



The Musician

Journal of the Musicians' Union
Summer 2023
theMU.org

David Kofi

Rising jazz keyboardist who spans gospel, neo-soul, hip-hop and r'n'b

Outrage Over BBC Cuts

How the MU is fighting to protect the livelihoods of the BBC Singers

Neurodiversity Report

Supporting neurodivergence among students and musicians

Depping Out

Essential advice for function band musicians booking their own deps

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**Musicians'
Union**



AI: An Existential Threat?

The ability of AI to auto generate musical content based on past works is worrying, says Naomi Pohl as she outlines the legislation that we may need to protect our work



Photo: Jonathan Stewart. © MU

Naomi Pohl,
General Secretary

“It isn’t hyperbole to say that Artificial Intelligence poses an existential threat to the recorded music industry”

Trade bodies and copyright councils in our sector have been mulling over the potential uses and impact of Artificial Intelligence, and it has been a hot topic for industry panels for several years now. However, it is now very much upon us and as usual legislators are struggling to catch up. The behemoth tech companies who stand to benefit from AI will be lobbying for changes in the law that facilitate use of it with a view to making as much money as possible. A rush to pass new laws could be highly dangerous for the music industry and we must make sure the UK Government gets it right.

It isn't hyperbole to say that Artificial Intelligence poses an existential threat to the recorded music industry, music publishing, performers and creators. In order to ensure our survival, we will once again need to take on the tech giants.

Auto Generation

The most significant threat to all artistic creators, not just in music, is auto-generated content which could replace human creation. ChatGPT has been much in the news and it is a fairly impressive way of auto-generating text. In order for an AI application to generate content, however, it must 'learn' to replicate by scraping existing works including books, music and visual images. This is currently done without the permission or knowledge of rights-holders and creators and has therefore resulted in a number of legal cases. A creator's original work may be used to help generate an AI work, which will then compete against it.

In 2022, the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) launched a consultation on IP rights and the development of AI including copyright law

for Text and Data Mining (TDM). The IPO initially recommended the broadest of the four options they had presented: a copyright exception for the purposes of 'training' all AI, including commercial applications (there is already an exception for TDM for non-commercial research).


There was a huge backlash from the industry to this proposal and thankfully the Government concluded that further consultation was necessary. We will continue to press for musicians and other creators to be able to choose whether to permit use of their works and on what licensing terms.

Legislation Needed

In the EU, there is legislation being debated that would require developers of artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT to publicly disclose any copyrighted material used in building and training their systems. This is an extremely positive development and could be a model for legislation in the UK.

At the time of writing, the artist Grimes has launched a new AI voice software called ElfTech, which will enable people to duplicate her voice to create music. Users of the platform can upload recordings of their voice, which are then transformed so they sound like Grimes, with her being entitled to 50% of any income from any recordings created as a result.

If her business model works it would mean thousands of new Grimes tracks, each generating income for her, none of which she's had any direct involvement in producing. Success seems unlikely, however, given the availability, due to the advent of AI, of alternative methods of replicating someone else's voice without the need to sign away half of any potential royalty income.

It is clear AI is here to stay in music and we must ensure the law keeps pace with the technology to protect human creators. 



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“Every time we step on that stage we leave absolutely everything out there. It’s cathartic, honest, exciting”

Vlure





Photo: Joseph Branston. © MU



Assessing the potential pitfalls of depping out gigs in the function band market

Photo: tdub303 / 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. **p12**



Will Simpson

Will has contributed to a range of music magazines, including *Total Guitar*, *Guitarist* and *Mixmag*. He has also published the book *Freedom Through Football*. **p46**



Katie Nicholls

Katie is a freelance journalist and editor whose features and reviews have appeared in titles such as *Mojo*, *The Guardian* and *Kerrang!* **p30**



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. **p26**



Henry Yates

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



Roy Delaney

Roy has written for *Metal Hammer*, *Melody Maker* and TV's *Tipping Point*, and sings and drums for the noisy punk rock bands Hacksaw and Chaotic Dischord. **p43**



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 Bristol band Furlined. **p34-41**



Andy Cowan

Former editor of *Hip-Hop Connection*, Andy works in academia and writes for *MOJO*. His first book, *B-Side* is published by Headpress. **p16**

Cover photo: Joseph Branston. © Musicians' Union 2023. Taken at Pizza Express, Dean Street, Soho. www.pizzaexpresslive.com



MEMBERS' DIARY 2024 Please note that next year's MU Diary will be distributed in October to those members who have requested a copy

frontline

Summer 2023

The MU in action, working on behalf of professional musicians

MU Welcomes Announcement Of Orchestra And Theatre Tax Relief

The Musicians' Union has welcomed the Government announcement that the rates of theatre and orchestra tax relief will be maintained at their current levels for a further two years from April 2023. The announcement to extend tax relief was made by the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, in his spring budget statement on 15 March 2023.

Cash Injection

The Musicians' Union had lobbied strongly for the higher tax relief rates of 45% and 50% respectively to be extended to help the sector to recover from the dual impacts of COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

MU General Secretary Naomi Pohl said: "We are grateful that the Government listened to the Musicians' Union and others in the creative sectors and extended the higher rate of tax relief for theatres and orchestras for another two years. This extra injection of cash is a vital lifeline for an incredibly successful sector."

Fast Growth

In his spring budget statement, the Chancellor acknowledged that the creative industries are growing at twice the rate of the wider UK economy and that the uplifted rate of tax relief has been driving a much higher rate of activity and employment in the sector than would otherwise have been possible.



Photo: HillStreet Studios / Getty Images

"That said, we hope that the money provided by this extension of tax relief does translate into more work, secure jobs and better pay and conditions for musicians, performers and other creatives who drive this exceptionally successful sector," said Naomi.

Best Performers

The Chancellor's announcement follows a speech he made on 27 January, in which he identified the creative industries as one of the five growth sectors. Figures published by the DCMS in December 2022 show that the creative industries contributed £109bn to the UK economy in 2021 – which is equivalent to 5.6% of the entire economy. The figures also show that the creative industries have seen higher growth than any other sector since the outbreak of the pandemic.

"The creative industries contributed £109bn to the UK economy in 2021... and have seen a higher growth than any other sector"

MU Marks Record Breaking Year For Royalty Payments

The MU's Recording & Broadcasting department distributed £1.37m to musicians, – both members and non-members – by the end of 2022. This is the highest payment of royalties made in one single year by the MU and is particularly good news following the lack of work suffered by musicians due to COVID-19, from 2020 onwards.

Jessica Craig, MU Royalties Official, explained the reason for such a surge in payments: "Most of the increases in revenue come from use of commercial recordings used in advertising and film sync, which helps to balance some of the reduction in studio recording over the past couple of years."

Streamlined Processes

Royalties were paid to 12,495 individuals in 2022 and the average payment was £110. There was a £500,000 increase in raised invoices in 2022 compared with 2021 and the total invoices raised was £1.6m.

Geoff Ellerby, MU National Organiser for Recording & Broadcasting, praised the work of his department: "The team pulled off a tremendous piece of work last year, it was a wholly collaborative effort. We hope to equal and increase this for 2023 and have already streamlined some of our processes including further development of software."

Get In Contact

"However, there is a downside in that a substantial number of musicians have not passed on their full details for payment, so we still have more royalties that we need to distribute to musicians."

Geoff advises members who have performed on a commercial track as a non-featured performer (a session player, not contracted artist), who are aware the track has been used in sync and have not had any payment from the Musicians' Union, to contact the MU. "They can email us at: unpaid_musicians@theMU.org. We can then do the appropriate checks to release payment."



ENO's production of Leos Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen* at London Coliseum

Photo: Robbie Jack / Getty Images

Funding Future For English National Opera

The MU welcomes continued funding for English National Opera, but warns it still represents a significant real-terms 24% cut since 2015 and is set against a backdrop of high inflation, as well as the unknown costs of potentially moving to a new location.

The MU will work with members and ENO management to ensure the best outcome for members, whether they are the full-time members whose jobs we will fight to protect or the freelancers who are essential to the entire orchestral ecosystem. MU London Regional Organiser Jamie Pullman said: "English National Opera is a forward-thinking, creative and accessible opera company

with an incredibly talented and experienced staff of musicians, singers and crew. It must not be allowed to dwindle or wither on the vine. We will continue to argue for increased funding and a return to National Portfolio status in the next funding round."

The Union maintains its call for more notice and consultation on major funding decisions, especially with a number of the ACE funding decisions having been criticised by trade unions, the industry and MPs. MU General Secretary Naomi Pohl said: "The ordeal ENO staff and people working in NPOs across the country have been through over the past few months must not be repeated."

Industry Stats

4.3%

The year-on-year increase in UK recorded music consumption in 2022, according to figures released by the BPI

21,000

The largest capacity of an indoor venue in the UK is the AO Arena in Manchester, which tops a list compiled by statista.com

4.5m

The number of physical albums sold this year to date in the UK. Source: Official Charts Company & *Music Week*

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

Impact Of ACE Cuts On Young Workers

MU member Tom Plater represented the Union at this year's TUC Young Workers' Conference. Tom moved two motions highlighting the impact of Arts Council England (ACE) funding cuts on opportunities for young workers, and the need to protect young workers from sexual harassment on public transport. Both motions passed with unanimous support.

The MU is delighted that Conference delegates voted for the Union's motion on protecting workers from sexual harassment to be one of two priority campaigns for the TUC Young Workers' Forum for 2023-24. For the full story visit tinyurl.com/yc484p7s

MU At MPG Awards

Producers, engineers and artists from across the industry assembled at the Music Producers Guild Awards on 27 April at the Tower Hotel, London. This was the fifteenth annual MPG awards and the second year that the MU had sponsored an award.

MU General Secretary Naomi Pohl presented the Unsung Hero Award to Carla Harding, while Kid Harpoon won awards for Producer Of The Year and Writer-Producer Of The Year. Legendary producer, engineer and mixer Bob Clearmountain received the inaugural MPG Icon Award, presented to him by Giles Martin. For full details see tinyurl.com/MPG-Awards



MU Supporting UK Musicians At SXSW

MU Head of International Dave Webster joined 160 UK bands at SXSW, the annual music industry conference and festival, held in Austin, Texas from 10 to 19 March 2023. Dave's role was to support as many musicians as possible, recruit new members and talk about the work of the MU.

The two main venues for UK acts were the British Music Embassy and Sellers Underground on 4th Street, which is in the heart of the city. British Music Embassy is curated by the Department for Business and Trade, Music Export Growth Scheme, and a list of music industry partners.

"The UK had the second largest representation of bands after the US at the festival, which speaks volumes for our industry and the quality of musical output from the UK," said Dave. To read Dave's full report please visit tinyurl.com/MU-at-SXSW

Northern Ireland Arts Cuts Spark Concern

Arts organisations in Northern Ireland have been told that their annual funding available from the Arts Council could be cut by 10%.

Sam Dunkley, Acting MU Regional Organiser for Scotland & Northern Ireland, said: "The MU is deeply concerned by the proposed cuts to the budget of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and of organisations in its Annual Funding Programme. The budget year has already begun, and to even suggest such cuts will put at risk the jobs of musicians across Northern Ireland.

The MU is now intervening in a bid to get the proposed cuts reversed. For full details on this story visit tinyurl.com/NI-Funding-Cuts

'Keep Music Live' Sticker In This Issue

On 7 May, the MU celebrated its 130th anniversary and to help mark the event, this issue of *The Musician* includes one of the iconic 'Keep Music Live' stickers from the campaign of the same name that was launched in the 1960s.

The Union was founded in Manchester by 20-year-old clarinettist Joseph Williams in 1893 in response to poor working conditions, paltry pay and exploitative theatre owners. For more info visit tinyurl.com/MU-History

Dates For The Diary

30 June

What: Innovation In Music Conference. New music ideas and conversations
Where: Edinburgh
Info: inmusicconference.com

7 July

What: Feldenkrais: Move Better, Feel Better, Perform Better. Free up your playing and singing with Feldenkrais
Where: Online
Info: theMU.org

8-10 Sept

What: Conference on Politics In Music And Song. Examining protest songs
Where: Queen's University, Belfast
Info: tinyurl.com/promusong

18 Oct

What: Youth Music Awards 2023. Recognising trailblazers in many fields
Where: Troxy, 490 Commercial Road, London
Info: youthmusic.org.uk

23 Nov

What: Artist & Manager Awards. Celebrating great work.
Where: Bloomsbury Big Top, 93 Guilford St, London
Info: amawards.org

Your Voice

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

Big Shoes

With #stuc23 coming to a close, it was a joy to represent my union The MU as lead delegate, and quite humbling to be elected to the Scottish TUC General Council. I have big shoes to fill, as the post was held by the late, great Rab Noakes. I will try my best! **benlunn** @Benlunn

Massive Thanks

Our grateful thanks to Naomi and Jo at The MU for their unwavering support. For the first time in many weeks it feels like we can look to the future with some optimism for the BBC Singers and BBC Orchestras.

