Australia's bush towns, before heading to the UK via New York. But despite those influences, his gentle style teases rather than cajoles.

gregmcleish.com



» **SAM BRACE**
Fever & Bones

Soaring yet muscular pop rock offers echoes of peak Britpop angst, but still delivers mature, heartfelt takes on life. *Partly Coded* is the real showstopper here, but there's much to enjoy.

sambrace.com

STAND OUT

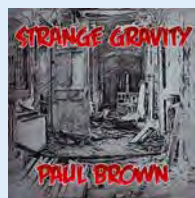
This month's highlights include a faithfully executed Stevie Wonder tribute and a top session guitarist wowing with a little help from his friends



» **SOME KINDA WONDERFUL**
The Music Of Stevie Wonder

Jazz saxophonist Derek Nash and versatile vocalist Noel McCalla put their own stamp on 13 of Stevie Wonder's finest tunes. More than just a tribute, this is superb in its own right.

dereknash.com



» **PAUL BROWN**
Strange Gravity

Top session guitarist Paul's second LP of instrumental jazz-rock fusion features elite session players and writers, including Nigel Hitchcock, Rick Taylor, Paul Spong and Simon Goulding. An exquisitely produced, first-rate album.

tinyurl.com/442umnr6

singer/songwriter

» **BOO HEWERDINE & KIM EDGAR**
The Edge
Of Shame

This is the third of 12 collaborations within Kim Edgar's Consequences project. There's an ethereal feel to this track, with Edgar's emotive vocal nestling amid the cyclical motifs of the lush instrumentation.

kimedgar.com

» **LUIS LOPEZ**
Loue Love

A collection of songs old and new from the musician Luis Lopez. Mixing up wigout rock with phat funk and gentler tunes, this feels like every idea in Luis's head emerging through his hands and mouth at once – and what a fabulous mix-up it makes.

louemusic.co.uk

» **KALA CHNG**
Star

Powerful pop songs and gentle introspection both highlight Kala's precise voice and deep awareness of the world around her, drawing Eastern elements and contemporary British sounds into one fascinating whole.

kalachng.com

various

» **BILL BEVAN**
Where Did
You Go?

Reminiscent of all the stompiest 60s beat poppers – ranging from the Fab Four to The Dave Clarke Five – Bill squeezes every well-loved trope of the era into his fresh and urgent guitar pop.

tinyurl.com/billbevan

» **SIMON TAYLOR**
Survival

Taylor's hushed, bittersweet vocals succeed in keeping his important lyrical themes firmly in focus on this EP of five orchestral-pop meditations on his personal mental health struggle.

simontaylormusic.com

» **REEM KELANI**
The Singer Said:
Bird Of Dawn

This Palestinian singer's new EP is a tribute to Iranian singer Mohammad-Reza Shajarian, who passed away in 2020. It is a haunting and fitting tribute to one of the world's greatest vocalists.

reemkelani.com

jazz

» **HEARTS FULL OF GRACE**
Pointless Beauty

The latest album from Bristol prog-jazz collective Al Swainger's Pointless Beauty is a lush and laid-back blending of jazz and cool electronica that sweeps over you in bright, refreshing waves. Best listened to late at night.

alswainger.com

» **LEWIS HARDING**
Palm Thievery

At once smooth and urgent, this Chichester-based guitar instrumentalist unveils an album of relaxed jazz grooves and potent instrumentals. The performances are inspiring on this lush and impeccably realised release.

lewishardingmusic.co.uk

» **THE GAZ HUGHES TRIO**
Beboperation

Drummer Gaz shows musical generosity here, swinging away sweetly while pianist Andrzej Baranek and bassman Ed Harrison pick out their gorgeous tunes. But when Gaz lets rip, as on closer *Seven Steps To Heaven*, boy do his hands do the talking.

gazhughesmusic.com

eclectic

» **KIOKO**
Kakaroach

This fine Birmingham outfit take a new direction with an updated line-up as they tell of their lived experience of contemporary racism in an online world. Stirring and important themes, with a lush reggae soundtrack.

kiokomusic.co.uk

» **DIPHONON DUO**
Emerging Voices

Accordionist Iñigo Mikeleiz Berrade teams up with viola player Michael Iskas to create a delightful merging of styles, from European folk to contemporary classical. Unusual... utterly compelling.