Kathy Nicholson
@kathynicholson

Help Education

It was good to speak at the All Party Parliamentary Group for Music Education and have the chance to discuss the BBC Singers today. Music education doesn't stand a chance if we are simultaneously eradicating the careers our young people are aiming for.

Anna Lapwood @annalapwood

Save Our Culture

It takes centuries to build a cultural infrastructure, but



Rab Noakes (far left) with Stealers Wheel at Pinkpop festival, Geleen, Netherlands, 11 June, 1973

Photo: Gijbert Hanekroot / Getty Images

just moments to dismantle it. While I appreciate we are going through difficult economic times, the British musical tradition is not something you can simply switch off then switch on when we feel like it. **Jamie Njoku-Goodwin** @jnjokugoodwin

Join Your Union

The MU are demonstrating how important it is to join a union. I urge all freelancers to seriously consider it!

Peter Davoren
@PeteDavTenor

Warning Light

The war on culture in Britain continues, courtesy of a government that has no understanding of its value.

This feels like another warning light on the dashboard for the Cultural sector in the UK. Solidarity with my friends and colleagues at the BBC Singers. **Aliye Cornish Moore** @AliyeCornish

Music Power

Excellent work from The MU on behalf of the BBC Singers. There's power in a union. **Matt Huxley** @Matt_Huxley

Touring Lift

Rachel Reeves MP says if Labour gets into Government it will negotiate to allow UK musicians to tour in EU free from Brexit bureaucracy. #CarryonTouring **Harriet Harman** @HarrietHarman

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Misogyny In Music

As a new Select Committee inquiry examines misogynistic attitudes in the music industry, **John Shortell**, MU Head of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, highlights the MU's work to combat misogyny and sexism



John Shortell
MU Head of Equality,
Diversity & Inclusion

In recent years since the start of the #MeToo movement, there has been a focus on the extent to which sexism, discrimination and misogyny exist in the music industry. The Musicians' Union has been at the forefront of work to improve the culture of music, across genres, workplaces and for women and gender minorities of all backgrounds. This work is ongoing and culture change takes time. A code of practice alone won't solve it, training alone won't solve it – there has to be a long-term commitment from everyone working in the music industry to ensure it is safe for everyone. MU members have a part to play in this and the Union has a key role to play as a catalyst for positive change.

The latest initiative to tackle the problem is a House of Commons Women and Equalities Select Committee inquiry, which aims to examine what misogynistic attitudes exist in the industry and why. It aims to uncover how these attitudes can filter through to society, impacting attitudes towards and treatment of women and girls, including at live music events. The inquiry, through receipt of written submissions and oral evidence sessions, will explore what steps can be taken to improve attitudes and treatment of women working in music. The MU made a detailed written submission last year and we are giving evidence at an oral evidence session in May.

To put the problems in music into context, the 2021 UN Women UK YouGov survey found that 71% of women of all ages in the UK have experienced some form of sexual harassment in a public space. This number rises to 86% among 18 to 24-year-olds. Unfortunately, the

music industry will reflect the misogyny that exists in wider society. However, we would argue based on the reports made to us that the music industry has higher incidences of misogyny for the following reasons:

- 90% of our members are freelance and they do not enjoy the protections in law that employees do.
- There is a power imbalance in many working relationships in the music industry; individuals can make or break careers. Again, this is a particular problem for freelancers who rely on being offered their next job.
- Late night working, informal work environments such as festival sites and tour buses, and prevalence of alcohol and drugs in workplaces are all features of the industry that can facilitate abuse.
- The music industry remains male-dominated, particularly in senior and decision-making roles.

Appearance Before Ability

The sexualisation of women is also a major problem in the music industry and comes in many forms and from various places. Respondents to the MU 2022 snapshot survey on misogyny in music reported that they were often judged on their appearance before their ability as a musician, and had lost out on work because they were deemed 'not attractive enough' or didn't have the right 'body type'.

Respondents noted that they had changed their behaviours or appearances to avoid being sexualised or sexually harassed. We have repeatedly heard women talk about having to assimilate into the boys' club environment in order to be accepted by male colleagues. We have also heard repeatedly of women leaving the music industry because of the negative experiences they have had.

Many respondents commented that a lot of the issues they experience in the

“The sexualisation of women is a major problem in the music industry and comes in many forms and from various places”



The MU snapshot survey concluded that there is a power imbalance in many working relationships in the music industry

workplace start in music education. When behaviours start at that level, they are entrenched and unfortunately viewed as 'normal' by the time students enter the professional music community.

A common theme of the reports we receive through Safe Space is men abusing their power to instigate and maintain coercive sexual relationships with women. Promises of work, career progression or the threat of retaliation against women professionally if they refuse to participate are used by men to sexually harass women without consequence. These behaviours prevent women working in certain organisations where there are known sexual harassers.

Culture Of Misogyny

Where women do report their experiences, the MU has found that they become the problem and they are deemed as "difficult to work with" or their experiences are denied.

Combined, these themes create a culture of misogyny and unsafe workplaces that limit women's careers and opportunities for

progression, negatively impact mental health, and in some cases result in women leaving the industry altogether. The UK music industry is working together on creating safer workplaces, free from discrimination and harassment with equal representation of all underrepresented groups. The MU is taking steps internally to tackle misogyny and sexism. We also created a Music Sector Code of Practice in partnership with ISM to tackle and prevent bullying, harassment and discrimination and provide the Safe Space service to the entire industry.

Our recommendations to the Government and industry include:

- Robust policies and procedures for combatting misogyny, sexual harassment, and discrimination.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion training with specific training on sexual harassment for all workers.
- Active bystander training.
- Clear, and accessible reporting mechanisms, including anonymous methods.
- Equal representation of women in decision making positions and senior leadership.

- Support the creation of the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority which is underway.
- Consistent and regular discussions with music students regarding misogyny, sexism, and gender equality.
- The Government should extend the protections relating to discrimination and harassment in the Equality Act 2010 to all freelancers so that they are entitled to the same protections as the wide range of individuals in the workplace who are already protected.
- Protect all workers from third party harassment, for example by audience members.
- Extend limitation periods for discrimination and sexual harassment claims to at least six months.
- Legislate to make NDAs unenforceable for anything other than their original purpose, the prevention of sharing confidential business information and trade secrets.
- Introduce mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting and widen gender pay gap reporting for companies with over 50 employees. [mu](#)

Outrage Over BBC Cuts To Ensembles

How the Musicians' Union is fighting the cuts to the BBC Singers and its English Orchestras

Report by Andrew Stewart

The manner in which the BBC announced its decision to axe Britain's only full-time professional chamber choir and shave one-fifth of all salaried players from its English orchestras by voluntary redundancy – coming as it did without prior consultation or warning – came as a body blow to those facing unemployment and a profound shock to the Musicians' Union.

The BBC Singers and the members of three bands – the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and the BBC Concert Orchestra – received the devastating news on 7 March in a press statement headlined 'New strategy for Classical Music prioritises Quality, Agility and Impact'.

The BBC asserted that cutting jobs would make its orchestras 'flexible and adaptable', a trick to be achieved by shrinking the number of salaried posts and 'bringing in more musicians when needed'. The suggestion that the BBC could cut salaried jobs and get freelancers in to fill the gaps and save money, prompted the MU's Freelance Orchestral Committee members to submit a motion to the MU Executive Committee in March. The motion, which was accepted, included the following statement: "Freelance members stand in solidarity with BBC employees. The

"The BBC began this with a set of proposals that the MU could not possibly accept"

Alex Gascoine

freelance community is unwilling to further bear the brunt of cuts in our industry and enable the destruction of stable employment."

The BBC Viewpoint

It is hard to understand how the BBC's famously versatile Performing Groups could be any more flexible and adaptable, and harder still to imagine the positive returns to the nation's fragile choral ecosystem of axing the BBC Singers.

The Singers' fate was relegated to the last of five otherwise upbeat bullet points. The 'difficult decision' to cancel the group on the eve of its centenary was preceded by the claim from BBC Chief Content Officer Charlotte Moore that the "new strategy is bold, ambitious, and good for the sector and for audiences who love classical music".

A stark funding reality, absent from the published announcement, stands behind the BBC's stated aim of investing more in classical music and 'future-proofing the BBC Ensembles'. Thanks to the Government's decision to freeze the licence fee until 2024, the corporation has to make substantial annual savings. Consequently the BBC's 'English' Performing Groups could see a cut of up to £5 million.

The BBC Singers, already reduced to 18 full-time members and two job shares, supplied an easy target: their abolition would save around £1.3 million per annum. The Musicians' Union responded swiftly to the BBC's ill-conceived strategy. It called on the corporation to abandon its proposed job cuts and work constructively with MU Officials, MU Stewards and the wider music industry to find new funding streams to secure the future of

The BBC's surprise announcement about classical music job cuts was a devastating shock and caught everyone off guard. But the MU was there to help



Photo: Neil P. Mockford / Stringer / Getty Images

the BBC's six Performing Groups, including the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Musicians' Union General Secretary Naomi Pohl set the proposed cuts within the wider context of the BBC's role as Britain's biggest employer of musicians. "The hundreds of singers and musicians the BBC employs will be very concerned about their futures today," she noted in response to the corporation's announcement. "We will support them and stand with them to push back against these proposals. We will fight for every job. This will mean working with the BBC to



Photo: Mark Allan

David McCallum

BBC Concert Orchestra trumpeter and MU Steward

"The Musicians' Union have been great. Thanks to them, we're dealing with people sufficiently high up in the BBC hierarchy. Naomi, Jo and Alex Gascoine have been talking to senior people in BBC finance, content and employee relations, which has brought us to a consultation process with a proper list of things to discuss.

"We're now in a relatively benign environment for negotiation. I'm glad to see the advance in negotiations and the BBC's commitment to avoiding redundancies.

"It's been really tough on people. The orchestra met with Charlotte Moore, Simon Webb and BBC Director of Music Lorna Clarke in mid-April. They heard some really heartfelt stuff about how this was affecting players, and our orchestral manager told them that he'd never had so many requests for help with mental health as he has received now.

"Charlotte was aghast when I told her that we haven't had a base for 22 years and there was a real promise to fix that. We need certainty from the BBC about where the Concert Orchestra will be based, as well as about job security."

look at alternative measures, representing affected individuals, and also calling on the Government to step in with more support."

In company with MU National Organiser Orchestras Jo Laverty, and Executive Committee Chair Alex Gascoine, Naomi pressed the BBC to listen to its musicians. Members of the BBC Singers and BBC Symphony Orchestra met with BBC Head of Orchestras and Choirs Simon Webb, and Director of Music Lorna Clarke on 9 March to challenge both on the seemingly unfeeling way in which the job cuts were announced, and call for the BBC to think again.

The following day the MU began a consultation process with the corporation, backed by a 150,000-strong petition – started by conductor Jack Apperley – which highlighted the BBC Singers' valuable work. This, along with public condemnation and the reputational fallout

from the Gary Lineker Twitter affair, resulted a fortnight later in news that the BBC Singers would no longer be closing on 30 September.

Budget Changes

In early April, the MU convened a meeting between Naomi Pohl and Alex Gascoine, and three members of the BBC's senior management team. They drew attention to Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's decision, announced in the March budget, to extend theatre and orchestra tax relief until 2025. The Union's negotiating team hope the BBC will receive financial benefit from this which could fund concerts by the Performing Groups and significantly reduce the savings target.

The corporation's climbdown continued on 13 April with a 'Statement on the Future Funding of the BBC's English Orchestras', issued in agreement with the MU, in which the BBC pledged to work with the MU 'to explore alternatives to the proposed 20% post closures in the English Orchestras'. →

The BBC's decision to axe the BBC Singers was made on the eve of the group's centenary and prompted widespread condemnation

Photo: Mark Allan



Phill Stoker

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra
horn player and MU Steward

"Simon Webb was Director of the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra before he was promoted to his new role at the BBC. One of the last things he did before he left was to reassure us that, although there were cuts in the pipeline, they wouldn't affect how we operate.

"A lot of players felt a sense of betrayal when the cuts were announced. I had letters from members expressing their shock. They wrote about the impact of learning that their jobs were under threat. They felt that the news was delivered in such a brutal way, without any empathy, it felt callous from the receiving end.

"The BBC told us in meetings that they were trying to maintain the same orchestra but with a different funding model. We said that by stripping out 20 per cent of the players, it would not be the same orchestra."

"The BBC began this with a set of proposals that the MU could not possibly accept," observes Alex Gascoine. While the Union was always willing to talk to the BBC, he adds, it categorically refused to negotiate with senior management while the BBC Singers faced disbandment and the programme of orchestral redundancies remained in place.

"We understand the need to save £400 million is extremely serious for the BBC," said Alex. "That's why we want to work with them to ensure that arts and culture, and particularly music, survive and thrive within the BBC over the next 30-plus years, not just in the short term. That's what we're doing now."

Jo Laverty notes that the Musicians' Union had no idea that the BBC was planning catastrophic cuts. Indeed, Simon Webb, who started work in his newly-created post at the beginning of January, had met with the MU team at the Association of British Orchestras Conference and his plans for the Performing Groups had sounded very positive. "Naomi and I met with the BBC Symphony Orchestra

and Singers around a week before the cuts were announced," recalls Jo Laverty. "People asked us about the Head of Orchestras and Choirs role, and we said we felt it was a great thing to have someone at a senior level within the BBC advocating for them. We had pushed for the role to be created – and then this happens!"

A Different View

The Union's National Organiser, Orchestras echoes a timeless refrain – that the BBC's top-tier management is perhaps unaware of the high public value and broad reach of its Performing Groups. "I understand that the corporation is constantly beleaguered by funding cuts," she says. "We're not suggesting that the Performing Groups should be protected while other parts of the BBC are having to make savings. But if they really want agility from them and to invest in music education, then properly use the incredible resources of musicians they have on salary."

The MU's message to the BBC is clear: promote what you have. Don't pretend that axing musicians from the payroll will realise the corporation's 'new strategy to strengthen its public purpose for classical music'. That



Photo: Mark Allan

The BBC Singers were shocked to learn of their disbanding via a BBC announcement with no consultation with them about their needs or views

claim rings particularly hollow given the proximity of the BBC's proposal to axe the BBC Singers to ACE's scarcely credible plan to push English National Opera out of its London base.

"If the Singers and the ENO Chorus were lost because of these draconian proposals, then almost an entire profession would be wiped out," notes Jo Laverty. She and Naomi Pohl have remained in touch with the BBC Singers and the BBC's English orchestras since the BBC announced its strategy for classical music in March, relaying the Union's legal advice to all concerned and listening to the fears of those under threat of redundancy. "It's no surprise that the Singers have been so devastated by the BBC's disastrous handling of this whole business," says Jo. "It has been very deeply upsetting for the whole group and they have been treated so badly."

Shocking Announcement

Jess Gillingwater, MU Steward at the BBC Singers, points to a fundamental breakdown in trust in management. She also reflects the trauma experienced by the 20-strong group and their shoestring administration on learning they were to lose their jobs. "It's hard to articulate how people feel now. There were so many different reactions to

"It has been deeply upsetting for the whole group and they have been treated so badly"

Jo Laverty

the announcement and it was so difficult to process. It came completely out of nowhere. It seemed to us that the people who made the decision [to disband the BBC Singers], had no understanding of what we do or why we care so passionately about it. And they also seemed to have no real understanding of the impact of their words."


Gillingwater recalls how she and her colleagues felt robbed of their agency and were so disappointed in the corporation they had been loyal to for so many years. The intervention of the Musicians' Union helped bring a sense of control to the situation. "The MU have been fantastic throughout. I feel Jo and Naomi, who have been so supportive, are carrying an enormous burden in dealing with this."

Despite the apparent U-turn signalled by the BBC's announcement in late March

concerning 'alternative funding solutions for the BBC Singers', the singers themselves were still waiting at the end of April to discover the identity of prospective new funders.

"Although I'm an optimist by nature, I don't feel greatly reassured [about potential donors]," says Gillingwater. "But there has definitely been a change of mood. We bashed our heads against a wall for a month, but have seen a shift in the BBC's rhetoric and in the line-up of people we're talking to. That has been very positive, but so many questions about our future remain unanswered."

Union Support

Alex Gascoine believes that the BBC was unprepared for the force of the MU's response or the criticism levelled at them by everyone from Simon Rattle and the BBC's own chief conductors to members of the public. "Nobody has said these proposed cuts were a good thing – nobody! The MU will always support the BBC as the biggest employer of musicians in the UK. We believe their Performing Groups are fundamental to the core of Britain's arts, culture and music, now and in the future. That's why we could never agree to these proposals and were determined to stop them. We will work with the BBC to come up with something that helps the corporation give the performing groups what they need to survive." 

Reason to Believe

Rising jazz keyboardist David Kofi draws on gospel, neo-soul, hip-hop and r'n'b to create his own artful and inventive sound

Profile by Andy Cowan

A new breed of British jazz musician has emerged in recent years. Artists such as Binker & Moses, Nubya Garcia, Alfa Mist, Ezra Collective and Blue Lab Beats have not only absorbed the genre's greats but more contemporary styles too (hip-hop, r'n'b, dubstep, grime, broken beat), reflected in music that mixes the two together in ever-more artful and inventive hybrids. That musical freedom is echoed by the scene's interconnectedness and collaborative spirit, with many musicians guesting on each other's records, shows and club nights.

That cultural shift has been a boon for David Kofi, a rising British jazz keyboardist who capped the momentum of 2021 and 2022's *Koroko* EPs with a sold-out Late Night Jazz show at the Royal Albert Hall's Elgar Room in late February. Born in north London to Ghanaian parents, David's home-life was saturated in music, from traditional hi-life and hiplife to pop (Michael Jackson), his brother's hip-hop favourites (2Pac, The Notorious B.I.G.) and gospel (Ron Kenoly, Dede, Daddy Lumba). As much as he loved music, he was a reluctant starter on the piano.

"My Mum and Dad forced me to play," he laughs from his home in Edmonton, north London. "They put me into classical training at school when I was about 8. I didn't like it. I was so young I couldn't appreciate it." Yet those early lessons would pay dividends when his father, an assistant pastor at Glorious Inheritance Missions Worldwide, suggested he play gospel at

church a few years later. "It was the music I liked, it gave me a buzz. I started playing in church regularly."

Learning close at hand from resident pianist Basil Hanson proved a real turning point. "I had done some gospel training, but when I heard Basil play I was like 'wow!' I'd never heard anyone play like that before – it was gospel, but it had a very neo-soul tinge to it. From then on I would sit next to him every Sunday, looking at what he was playing. I tried to play exactly like him." Once he started playing gospel, David found it hard to stop, as he relished the transportive power of his instrument.

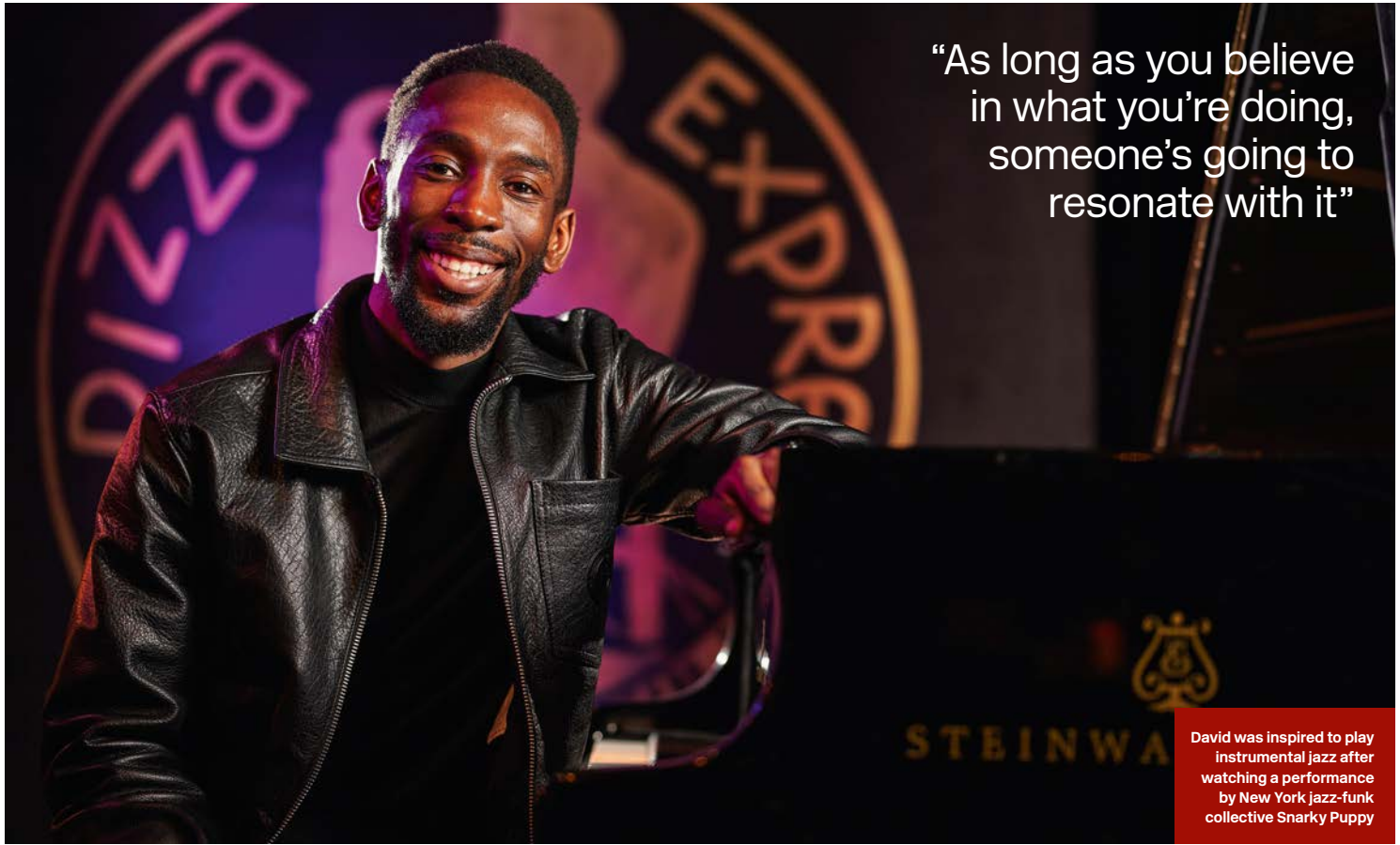
"It was the expression, the freedom, the joy I had. In church, you play the same song differently every week, often playing by ear." He would eventually displace his mentor in the bandleader's hot seat, but not without putting in some serious practice first. "I would be on YouTube for hours, every day after school. I was constantly trying to learn. I used my lunch money to buy Jamal Hartwell CDs from America, because I really wanted to get better. Jamal was very influential on my playing."

Jazz Moves

Gospel music encourages improvisation. David would often have to think on his feet and learn a song on the spot. It was a perfect grounding for jazz, which makes similar demands on its players. Yet jazz came along for David almost by accident. He was studying Sports Science at Coventry University when a friend asked if he'd like to go and see US jazz-funk collective Snarky Puppy in concert. "I checked them out on YouTube and they sounded good. But on the night I was just like 'wow!' I never really knew about jazz before. I heard this band – no singers, just musicians – and they totally blew me away. From that night I →

"In church, you play the same song differently every week, often playing by ear"





“As long as you believe in what you’re doing, someone’s going to resonate with it”

David was inspired to play instrumental jazz after watching a performance by New York jazz-funk collective Snarky Puppy

was like ‘Okay, I want to be onstage and play instrumental jazz’. Snarky Puppy was where it all started for me.”