diphononduo.com

» **MICHAELA FEDECZKO**
Blue Embrace

Michaela weaves jazz, soul, pop and gospel throughout her debut. Effortless, silky vocals are backed up by a cast of South West talent.

michaelamusicuk.com

tributes

Peter Ind

Superbly gifted jazz bassist, producer and club owner

Peter Ind, who played bass with some of the best jazz artists of his era, has died at the age of 93. Employing an unusual four-finger technique for faster, more intricate melodies, Ind cut his bass chops playing in house bands on transatlantic liners. By 1951, he'd settled in New York, ideally placed to immerse himself in the city's burgeoning bebop movement.

As his reputation grew, he played with several of the greats, from saxophonists Coleman Hawkins and Lee Konitz to drummer Buddy Rich and trumpet maestro Miles

Tina May

Highly regarded and versatile jazz vocalist and educator

Tina May, who died in March, was known primarily as a jazz singer, though her work transcended the genre and intersected with many others.

Born in Gloucester, May's life changed when she spent a year studying abroad in Paris, where she frequented and eventually ended up singing in the city's many jazz clubs.

On returning to the UK, she began singing with Frevo, a Latin American band with guitarist Dylan Fowler, as well as working in theatre workshops and solo gigs.

Davis, alongside pioneering solo bass performances.

Ind travelled the US by motorbike to paint landscapes, before opening recording studios and the Wave Records label in New York. Returning to the UK in 1966, he tutored at Leeds Conservatoire, prior to opening Hoxton's beloved Bass Clef jazz club in 1984.

He wrote the 2007 book *Jazz Visions: Lennie Tristano And His Legacy*, celebrating his pianist mentor. He was honoured for his contribution to the genre with the Special Award at the 2015 Parliamentary Jazz Awards.

Clive Somerville

She signed to the 33 Jazz label and released her solo debut *Never Let Me Go* in 1992. It began a long career, which included collaborations with saxophonist Tony Coe (1998's *Jazz Piquant*) and albums with her own trio (*One Fine Day*, from 1999), plus stints with the BBC Big Band and Stan Tracey Orchestra.

She also enjoyed a parallel career in teaching, at Trinity College of Music, Birmingham Conservatoire and the Royal Academy of Music, and mentored many young singers. Well-known for her personal warmth and musical openness, she will be sadly missed.

Will Simpson



Gary Brooker MBE

Founder of proto prog-rock band Procol Harum

Gary Brooker, frontman of the band that helped pave the way for the British prog-rock scene, has died of cancer at the age of 76. He was the only ever-present member of the band across its 55-year history and co-wrote their definitive hit, *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*. Brooker earned a minor hit with The Paramounds, a band he formed at just 14, but further success eluded them and in 1966, Brooker created Procol Harum, named after the misheard moniker of a friend's cat.

Their debut single, the Bach-inspired, baroque-pop classic *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*, was released the following year. Featuring Brooker's Ray Charles-esque vocals over ethereal organ, it became the fastest-selling single by a new group and has sold over 10 million copies worldwide. It is thought to be the song with the most plays on UK radio.

Brooker hoped the band could progress. Follow-up single *Hornburg* charted well in the UK and US, and third album, the lush, prog-rock masterpiece *A Salty Dog* (1969) signalled a change of direction. Yet they

never escaped the enormity of their debut single and Brooker went solo in 1977.

While the song defined the band, Brooker was a man of many parts. He toured with Clapton, played with McCartney, Harrison and The Alan Parsons Project and was cast as the Argentine foreign minister in the 1996 film *Evita*. He was awarded an MBE in 2003 and inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018. He was also a prize angler and landlord of historic Surrey pub, The Parrot. But Brooker never really left

"Featuring Brooker's Ray Charles-esque vocals over ethereal organ, it sold over 10 million copies"

Procol behind. Reforming the band in 1991, he continued to record and tour with various line-ups until 2019, engaging warmly with legions of fans worldwide. "Without any stage antics or other gimmicks, he was invariably the most watchable musician in the show," the band recalled. "He lit up any room he entered."