David began writing his own songs after he had finished his degree and returned to London. Snarky Puppy’s influence was particularly acute amid the soul hooks, danceable beats and graceful melodic transformations of 2013’s debut six-track EP *Galaxy*. He capitalised with his first headline show at Shoreditch’s Richmix, funded via a government help scheme. But after being nominated for Best Jazz/Blues Act at the Unsigned Music Awards, David’s momentum as a solo artist stalled, largely due to financial pressures. A freelance music teacher and player for hire, he found himself taking a three-month residency in China, playing top 40 classics, just to keep his head above water.

Back On Track

It was a chance meeting with his current producer, Natty Sounds, that got him back on track: “He encouraged me to start writing

again.” The pair collaborated closely on 2021’s first *Koroko* EP, a huge stylistic leap whose mix of pensive keys and layered percussion was enhanced by an enigmatic saxophone solo by James Mollison (Ezra Collective) on standout *Shinko*. “I was very young when I recorded *Galaxy* and didn’t spend a lot of time writing it,” he reflects. “It was like ‘I like this idea, let’s just get it out’. With *Koroko* we took a lot more time dissecting the pieces, sometimes going back, taking a week, changing things up. I had a lot more experience musically that I could pull into the project. It was a real step up.”

Last year’s second instalment doubled down on its Japanese influences (*Koroko* translates as heart, soul and mind) and anime-inspired artwork, incorporating eastern-themed strings. Elsewhere his bold use of extending – taking a chord and adding an extra note on top – echoes US genre-bender Robert Glasper, a musician he says “inspired me to think outside the box when creating music”.

The resurgence of British jazz – for the most part a DIY movement – has also helped raise his profile. “The way the UK jazz scene is now

helps everyone,” he enthuses. “When I first started there wasn’t much going on, now I hear so many different artists doing very different things, I feel like there’s not just one way to do jazz now. As long as you believe in what you’re doing, someone’s going to resonate with it. It’s so open now.” Open enough to embrace a sound some purists may not immediately recognise. “The genre is jazz, but I take so much from all my experiences – be it in rock, gospel, r’n’b, neo-soul. You’ll hear a bit of everything in there.”

For the Albert Hall show David established his core band featuring guitarist Peter Solomon, bassist Leslie Essel and drummer Jeremy Wilson, but recent years working as a jobbing musician means he can always pull in favours whenever necessary. “I like to use the same guys, but everyone’s so busy it’s not always possible. Fortunately if someone can’t make it I have people I can call on.”



Playing The Albert Hall

"My goal was to find a venue to demonstrate the evolution of my musical style over the years. I was aware of the successful performances of Niji Adeleye and Blue Lab Beats at the Elgar Room. I knew it was sold out and I went into the show with high expectations after great rehearsals with my band. They provided valuable input on arrangements, which helped build my confidence before the performance. The audience gave us a lot of energy – just seeing everyone clapping and enjoying themselves gave us more space to play with freedom and express ourselves even more. The feedback afterwards was really positive too. I'm extremely proud of the achievement. I fully immersed myself in the moment and gave it my all, and looking back at the footage fills me with a deep sense of pride. Having such a successful show has given me the confidence to perform in front of larger audiences in the future. This experience has been a defining moment in my career. I'm more determined than ever to continue creating music that has a positive impact on people."



David self-funds his releases through school commissions, gigs and his work as a wedding pianist

Next Steps

While David's next release is a four-track EP commemorating "the best night of my life" – *Live at Late Night Jazz, Royal Albert Hall* – he has no immediate plans to record an album. "At some point I will," he ventures, "but I prefer concentrating on smaller projects." Part of that is due to the stresses and strains of handling his own business. "I go through seasons of songwriting. Sometimes I'm writing every day, sometimes I have to take time out just to clear my mind. Because I manage myself the creative process can be affected. I have to do so much admin, liaising with people, emailing etc. I'm very organised, passionate and positive, and I like to get things done. But it's not always conducive to music-making."

David self-funds his releases through school commissions, gigs and, come spring, work as a wedding pianist. "At least once every two weeks, from April to October, there's a wedding gig somewhere. That helps me a lot." However, finance is not the only challenge facing younger musicians. "Self-confidence is a big factor too," he notes, reflecting on his own struggles after his first EP. "Sometimes when you create something it's easy to feel people might not like it. You need to believe in yourself and really go for it. Of course, it is very expensive – you need some form of outside income to get everything recorded, mixed, mastered and promoted. I also make a point of always paying my musicians."

Indeed, it was a costly encounter during one of his many live travails that first drew David's attention to the MU. "I joined in 2019," he recalls. "I was playing in a band and we got into a bit of a situation where the client didn't pay us. It was a lot of money too. The only person that got paid was the singer, who was an MU member. I wasn't really aware of the Musicians' Union before that, but that was an important moment." It has become a critical back-up for an artist hoping to make further strides into the big time. "It means community, it means meeting like-minded people who can share ideas. If there's a problem, the Musicians' Union is there to help. As musicians we often don't know what our rights are, and the MU is very good at resolving those. I haven't had many issues, fortunately, but I know that if I did they would have my back."

Despite climbing several rungs up the jazz ladder in recent years, David remains as amiable and unassuming as his early idols Snarky Puppy. Keeping his feet on the ground and staying true to his roots is important. "I still play in church and I will always continue to do that," he says with conviction. "I love the expression and feeling it gives me. It will always be a key part of me."

David plays Pizza Express, High Holborn, on 5 September. Please visit: davidkofi.com 

Grassroots Scene

With Covid a fading memory, but a litany of new challenges arising in its place, how does the grassroots live music scene of 2023 look to those at the sharp end? Henry Yates asked a range of insiders to take the pulse of the sector

Report by Henry Yates

In summer 2021, when the pandemic receded and the shutters rolled up on UK music venues, the inhabitants of the grassroots circuit took their first steps into an uncertain future. Would music-starved fans flood back into their local venues, or stay away over lingering health concerns? How many gig-hosting pubs and small clubs had been lost to lockdown, and could the survivors claw their way back to solvency? Did the pandemic reveal cracks in the UK's live infrastructure that needed fixing? And was Covid the worst that circumstances could throw at us?

Two years later, there are undoubtedly positives to take from the state of the sector, with further victories anticipated from the tireless work of the Music Venue Trust charity (MVT), which has fought alongside the MU since 2014 for our grassroots music venues (GMVs). The sector is not dead, by any means. In fact, according to Music Venue Trust's annual report of 2022, there are now 960 GMVs within the membership of its Music Venues Alliance (MVA). This is an increase of 4.1% from 2021, and an increase of 41.2% over pre-pandemic levels. "The grassroots music scene is still an incredibly vibrant and exciting sector," says MU National Organiser Kelly Wood. "But it's facing a lot of challenges."

"The UK grassroots music scene has definitely bounced back after two years of lockdown"

Mig Schillace

The Musician • Summer 2023

Community-owned Exchange in Bristol is a venue that has flourished post-lockdown



© Jonathan Minto

Hard Times

You needn't look far for sobering statistics. The permanent closure of GMVs seems to be accelerating, with a recent BBC report noting that 22 had folded since April 2022, and MVT founder and CEO Mark Davyd telling us that such venues are now vanishing at the terrifying rate of one a week. The MVT report noted that the average small venue with a 308 capacity was just 40% full at a typical event in 2022 (an 11% drop from 2019). The doors opened less frequently, too, with an average venue presenting 184 events last year (down 16.7% from 2019, that saw 218 events).

"The number of performances is collapsing," explains Davyd, "and that's very simply because huge swathes of what GMVs do, especially the development of new and emerging talent, simply aren't economically sustainable any longer. And it's going to get a lot worse without any external action."

New Challenges

It's interesting to note that Covid – while the single worst threat to musicians' livelihoods in living memory – is now only a footnote in the list of challenges facing venues. "The UK grassroots music scene has definitely bounced back after two years of lockdown," says Mig Schillace, owner of The Louisiana in Bristol, where he reports that footfall is healthy. "The main issue is that more GMVs up and down the UK are closing due to rising costs for actually running them. If we don't safeguard GMVs, this will have a huge knock-on effect for artists looking for venues to play."

Power Cut

Nobody needs reminding about the spike in UK energy costs. Frustratingly, despite efforts to lobby the government before the last Budget, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt offered





Sour Kix at The Boilerroom, a much-valued grassroots music venue in Guildford

Photo: Jonathan Stewart. ©MU

no additional support for music venues. The failure to extend the business energy relief scheme will be catastrophic, says Davyd. "The already very bad situation is going to be amplified by the huge increases in energy prices as people are confronted by rises of 300% to 400%. The cost of opening the venue has escalated out of control. The costs of touring have tracked alongside that. This creates the perfect storm: performers that desperately need to increase their income to make their tour affordable, meeting venues who aren't able to meet that demand."

As Director of The Black Box in Belfast, Kathryn McShane is rising to the challenge of keeping her venue as one of the city's most vibrant locations while balancing the books. "Many of us, venues and artists alike, emerged from Covid to be faced with a cost of living crisis which has reached a point of instability for the sector. Increased costs of everything

across the board has affected venues, artists and audiences – and potential audiences."

Fears For First-Timers

The knock-on effect is that many venues are more reticent about giving untested acts the springboard they desperately need. "Right down at our 100-cap level has never been the size of venue for musicians to have profitable careers in the long term," says Nick Stewart of Sneaky Pete's in Edinburgh. "We're continuing to make an enormous amount of performance opportunities for emerging artists that will move on to bigger venues later on." But that's only feasible, explains Stewart, when business is good. "When a venue is busy, both with good ticket sales and a healthy bar, it's easier for venues to take a chance on emerging →

Playing Fair

Even with many UK music venues under severe financial pressure, the Musicians' Union still holds the expectation that musicians who play on the grassroots circuit should be treated with respect and paid fairly. Initiated in 2013, our Fair Play Venue Scheme invites smaller music venues to declare their support for the fair treatment of musicians and their opposition to pay-to-play and unfair ticketing deals by signing up to the Fair Play Venue Scheme.

When routing a UK tour or deciding which clubs to book for gigs, be sure to refer to the MU's list of Fair Play Venues (available to view at our website), all of whom endorse the principles of our Fair Play Guide. Even at a tough time for both sides on the grassroots live music scene, it's the best way to ensure the night is a mutual success.

“There is a pretty unanimous belief among grassroots venues that we need Government support”

Heidi Wort

acts that might or might not go on to bigger things. When costs go up so steeply for venues, we see venues taking fewer risks on upcoming talent. That’s a real shame.”

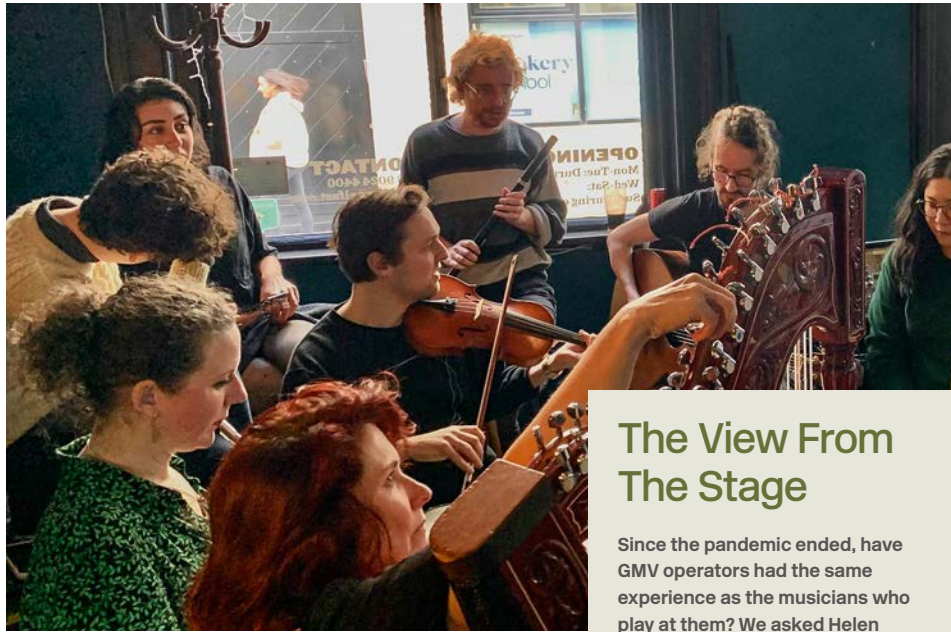
Priced Out

If GMVs are suffering from the cost of living and runaway inflation, so too are fans, making the unavoidable rise in ticket prices an issue for both sides. The MVT report found that the average GMV ticket price rose to £10.90 last year (up 24% from £8.74 in 2019). But while cynics might accuse artists and venues of overcharging, the report found even this rise often wasn’t enough to break even. The average GMV makes a loss of 37% on ticket sales for live music – relying on food and beverage sales to soften the deficit.

In such an environment, artists can hardly raise their fees. “There’s concern from both parties,” says Wood. “It’s incredibly hard to run a venue and it’s similarly hard for artists to make a profit whilst touring grassroots venues. The appetite for live music remains, but grassroots touring is really hard in terms of turning a profit as the margins are so tight. Both artists and venues are aware that increasing ticket prices may price fans out of attending shows.”

Landlords also play an important part in the equation. The UK music scene is notable for the low percentage of GMV operators who own their venue, with the MVT report finding that an estimated 89% pay rent each month. That might not be an issue in boom times with a conscientious landlord, but for many tenants, the average monthly rent is £3,000-plus and rising – an unsustainable slice of their precarious income.

Photo: The Black Box / Addison Paterson



The View From The Stage

Since the pandemic ended, have GMV operators had the same experience as the musicians who play at them? We asked Helen Turner – singer of acclaimed blues-rock band Born Healer, who recently released their album *Herbs, Roots, Barks, Etc* – for her impressions.

“Immediately post-pandemic, there was a positivity in the air at venues, albeit with a smaller audience – but the audiences that were there were very appreciative, with a spirit of ‘we’re all in this together’. Ultimately, that feeling will fade, but we still get the impression that people who come to gigs appreciate it more because of the times when there were none.

“The audiences really want to be there,” Helen continues. “We’re perhaps seeing a distilled-down group of gig-goers who would go to live music anyway, and are a more enthusiastic and appreciative audience. In fact, we’re wondering if the real live music fans are going to more events now than before.

“As far as the cost of living crisis goes, people need to make a choice and prioritise what they do with their money, and it feels to us that real live music lovers prioritise just that. Venue owners seem pretty positive now, in our experience, and are putting on a full gig schedule, and new venues are opening up, which is a great sign for the future.”

The management of The Black Box in Belfast say that increasing costs have made putting on shows increasingly difficult



Photo: Sarah Jones

Future Solutions

When analysing the grassroots music sector, it’s easy to enter a death spiral of doomy statistics. Yet the bright spots should not be overlooked, not least the spirited fightback and battleplan of organisations including the MU and MVT.

Last year, MVT awarded £107,698 direct to venues, allowing the purchase of everything from lighting equipment to sound desks. By the end of March, the charity had raised £2,318,210 for the Own Our Venues scheme, described as “a bold programme to acquire the freehold ownership of premises, place them into a benevolent and protected ownership model, and offer them back to

Sneaky Pete's in Edinburgh is committed to creating performance opportunities for emerging artists



Photo: Alan Wilson / Alamy Stock Photo



Photo: Roberto Ricciuti / Getty Images

venue operators under sustainable and protected leaseholds”.

Artists have had tangible help, too, with £3,374,150 awarded to over 650 musicians, allowing them to play 825 gigs at 660 venues across four nations. Other initiatives include MVT Showcases, Move To The Music and Revive Live, the latter investing over £3 million into grassroots artists, venues and crew, enabling 700-plus shows in over 500 venues and underwriting the fees of over 170 headline acts with more than 200 supporting acts.

Next Steps

This financial support to grassroots artists and venues has been an invaluable sticking plaster. But all agree Westminster needs to give serious long-term help to a sector that is worth £500,320,320, employs 30,720 people and provides the first step for the future stars whose tax bills will one day run into the millions. “The sector needs support to continue to grow and develop,” says McShane, “from council, local government and communities as a whole”.

As well as challenging the UK’s “excessive and anti-competitive” business rates, Davyd is one of many voices calling for VAT to be scrapped on tickets, on the basis that “it

doesn't make any sense for the government to continue to tax what is clearly research and development”. He also wants to see the giants of the live sector support the symbiotic relationship with GMVs. Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham has already been approached with proposals that the city’s soon-to-open 23,500-cap Co-op Live Arena should support the smaller venues where its future bookings will play their first gigs.

Heidi Wort of Bristol’s Exchange agrees the stadium league should recognise the ‘feeder’ service of small venues. “There is a pretty unanimous belief among grassroots venues that we need more governmental support with energy and rising costs as well as potential levies being introduced on new stadiums to invest in grassroots music and the talent pipeline – similar to what we see in football with the funding distributed by the FA.”

Make no mistake: grassroots venues are the lifeblood of UK music. If this vital cog is removed – and young acts denied the first rung of their career ladder – the superstars will never develop and the marquee events will run dry sooner than we think. “The grassroots venue network is where musicians cut their teeth, grow their fanbase and start to understand the industry,” says Wood. “This is where it all starts.” **mu**

Visit bornhealer.com, blackboxbelfast.com, thelouisiana.net and exchangebristol.com. See sneakypetes.co.uk for listings including August’s Central Belters season, showcasing the best new Scottish acts

Scotland & NI Office

The first in a new series on the MU's Regional Offices focuses on the Scotland and Northern Ireland Office

Report by Neil Crossley

On 21 February this year, the MU's Scotland and Northern Ireland Office received some welcome yet wholly unexpected news. After months of heavy campaigning and an open letter from the MU, Midlothian Council announced that it was rejecting proposals to cut its instrumental music service by 60%.

It was a landmark moment for the Scotland and NI Office. Had the cuts gone ahead, they would have transformed instrumental music tuition in Midlothian into a primarily parent-funded service, completely undermining the Scottish Government's pledge to offer free tuition to all. They would also have affected MU members' jobs and caused serious long-term damage to the musical ecosystem in Scotland.

For the Scotland and NI Office, it reinforced the importance of political lobbying, which forms the core of their workload. It also highlighted the fact that in Edinburgh at least, there sits a government with arguably more empathy for culture and the creative industries than its English counterparts.

Meet The Team

Situated to the west of Glasgow city centre, the MU's Scotland and Northern Ireland Regional Office consists of a team of three: Regional Organiser Caroline Sewell, Regional Officer Louise Stanners Pow and Membership Services Coordinator Becci Abbott. Caroline joined the team in 2014 and was appointed Regional Organiser in 2016. She says that most of the Scottish MU members are based within

"The arts is always going to be perceived as a soft target"

Caroline Sewell

the central belt between Glasgow and Edinburgh while others are spread across smaller communities on the mainland and on islands to the west and north. Similarly, the majority of the Northern Ireland members live in and around Belfast she says, while others are based in villages and towns in the North.

Serving such a vast geographical area can be challenging for the Scotland and NI Office. Before the pandemic there were at least six flights a day from Glasgow to Belfast. But since Covid, the service has been completely stripped back.

"It used to be the case, pre-pandemic, that if I had to be in Belfast that afternoon there used to be loads of flights you could just jump on," says Caroline. "Now it's just not like that. There are definitely challenges in terms of how quickly we can access parts of the region physically."

The Benefits Of Online Access

One beneficial factor though has widespread uptake of meetings via Zoom and Teams over the last three years, says Caroline.

"We're a very small team of three people with a wide geographical spread," she says. "We're slowly making a transition back to trying to do more in-person events, but the online events are really well-attended and we found that we can reach those members that wouldn't have been able to travel down from, say, Inverness to Glasgow, just for a couple of hours in the afternoon."

Inevitably though, there are incidences when a Union Official needs to be physically present. "Sometimes there are those industrial situations which happen, and they require a Union Official to be there in person as well, to be the front of the players, if we're talking about an orchestra or a school, for example."



Photo: Travelpix Ltd / Getty Images

From the Clyde in Glasgow to the Highlands, the Scottish Isles and the whole of Northern Ireland, the Scotland & NI office has an enormous geographical spread

There is one full-time symphony orchestra in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Orchestra, with whom the MU has an in-house agreement. The Union also has agreements with the five main Scottish orchestras: the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra (BBCSSO); the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO); Scottish Opera; Scottish Ballet and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Caroline estimates that over 50% of musicians in these orchestras are MU members and, as is the case across the UK, she believes that over 90% of all MU members in Scotland and Northern Ireland are self-employed.

Lobbying On Behalf Of Members

Much of Caroline's work involves lobbying at Holyrood and Stormont. She has an awareness of Westminster politics, she says, but points to the fact that there is a different employment and legal system in Northern Ireland and a different legal system in Scotland. "In areas such as culture, education, public health and justice, those are devolved areas in Scotland and Northern Ireland," she says. "Whenever it comes to that side of our work as a trade union, it's different in Scotland and Northern Ireland as it will also be in



The MU Scotland & NI Regional Office: Caroline Sewell, Louise Stanners Pow and Becci Abbott

Photo: Jonathan Stewart © MU

Wales. It's quite a different job in that sense and actually that takes up the bulk of my working hours."

Growing Membership


The Scotland and Northern Ireland Office has seen a steady rise in MU membership in recent years. Membership in Scotland and Northern Ireland is now almost 3,000, with over 400 of those members being in Northern Ireland. All evidence suggests that most new members join due to word-of-mouth recommendation, says Caroline. But the cataclysmic events of the last three years have also had a major impact on growing membership.

"What we've seen is this perfect storm of low pay and precarious freelance work, we've then had the impact of streaming on incomes. Then we had Brexit, which meant that musicians couldn't go out and tour in Europe, at least not without considerable expense and headache. Add to that obviously the pandemic, with two years of lockdown and being unable to work and earn for a lot of musicians."

Despite the positive news from Midlothian Council, the reality is that the region is facing

ongoing cuts to funding. In December 2022, Creative Scotland – the public body that supports the arts and creative industries in Scotland – received proposed cuts of nearly 10% to its funding for 2023/24 from the Scottish Government.

Instrumental music provision in schools continues to be a huge concern, says Caroline, as it is across the UK. "I think sadly, no matter how much noise we want to make about the fact that arts and culture contribute significantly toward the wider economy, that is always going to be perceived as a soft target and low-hanging fruit when you're weighing everything up? It's an easy target."

Against such a backdrop, says Caroline, it's not surprising that those in the creative industries are looking to trade unions for support. "I think there's a lot of musicians who are looking around and thinking, 'Now's the time to join a union, if I've not been in one before'. And our membership is certainly growing among those engaged or employed by organisations, who have been affected by these kinds of cuts and losses." 

Different Politics

Caroline acknowledges that the Scottish Government has a greater appreciation of the value of arts and culture than Westminster. She also believes the Scottish Government has a greater respect for trade unions.

"I do think there's more engagement with the trade unions," she says, adding that the MU, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC), Equity, BECTU, the NUJ, Writers' Guild for Great Britain, the Scottish Artists' Union and the Scottish Playwrights now regularly convene to meet the Scottish Government.

"So there's now a significant group of us that meet on a monthly basis with Scottish Government officials to raise issues," she says.

To contact the Scotland and Northern Ireland office, email Caroline at glasgow@themu.org or phone 0141 341 2960

Thinking Differently

Rigid rules and traditions within music education and the music industry can have a devastating impact on people who identify as neurodiverse. So what can be done to support neurodivergence among music students and musicians?

Report by Glyn Mon Hughes

Imagine a world in which musicians across the ages had always obeyed the rules. There would be no Mozart, no Miles Davis, no Billie Holiday, no Beatles and no David Bowie. The list goes on and on. The reality is that only by breaking rules can truly innovative music be created. This may be welcome news to neurodiverse students and performers who frequently work in rigid, rule-bound environments. But while some may cope well, others may experience anxiety, ostracism, the crushing of ambition, even discrimination.

What is Neurodiversity?

The study of such negative experiences is what led to the concept of 'neurodiversity', a word coined by Australian sociologist Judy Singer in 1998 and used to describe the way people experience and interact with the world in different ways. It suggests that there is no 'right' way of thinking, learning or behaving and that differences should not be viewed as deficits, but rather seen as strengths and talents. ADHD, autism, dyspraxia and dyslexia all fall within the range of neurodiversity.