Clive Somerville

Frank White

Beloved bandleader, virtuoso and teacher

Born to a musical family in London, Frank received piano lessons from his mother and took up clarinet at 11. At 12, he took up the saxophone and studied with Harry Hayes and Nick Tchaikov. Having attended the London School Of Music, his first pro engagements took him to Africa, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Ayr, where he met trumpet player and vocalist Barbara Ferris. The pair married in January 1962 and stayed together for 60 years.

Frank toured with The Bachelors and worked in orchestras at the Victoria Palace and London Palladium with Max Bygraves, Des O'Connor, Bruce Forsyth and Engelbert Humperdinck.

In the 1970s, he joined the Pasadena Roof Orchestra and became bandleader of The Glenn Miller European Memorial Orchestra. He played with prominent big bands, including Nat Allen and John Miller, and gained a formidable reputation for his superb clarinet, saxophone and flute playing. Frank also enjoyed a long career as a teacher, inspiring students at several schools around London.

James Thompson

A full tribute can be found at the MU.org

John Ashton Thomas

Revered orchestrator, composer and musician

Born in 1961, John attended Exeter Cathedral School as a chorister, and studied at Trinity College of Music and Goldsmiths College. He rose to become one of Hollywood's top orchestrators, working on over 160 films as well as music for the Oscars awards ceremony.

A prolific composer across jazz, choral works and folk, John's piece *Iona Elegy* was featured in the Proms in 2018. He was also much in demand as a conductor, working with Michael Buble, Diana Ross and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. His warmth and humour endeared him to all those he worked with.

John was a phenomenal musician and a hugely inspirational and popular figure. He created music across all genres and as an educator, he ignited endless musical possibilities for generations of students. John's passing leaves an irreplaceable void in the industry. He possessed the rarest kind of passion, generosity and skill from which all of us can only feel supremely lucky to have benefited.

John Parricelli and Nick Smart

A full tribute can be found at theMU.org



Stanley Higham

Skilful saxophonist and big-band stalwart

Stan died of old age on Boxing Day. He was 93. He was a saxophone player all his life, after teaching himself to play from the age of 14. He was still playing in his 90s as a member of two local bands near his home in Gosport.

In 1949, Stan undertook his National Service in the RAF and travelled the world with the RAF band. In the 1950s, he established himself as a member of big bands such as Joe Loss and Ted Heath, which had summer residencies in Blackpool at the Empress Ballroom and other top venues.

He played with the Eric Winstone Orchestra, on stage and on BBC radio live broadcasts. He also worked with the Sid Phillips Orchestra and had a residency at the London Hilton's rooftop Starlight Restaurant. In later life, he taught schoolchildren to play saxophone, clarinet and flute and ran the Jazz Appreciation Group for the Gosport U3A.

Lee Higham

Anne Hagyard

Oboist, teacher and inspiration to many

I first encountered the vivid energy source that was Anne through Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra in 1999. So began a long, thought-provoking and often amusing musical acquaintance. In the early 2000s, Anne enrolled at Birmingham Conservatoire, studying with George Caird and pushing herself

“Anne’s lifelong learning approach was inspiring”

to grow as a musician, seeking out new ideas about reeds, technique and musicianship. Her lifelong learning approach was inspiring to students and peers.

Anne also worked in voluntary capacities at BPO and the Sinfonia of Birmingham. She was testament to the many ways our fellow musicians enrich our lives and communities. It's hard to accept we won't see her on that next gig somewhere. Thank you, Anne, for everything you gave us.

Louise Braithwaite

A full tribute can be found at theMU.org

The Musicians' Union also notes the sad passing of Bernard Parris, former Central London Branch Secretary. A full tribute to Bernard will be published in the next issue of The Musician magazine.

Malcolm John 'Mac' Randle

Jazz aficionado with soprano sax prowess

Multi-instrumentalist 'Mac' Randle passed away peacefully at home on 4 April 2022, with his devoted wife Pat beside him. He was 92 years old. Born and raised in Coventry, Mac always lived and played music, in and around Coventry, Leamington and south Warwickshire. He played several instruments, but was known for his prowess on his favourite, the soprano sax.

Over almost 70 years he played with many bands, and was known for his fun personality, versatility and reliability. Even recently, he sat in with the band he played with the longest, Jazz Salon Rouge. Mac was a very proud Gold Card MU member and jazz was his life: he maintained a huge collection of recordings.