"We sometimes think music is experimental but, in reality, it can be quite rigid in traditions and approach," says John Shortell, MU Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

"We do things in a certain way and that's not changed for centuries." That might be especially so in education. "It's essential to look at approaches to neurodiversity from an educational perspective. How do we set up students and teachers so as to include everyone? How do we give neurodiverse students the skills to be able to work in the industry in a way they can understand them?"

John explains that research has indicated there is an over-representation of neurodiverse people working in creative industries in general.

"While we ask about disability when we monitor members, we don't specifically ask about neurodiversity. Often, it's in day-to-day conversations that members say they are neurodiverse," he says. "That makes us think about how we communicate. Are we communicating in a way that everyone will be able to consume that information? Is it suitable for neurodiverse as well as neurotypical members?"

Challenging Traditional Concepts

Dr Tony Lloyd of the ADHD Foundation reports that we are living in a changing world: "The neurodiversity movement is challenging our traditional concepts of intelligence, ability and potential that have classified those 1.4bn humans with either dyslexia, autism, ADHD, dysgraphia and dyscalculia (or a combination of these differences) as 'disordered' or somehow 'less than' that 80% classified as 'neurotypical'."

Lloyd refers to human dignity and a right to self-determination, respect and inclusion, noting that "neurodiversity is a concept whose time has come". While equality and inclusion of race, sexual orientation, class and culture heralded major shifts in the

"All it means is that my brain functions differently"

John Shortell

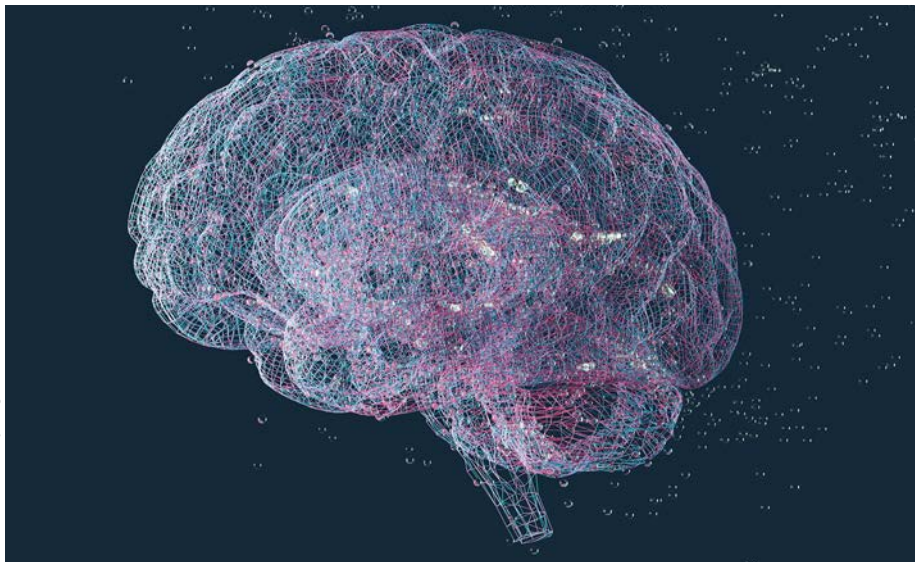


Photo: Boris SV / Getty Images

A Bigger Issue

Neurodiversity includes a range of conditions. For years, the focus was solely on ADHD – attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder – which remains one of the most common conditions in the neurodiverse grouping. Other conditions include autism, dyslexia, dyscalculia, obsessive compulsive disorder or OCD, Tourette's syndrome and dyspraxia.

Researchers at New York University found as many as 75% of people with neurodivergent conditions go undiagnosed. Worldwide, it is estimated that 1.4bn people live with neurodiversity while it is thought up to 20% of the UK population is neurodivergent. Universal Music's Creative Differences project found, in the creative industries, that percentage was likely to be at least double the UK estimate. Another study, by the Association for Electronic Music, found 58% of respondents living with a neurodiverse condition, something particularly prevalent in performers of dance music.

Yet the vast majority of workplaces are designed for neurotypical people and, according to Creative Differences' findings, nearly 80% of companies did not see adapting their working patterns to accommodate neurodiversity as a priority, with most unsure whether there were any policies in place at all. Maybe that's why the University of Cambridge Autism Research Centre estimates that between 60% and 85% of people with autism are unemployed.



Left: Florence Welch was diagnosed with both dyslexia and dyscalculia in her youth. Below: MU officers John Shortell and Rose Delcour-Min both identify as neurodiverse

understanding of society and individuals, acceptance of neurodiversity is “reframing our understanding of intelligence, ability and potential,” he writes.

How Does Neurodiversity Affect Me?

Sometimes, people don't disclose their neurodiversity because of the reaction they may get. John, who is neurodiverse, explains: “I generally don't tell people I am neurodiverse. If I do, people can start treating you differently. Attitudinal barriers and assumptions about what terms like neurodiversity mean can often be the hardest barriers to overcome.

“All it means is my brain functions differently. I may do things differently or I may need extra time. It doesn't mean I do them better or worse but I might need things communicated differently. It is not always helpful to say I have, for instance, dyslexia as people have a preconceived idea of what it is. It will be different for every dyslexic person. Sometimes it's not that people are actively or knowingly being discriminatory. It's quite often a lack of awareness.”

Rose Delcour-Min, Education, Health and Wellbeing Officer at the MU, who is also



Photos: Joanna Dudderidge

neurodivergent, explains the problems faced by neurodiverse students. “I would categorise the barriers in two ways,” she says. “One can be emotional – your self-esteem can be really impacted. If people aren't aware of different learning styles or don't think about what a student might need, they won't consider how a student will learn in the best way. Lack of self-esteem and confidence can be a massive barrier when you don't know what you need to help you learn, you don't know how to ask for help and teachers say they might not have the knowledge or the resources to support those needs.

“The other barrier is that being neurodivergent is common among creative people as their brains are very good at thinking ‘outside the box’ and approaching things in a different way. They are often incredibly gifted in music. It has been a massive task to understand how to break down that barrier, especially for adults.”

Within education contexts, neurodiversity has often been framed from what Dr Lloyd called ‘a deficit-based classification of special →

“Early intervention and support makes a massive difference”

Rose Delcour-Min

educational needs’ or ‘learning difficulties’ Those categories apply to 12.2% of children in England, but neurodiverse children do not feature in that percentage, leading to what Lloyd suggested would cause ‘isolation, stigma and unrealised potential’. He called for a focus on a ‘strength-based pedagogy that nurtures capabilities, talents and a recognition of individual interests that feed our reward-activated neurology’.

Neurodivergence In Education

That may mean learning support for neurodiverse students. But, suggests Delcour-Min, there are many pre-conceptions. “People think support is expensive, time-consuming or very specialist,” she says.

“A lot of things that would help are quite simple. It can be quite cheap, even free, and giving someone help can be absolutely transformative. A student being labelled as disruptive, or difficult, is a symptom of frustration at not being involved. Early intervention and support makes a massive difference in adult life.

“An awareness of the ways different brains work is very helpful, and a curiosity as to what would help instead of focusing on the fact their participation is difficult can transform that experience into a student who blossoms. Hopefully, that is also rewarding for the teacher.”

It is also better to ask what someone wants rather than assume. “What you assume to be right may not make any difference,” notes Delcour-Min. Doing things differently, therefore, appears to be very much part of the agenda.

“We primarily work with emerging musicians from a range of backgrounds and with a range of issues,” says Philip Flood, Director of Sound Connections, a charity committed to providing all young people with high quality music-making opportunities.

Photo: Hill Street Studios / Getty Images



Finding new ways to work and learn together can be hugely beneficial for everybody on a project

“We need to know what people’s needs are and support them. We need to accept intersectionality as there are a range of different aspects of neurodiversity which need to be supported, and people can often have several conditions.

“For those who have disclosed they are on the autistic spectrum, we simply have to say ‘but that is who you are’. There’s lots we can do. For those who are dyslexic or autistic, we may need to provide them with music a few weeks earlier or in a different format. We can change the nature of the rehearsal or performance. If it was somebody who was visually challenged, we’d not think twice about what we could do. Why can’t we do it for neurodiverse people?”

Different Ways Of Learning

At the National Open Youth Orchestra, where 80% of musicians have a disability, players are involved in choosing repertoire, commissioning and contributing their views during rehearsals. Auditions can also be carried out at a candidate’s home, if need be, and musical learning resources are produced in a variety of formats as well as standard notation. This includes customised scores and audio recordings.

“I couldn’t have begun my extraordinary journey if I hadn’t been a member of NOYO,” says percussionist Leo Long. “NOYO were always understanding, giving the opportunity for a neurodivergent musician to learn music to a high standard. Also, I was able to master four new songs from the movie *I Used To Be Famous* in a very short time. Please never give up your dream.”

The MU works closely with the ADHD Foundation. An initial three webinars aimed at the membership were arranged, all well over-subscribed. People attended because they thought they might be neurodivergent, already knew they were, or thought they knew people who were. The webinars looked at how neurodiverse colleagues and music students could be better supported, with a special focus on neurodiverse burnout.

“Dr Tony talked about neurodiversity burn-out as it is something we will all suffer at some point,” says John Shortell, “especially in the music industry where you are often working

Anna Neale is surprised that neurodiversity is labelled as a disability. "I'd argue I'm higher functioning," she says

Think Inclusively

Anna Neale is a creator, academic and industry professional. "I'm surprised neurodiversity is labelled a disability," she says. "I'd argue I'm higher functioning. I see things crystally, emotional response as logical – and it's hard to be judged. Society considers people as linear objects, but we're all complex and individual.

"We need to normalise that everyone is different and not wrapped in cotton wool. I feel like a lab rat at times, especially when someone says 'you've done so well, despite your difficulties'.

"If you have ADHD, you're seen as being lazy, bad. But if neurodiverse, life is more difficult and expensive. The music industry is ahead when it comes to acceptance, but companies need to encourage an inclusive culture. I'm a multi-tasking entrepreneur and won't walk into a setting and say 'I am different'. I'd like to be asked 'How's it going today?' Anything you need?'. That's because there are days when my brain just does not come online."

freelance and say yes to everything because that is how you support yourself and you don't want to lose an opportunity."

John also suggests that Covid was the pivot to reassess how we do everything. "Some disabled people had asked about doing rehearsals through Zoom, or changing rehearsal schedules for various different reasons," he said. "We'd suggested these ideas for years but people were just not picking up. Suddenly they realised these things could work.

"Now we need to create spaces where neurodiverse musicians can flourish. In music education, it is important for members who are teachers to understand there are multiple ways in which we can learn music, teach music or impart that knowledge. It is all about responding to students individually. We want to provide members with the tools and

Lewis Capaldi has been very upfront about his Tourette's and how it affects his work



resources to be able to revisit their teaching practice to accommodate those students and to give neurodiverse people the skills to advocate for themselves."

How The MU Is Helping

The Union's Access Rider was designed in conjunction with the Disabled Members' Network. Access requirements can be communicated in an easy, effective way and can be used by neurodiverse people as well as those with any kind of impairment or disability. While discrimination against anyone needing additional assistance is a rarity, the Access Rider will open up conversations.

The MU Members' Conference last October led to a review of all Union processes to ensure they are accessible to neurodivergent people. There will also be a new neurodiversity hub on the Musicians' Union website where members will be able to access webinar sessions with additional information on routes to diagnosis, managing neurodiversity burnout, ways to support neurodiverse colleagues and methods for neurodiverse members to look after themselves.


Times are changing. But only by continuing to challenge entrenched parameters in music education and the music industry can those identifying as neurodiverse be empowered to flourish in the future. 

Photo: Nicky Thomas 2023

Photo: Andrew Chin / Getty Images



Tour de Force

Scottish five-piece Vlure are forging a reputation across Europe for their intense and emotional live performances. Here, they speak to *The Musician* about crafting their cathartic, genre-defying sound

Profile by Katie Nicholls

Honest, emotional, intense: three adjectives commonly applied to the live performances of Vlure – and we’d like to add ‘urgent, anthemic and impassioned’ to the list. Vlure have just been nominated for BBC Scotland Introducing Act of the Year and while they’re receiving applause and credits for standout performances at, among others, Pitchfork Paris, Cabaret Vert and The Great Escape, they are undeniably a slippery outfit in terms of definition. When the MU dials in for a relaxed chat with singer Hamish Hutcheson (on his lunchbreak in the Fred Perry shop in Glasgow), and guitarist and programmer, Conor Goldie, it becomes clear that challenging genre tropes is at the heart of Vlure, who cleverly craft post-punk, proto-techno and industrial-tinged 90s rave into tracks that are packed with hooks.

“Playing with genre can be fun, but bursting the bubble of genres can be even more fun,” says Conor. “People pigeonholed us at first as post punk, which we love and power to everyone in that scene – it’s amazing and it’s kicking off right now – but it’s maybe not who we are. It might shock people from those heavy post-punk shows to know that now we’re getting in the van and putting on Charli XCX,” he laughs. “We wanted to cast the net wider and not be afraid of casting the net wider.”

“Glasgow just bleeds creativity and you have to believe in what you’re doing up here”

Hamish Hutcheson

Born And Bred

Both Hamish and Conor alongside second guitarist and Conor’s brother, Niall, grew up in Glasgow – what they say is a “deeply inspiring place to be”. They are joined by Dutch duo Alexandra Pearson on vocals and synths and Carlo Kriekaard on drums and production. Pre-Vlure, Conor was busy setting up parties and putting on bands in small venues around the city when he met Hamish and drummer Carlo, who were both playing in punk outfits in Glasgow.

Conor and Hamish recall those days of spit and sawdust venues, sticky floors and late-night gigs as a time of intense creativity and energy. A stew of genres – punk, techno, country and rap – swilling around with artists finding inspiration in each other’s music. It was a breeding ground for musicians to feed into broader influences, which has influenced Vlure’s fluid sound. “When we were starting out, we were very focused on post punk, but even then there were elements of techno,” Conor considers, “and over the past couple of years we’ve had time to distil that. We’re into everything from hardcore punk to heavy dance music to pop, nothing’s off the table when we’re in the studio.”

Glasgow has a reputation for sporting the toughest of crowds. “It’s the city where comedians come to die,” reminds Hamish. This tough exterior is, however, simply a litmus test for authenticity, Hamish explains: “Glasgow just bleeds creativity and you have to believe in what you’re doing up here. Glasgow is, for a better expression, a no-bullshit city. If you’re being false or untrue you’ll get pulled out up here,” he warns. “If you can show you believe in what you’re doing then people believe in you and they’ll give you that leg up. It’s a community driven city, it’s a very →



Singer Hamish Hutcheson's live presence and profound lyrics fuel the intensity of the band's performance

“Every time we step on that stage we leave absolutely everything out there”

Conor Goldie



passionate place and everyone wants you to succeed, but you have to show you're being honest with what you're doing.”

Take It To The Stage

Having learnt their craft in probably one of the toughest cities to earn your stripes, Vlure have emerged as a tour de force onstage. Their live shows are intense and emotional. The band dig deep to find ways to connect on a level with their audiences, leaving reviewers scrabbling around in the thesaurus for alternatives to describe Vlure's heartfelt passion. “Vlure stole the show,” says *Clash Music* of Vlure's recent performance at SXSW in Austin, “with huge, profoundly ambitious anthems, crafted in sweat-pit venues but destined to end up in arenas.”

“Every time we step on that stage we leave absolutely everything out there,” says Conor. “It's cathartic, honest, exciting,” adds Hamish whose live presence and profound lyrics drive

the powerhouse of Vlure's intense live performances. “We put so much into it it's nothing short of a ball of energy for however long we're on stage.”

The band's driven, emotional shows have given Vlure a reputation throughout Europe, gaining notoriety and a solid fanbase in The Netherlands, France and Germany. “They really get it in Europe,” agrees Hamish. “With our dance influences and their dance culture I think they're really honing in on us. There seems to be a market for us and real passion from the audiences.”

A headline slot at Pitchfork Paris saw Vlure play to a capacity crowd, and it was a memorable moment for Conor. “There was a queue down the street,” he recalls, “and there were people watching through the windows. As soon as we came onstage the whole crowd were giving everything from the first song. It was one of those moments when you just look at each other and it all felt a very long way from a wee studio on the Clydeside.”

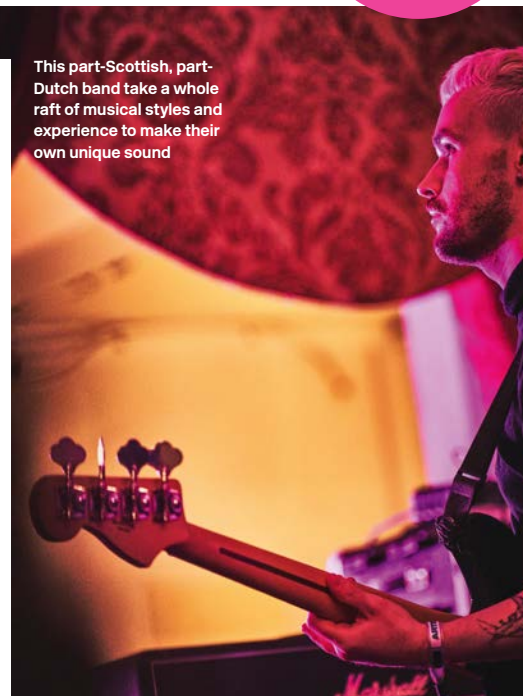
Studio In Focus

While onstage is where the band feel most at home, Vlure aim to retain that raw emotion and impulsive drive when they enter the studio. Songs are largely written in a small home-based space before being taken to a Glasgow studio to be engineered. The foundations of the songs are kickstarted by Conor and Carlo on Logic or Ableton. Niall and Alex will then get “stuck into it” explains Conor, who says “it's where they shine the brightest”. During this process Hamish sits by and writes lyrics, as he finds inspiration as the music is being formed. “While they're making the music, I'll be listening,” says Hamish, “and there'll be a bit that'll catch my attention and I'll think, ‘Yep I can get a hook over that.’”

The pursuit of spontaneity is always at the top of the agenda for the band, who are not exactly prone to chin-stroking contemplation. “It's not like someone writes it on an acoustic



This part-Scottish, part-Dutch band take a whole raft of musical styles and experience to make their own unique sound



What The MU Means To Us

As Vlure prepare to take on the stages of Europe this summer, their membership of the MU is as important as ever. “When we first got together, Conor said, ‘Join the MU because you get insurance,’” says Hamish. “One of our pals got their van broken into, so it was a real warning sign when we first started touring,” he explains. “Obviously, there are a million benefits to being an MU member,” adds Conor. “For example, I keep meaning to get the hearing check. It’s also about being responsible. When we first started doing this we were like, ‘We’re going to do this as a professional career’. There were blinkers on and tunnel vision in that respect and we wanted to set everything up in place to do this as professionally as possible. Being part of a union is super important in that aspect.”

guitar and then we play it live into a room. That doesn’t work for us,” says Conor. “We’d just end up jamming for hours. It’s nicer to have a vocal hook, or a synth hook or your topline.” Hamish adds: “If we spend too much time on it we just end up in a rut, in a loop, and the morale goes down. Usually, the best ideas come out when you just scrap an idea and move on and come up with something new. When you take the pressure off.”

“You can get too wrapped up in the semantics of looking back,” agrees Conor. “‘Could this be more polished? Could you change this chord, this lyric?’. It doesn’t always mean it’s going to be a better piece of music. Sometimes getting down what you have in that moment is the best way to do it. At the end of the day music is a form of human communication. If you get too wrapped up in your art and start over-distilling it, you lose that line of communication.”

It’s a formula that’s working out well for Vlure in 2023, whose newest single *This Fantasy* is

out now. Hamish says they’re “forever writing an album”. There are no plans on a release at the moment “but there is new music in the bank, which could be out over the summer”. In the meantime, take a listen to Vlure’s 2022 EP *Euphoria* to get a taste of what the *NME* described as “industrial bangers”.

Memorable Moments

While we hold on for more releases from Vlure, the band are excited to announce a six-date summer tour of Europe that will take them from Holland to the Czech Republic via Berlin, landing with a show in Otherlands festival, Scotland and what promises to undoubtedly be a memorable homecoming for the Scottish audience. With the lunch break over, Hamish gets ready to pack up in the staff room and head back to reality but there’s time for a final moment of insight. As a band creating memorable live memories for their audiences, which iconic gigs do they wish they’d witnessed? “I would have loved to go to The Prodigy’s first ever show at Glastonbury,” says Conor. “If I could teleport I would be there at that moment. So inspiring.” Hamish? “An album we listen to a lot at the moment is *Faithless – Live At Alexander Palace*. It’s not even that long ago but, God, I’d have loved to have been there.” 



A song's feel and vision can completely change when it gets to the mixing desk, so a musician must work with a producer who understands their work

Photo: ThePalmer / Getty Images

MUSIC PRODUCTION TIPS: CREATIVE DOS & DON'TS

As most musicians know, production is pivotal to creating great music. Here, Neil Crossley speaks to three music producers who reveal their creative approaches, plus their dos and don'ts in the recording studio

When it comes to creating bold and innovative music in the recording studio, music production is key. As most musicians know, a good producer can be sonic gold dust – adding dynamism, sparkle and even completely reimagining your entire style and sound. But whether you are working with a producer or producing the music yourself, there are some key pointers that can help musicians to realise and surpass their own expectations.

The first thing to remember is that no amount of production will help if you don't have great material or the early stirrings of something unique. It's also worth noting that a producer needs to like what you do and feel they can add something meaningful to it.

"It may sound obvious but if you don't feel really excited by the material and the people involved, it can end up being an uphill struggle," says Ali Chant, a Bristol-based producer, engineer and musician who has worked with artists such as PJ Harvey, Katie J Pearson, Gruff Rhys and Mark Ronson.

Communicate Your Vision

Chant highlights the importance of finding shared reference points when working with an artist or band. "I tend to look at this like I'm establishing a language that everyone

"The kind of vocal performances I adore are the ones that feel raw, intimate and vital"

Ali Chant, producer & musician

understands and can use to explain the unexplainable," he says. "Some artists are very visual or mood orientated and some come with playlists bursting at the seams with records they love. As you get further into the project you often find that the shared language develops and becomes more instinctive."

Chant tries not to impose any rules in the studio and remains open to new approaches. If he is working with a well-rehearsed band the first thing he does is to set them up to play live, even if they end up overdubbing everything. That way, says Chant, he can hear how all the parts interact and get a good overview of the arrangement. "I find it helpful to be able to tweak performances in real time rather than rely on editing and post-production. If it's feeling great, then you can capture it fast," he says, the main aim being to create "excitement and an emotional connection".

Recording Live

It's a view shared by Olga Fitzroy, a recording and mix engineer at AIR Studios in London and an executive director at the Music Producers Guild (MPG), who has worked on records for artists such as Coldplay, Foo Fighters and Muse, as well as on film scores for composers including Hans Zimmer and Dario Marianelli.

"There's nothing quite like capturing an amazing live performance, even if you go back afterwards and polish or replace certain bits," says Fitzroy. "There's a certain magic to a bunch of musicians playing together that's difficult to recreate."

Fitzroy stresses the importance of deciding the precise tempo early on. "Changing the tempo of a song by just a few bpm can be

really key. I often get bands to send me phone demos from the rehearsal room and I muck around with tempos and arrangements in Pro Tools and get them to try and nail those down before we even get into the recording studio."

Fitzroy says that sometimes limiting your sonic options can yield strong creative results. She cites as an example mixing the Tom Hodge-composed music for the 2022 ITV series *The Ipcress File*, which is set in the 1960s. "We decided to only use gear that would have been around at the time, so it can be fun and effective to limit your technical palette like that sometimes."

The Best Vocal Performance

Capturing a great performance is also pivotal when it comes to vocals. Fitzroy generally does A/B comparisons between mics when working with a singer for the first time to see what suits them best. Like many, she recognises the sonic benefits of a great valve mic in the studio, although notes that "Bono famously used an S58". "I think it's important to remember that it's about capturing the best performance, not necessarily about the best mic or gear."

Ali Chant finds vocal recording techniques "infinitely fascinating". He generally uses a Shure SM7 and/or a Telefunken U47 for vocals, with dynamic and condenser mics on the kick and snare. "The kind of vocal performances I adore the most are the ones that feel raw, intimate and vital to me. I try not to do too many takes in a row and am open to using demo or guide vocals if they give the feeling of excitement I'm after... That said, I do sometimes use Melodyne, de-essers,



“There’s nothing quite like capturing an amazing live performance”

Olga Fitzroy

Photo: Blake Ezra Photography



THE NATURAL FEEL

Mika Sellens believes that too much attention is given to achieving impeccable vocal pitch in the studio, adding that vocal pitch is “not absolute” and that the way a vocalist moves between notes, or hits notes slightly sharp or flat, is part of the character of their voice. It’s important to keep this in mind and not tune everything exactly, she says.