His beloved wife Pat and the extended family (five children between them) will miss him always, but they are fortunate to be surrounded by wonderful memories of their time together.

Sue Skelding

General Secretary Election Scrutineer's Report

This report is issued in accordance with the Trades Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 as amended.

MU General Secretary Election Results

As Independent Scrutineer for the General Secretary Election held between 14 February 2022 and 12 noon, 7 March 2022, I hereby give notice that the following candidate has been elected:

Naomi Pohl

(elected 2nd stage)

This election was conducted using the Alternative Vote Methodology.

Electorate:	29,695
Total number of ballot papers received:	3,757
Turnout:	12.65%
Invalid ballot papers (see below):	18
Total valid ballot papers:	3,739

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:

No unique identifier:	15
First preference for more than one candidate:	2
Writing or other identifying mark:	1
Unmarked ballot paper:	0

In accordance with Section 53 and MU Rules, 'Nothing in this Chapter shall be taken to require a ballot to be held at an uncontested election'.

Where the number of candidates nominated in each of the above elections does not exceed the number to be elected a ballot is not required.

We are satisfied that there are no reasonable grounds to believe that there was any contravention of a requirement imposed by or under any enactment in relation to the election.

We are satisfied that the arrangements made in respect to the production, storage, distribution, return or other handling of the voting papers used in the election, and the arrangements for the counting of the votes, including all security arrangements as were reasonably practicable for the purpose of minimising the risk that any unfairness or malpractice might occur.

We have been able to carry out our functions without such interference as would make it reasonable for any person to call my independence in relation to Union into question.

A copy of the register of voters (as at the relevant date) was not examined nor were we requested by any member or candidate to inspect or examine a copy of the candidanship register.

Craig Poyser
Independent Scrutineer
UK Engage, Image House,
10 Acorn Business Park,
Heaton Lane,
Stockport SK4 1AS
7 March 2022

N.B. Any member requiring a copy of the Scrutineer's Report should write to Phil Kear, Assistant General Secretary, 30 Snowfields, London SE1 3SU, with such a request enclosing a suitable SAE.

The Electoral Process And Postal Ballot

The electoral process consisted of a series of meetings in all six of the Union's democratic Regions and a comprehensive postal ballot of all members. Under the alternative vote counting system applied, members were encouraged to rank the candidates in order of preference, with the winning candidate required to achieve more than 50% of the overall votes cast:

In the first round, the votes were as follows:

Stephen Brown:	767 (20.5%)
Naomi Pohl:	1,867 (50%)
Morris Stemp:	1,105 (29.5%)

As none of the candidates achieved over 50% of the overall votes cast, the third placed candidate's second preference votes (where applicable) were then allocated to the other two candidates, with the following result:

Naomi Pohl:	2,193 (60.6%)
Morris Stemp:	1,426 (39.4%)

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**

Musicians' 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. **musicupport.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
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
T 020 7840 5512
E live@theMU.org

Music Writers' Section

Kelly Wood
Live & Music Writers' Official
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
T 020 7582 5566
E writers@theMU.org

Orchestra Section

Jo Laverty
National Organiser
Orchestras
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
T 020 7840 5571
E orchestral@theMU.org

Recording & Broadcasting Section

Geoff Ellerby
National Organiser
Recording & Broadcasting
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
T 020 7840 5555
E rb@theMU.org

Education Section

Chris Walters
National Organiser
Education, Health & Wellbeing
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
T 020 7840 5558
E teachers@theMU.org

Theatre Section

Dave Webster
National Organiser
30 Snowsfields
London SE1 3SU
London SW9 0JJ
T 020 7840 5512
E theatre@theMU.org



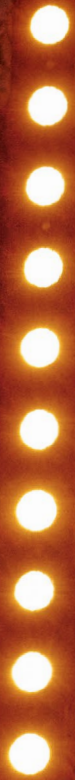
Are you due a royalty payment from the Musicians' Union for the use of any of your recordings in television programmes, films or adverts? Are you the next of kin of a musician who used to receive royalties from us?

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](https://www.theMU.org/Home/Advice/Recording-Broadcasting/Royalties)

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