“It’s about getting a feel for what’s important for a specific voice you are working with. It has to feel natural. Other things I think about are vocal doubles, BVs, and the balance of reverb and delay to achieve just the right presence for the vocal in the overall production. I like my vocals front and centre and high in the mix.”

Like many producers, Sellens frequently comps vocals to encompass the best moments from various takes. “I like to manually clip-gain or automate volume in relation to effects too, so I can control how particular notes hit a reverb for example. I do this as well as using compression. I manually pitch-adjust most things, too.”

mouth declacker and a fair amount of compression, and always ride the final vocal pass by hand before I mix down. But I’m trying to keep these processes invisible, so the listener feels as connected to the performance as possible.”

How Technology Helps

The staggering array of software plugins and hardware on the market offers colossal sonic potential for producers and engineers. Popular recording techniques in recent years have included: parallel compression; sidechain compression; reverse reverb; gated snare; stuttered vocals and pitch-shifting/time-stretching vocals. Another common one is the so-called ‘Abbey Road reverb trick’, which adds high frequency presence to push sounds forward in the mix.

“I think I’ve used all of the above at least once,” says Ali Chant. “EQ and filtering of reverb sends can be great. Sometimes you want brightness and sibilance coming through and sometimes you want your reverbs dark and in the background. Some reverbs have an inherent tonality to them as well. All colours can have their place in music production.”

Like Chant, Mika Sellens is well-versed in all these production techniques. Sellens is a London-based producer, songwriter, composer and engineer whose work encompasses elements of synth-driven electro, contemporary pop, and chilled-out soul, with a heavy dose of retro drum sounds and sampled beats. Sellens is an executive director of the Music Producers Guild (MPG), a senator for the Ivors’ Academy and is passionate about working to bring lasting positive change to the UK music industry and supporting more women and gender minorities into music production and engineering roles.

“Reverse reverb can be a useful tool at transitions to add tension,” says Sellens, “I nearly always use some element of sidechain compression to help the mix, but I also use it on synths for specific effect too. Pitch-shifting and time-stretching vocals is another specific vocal effect. I’ll often create high and low vocal doubles layers using pitch shift and have them low in the mix. At other times, I use these techniques to create a specific vocal sample sound.”

Sonic Landscape

Mika Sellens’s sessions often start from scratch, with a songwriting session. It’s all about getting a feel for the sonic landscape,

Top 5 Tips

Working with producers

1

Communicate Your Vision

Give a producer as much insight as possible about your influences and creative objectives. A producer needs shared reference points when working with an artist or band.

2

Sharing Copyright

Establish an early agreement with a producer about whether they will be seeking to share any copyright. Specimen production agreements are available at theMU.org

3

Just Do It

There is no right or wrong way to do anything in the studio, and if you are producing your own music there is no better way to learn than to do.

4

Trust Your Ears

If you create the music then you will instinctively know whether something is working or not. Have faith in your own instincts. They are probably correct.

5

Start With Something Great

It may sound obvious but remember that no amount of production will help if you don't have great material or the early stirrings of something unique in the first place.

LESS IS MOST DEFINITELY MORE

Some of the greatest productions ever use a lot of restraint and space. If something doesn't enhance and elevate a track then leave it out.

Photo: © Sonya Hurtado



Left: Olga Fitzroy, a recording and mix engineer at the prestigious AIR Studios in London. Above: Mika Sellens likes to start her productions from scratch with the writing. Right: Ali Chant, like many, agrees that less is more



Photo: Jess Mills

she says. Sellens says the ultimate aim is to create a production that best presents the song and the artist, and is a great listening experience sonically. "I think that a production should have a journey, and also a particular character that makes it feel original and specific to the artist and their work. Sonically, elements should blend well, but also provide interest and character."

As always, much of the power of great recordings comes from what producers and the artists decide to leave out. Less is most definitely more, and one of the simplest techniques to add light and shade is to simply drop out elements such as the bass or the kit at key points.

"Absolutely, some of the greatest productions exercise a lot of restraint and space," says Ali Chant. "Listen to mid-era Fleetwood Mac for example. Some of the massive songs actually have very little going on. Every part counts, it's not layered to bursting point and has room to breathe."

Advice For Aspiring Producers

When asked what advice they would give aspiring producers all three are adamant in their responses.

"The best piece of advice I was ever given is 'trust your ears' says Olga Fitzroy. "You don't need permission to have an opinion!"

Ali Chant advises up-and-coming producers to avoid convincing themselves that there is a right way or a wrong way to do anything.

"There are a lot of 'assumptions' on the internet, but there is no better way to learn than to do. All humans fall into habits, and if you're making music these can become part of your 'sound'. One of the best bits of advice I was ever given was to try and do at least one thing differently on every session."

Mika Sellens advises aspiring producers to not be afraid to experiment. Try things and see what works for you, says Sellens, and don't feel you have to use certain techniques just because others are.

"Make sure that the techniques you do use are enhancing your work, and that you are using them for a reason, or to create a specific effect. We are all continually learning, so don't be afraid to try things. Learn from the things that don't work as well as those that do, and use that knowledge to improve your process in the future." **mu**

TOP TIP

MU ADVICE FOR...

FUNCTION BAND DEPS

Recent disputes over depping out function band musicians have prompted the MU to remind members of their responsibilities, as Neil Crossley explains

For many working musicians, the use of deputies to fulfil engagements – a process better known as 'depping' – is an integral part of working life. It's a practice that has gone on for over a century, with theatre musicians in particular arranging or 'fixing' their own deps.

The depping system is an efficient method for musicians to organise themselves and ensure that an engagement is honoured when illness or other work commitments present themselves. But it can be a relatively informal and unregulated process, and for both musicians involved there are important practical and legal implications to consider.

Such implications have been brought into sharp focus recently by the MU's East & South East England Office. Regional Officer Tom Eagle and his colleagues have seen several disputes involving function band musicians depping out engagements.

The MU is keen to highlight the potential pitfalls of depping out gigs in the function band market and to advise members on how to avoid problems in the future.


Legal Liability

The first thing to note is that anyone depping out work – whether they are a band member or the bandleader – might be legally liable for the payment of that dep, says Tom, even if the band ends up not being paid. Many function band musicians incorrectly assume that payment in such cases is always the bandleader's responsibility, he says. When they discover the responsibility falls on them alone, it can come as a complete surprise.

"A lot of people do not understand that as soon as they dep someone out they're acting as a contractor," says Tom. "And that's what they are really shocked by. So if you're depping out a gig, make sure you are able to pay, in the event of a non-payment. We've had quite a lot of member versus member disputes where a dep hasn't been paid by the person who contracted them. And actually, if it came down to it, the person who arranged for them to dep would almost always be liable to pay."

Do You Have The Right To Use A Dep?

It's worth noting that there is no general right entitling all musicians to appoint a deputy whenever they want. If your contract doesn't mention it, do not assume you have the right to use a deputy. There may be specific terms in your engagement contract setting out



You may be depping a player in good faith, but be aware that you might be liable for their payment

who can appoint a deputy and how. This is often the case with permanent orchestras. As the MU's In-House Solicitor, Dawn Rodger encourages members to set out in writing exactly what has been agreed. This way, if needed, it can be used to evidence the terms of the arrangement between the musician depping out and the dep themselves. Dawn also advises that you make sure emails aren't just going one way, so if you send confirmation of your understanding of the agreement, make sure that the other person replies to confirm that they agree. "The terms of a contractual arrangement need to be agreed," says Dawn. "The important thing is to get whatever arrangements have been agreed in writing."

Get Written Evidence Of Agreements

Function bands will typically use the MU's L1 contract as the basis for their agreement with the client, and an L2 could be used as a written agreement between the person depping out and the dep. But realistically, any form of written exchange between the two parties, outlining what was agreed, can be used. "We've used things like WhatsApp and Facebook messages," says Tom Eagle. "Ultimately you just need to be able to prove



Photo: Hill Street Studios / Getty Images



CHOOSE WISELY

“Choose your dep wisely,” says Tom Eagle, MU Regional Officer for East & South East England. “If you are booking someone to dep for you, make sure they are fully aware of setlists, arrival and set-up times, dress code and so on. I spoke to a member who did a function dep and one of the band members had sent him the wrong setlist. So they ended up playing completely the wrong songs at this wedding, and obviously the client refused to pay. So make sure that any changes are always conveyed to other band members.”

Ultimately, says Tom, it's about being aware of your responsibilities when depping out work to other musicians. Failure to do so can be costly, he says, in both financial and legal terms.

“People just aren't aware of it,” he says. “They're not aware of their responsibilities. They just think they've passed on a gig to someone and while that might be the case most of the time, occasionally it goes wrong.”

that all the necessary elements of a contract have been agreed.” When it comes to determining the payment for a dep, it's worth noting that their fees may not be the same as for a regular band member. While many bands have regular depts lined up who may work for the same fees, if you need to bring in a last-minute dep who doesn't already know your repertoire, they may expect a higher fee for their time spent having to learn the new material.

Give The Client The Band They Booked

The whole process of hiring depts throws up another potential problem. Clients, such as couples planning their weddings, will often hire bands on the basis of the musicians that have impressed them live. Sometimes, it's a particular band member that has caught their attention. If it's an instrumental band, the client may have booked them primarily because they were impressed by the saxophonist. Or they may have been drawn by the talents of a particular singer. If that band then turns up with significantly different members, the client could understandably feel cheated.

“We had a case a few years ago where a client booked a band that they saw playing in a club because they wanted that singer,” explains

Tom Eagle. “The singer got offered a better gig so he depped his gig out and thought that the client wouldn't notice, because it was the same setlist. They turn up, it's not the singer that the client had booked so the client ended up suing the singer for 'loss of enjoyment'. It's more the case for singers – anyone who's named in the band – but basically if there are any changes at all to the line-up, make sure that the client is aware of that and is happy with that.”

The legal view was that fair compensation was the full cost of re-staging the wedding, explains Tom. “The member ended up settling out of court for less than the cost of re-staging the wedding, but it was still a very expensive mistake to make.”

Tell the Client About Line-up Changes

The MU's advice is to always make the client aware in advance if there are any changes to the line-up that they have booked. And once again, always get it in writing. WhatsApp messages, Facebook messages or emails will suffice as evidence of what was agreed. Band leaders will also use one of the MU's L1 contracts. “In that contract they might add a page of additional terms, such as rider requests and line-up changes,” explains Tom. “Some of the ones I've seen say 'If you're booking so-and-so band, they may dep out guitar, bass, keys or drums but they will be of the same standard'. It's always a good thing to make clients aware if that's the case, so that they know exactly what they're getting.”

Despite such assurances from the band there are sometimes instances when the wide use of depts impacts on the music provided at the event.

“Having a clause in the contract regarding the use of depts doesn't completely take away the problem, as of course the client could complain that the dep isn't of the same standard or some other issue might arise with the performance,” says Dawn. “Sometimes, too many depts are used and the band that performs is not used to playing together which can give rise to performance issues. No contractual clause can protect completely from the risk of a claim being brought against you. But if the client is happy to agree to the inclusion of one, then it's probably a good clause to include.” 🍷

ADVICE ON HOW TO... SEQUENCE AN ALBUM

Deciding which tracks should go where in the running order of an album can be pivotal. Here, two artists and one producer tell Neil Crossley what works for them...

In an era of digital streaming, the whole concept of listening to an album from start to finish might seem like an archaic pastime. But the impact of album sequencing – the order in which the tracks appear on an album – has not diminished for artists and their fans. Great sequencing can enhance and elevate an album, with each track complementing the other, adding dynamism and pace, and leading the listener smoothly on a musical journey.

Sequencing is the final creative decision before the album is mastered and will probably involve the producer and maybe the label or management. But it ultimately rests with the artist. Sequencing should be fun and that's how Nigel Pulsford, former guitarist with the band Bush remembers it. "It's a fun problem to confront. In my old band we would write the song titles down on pieces of card and try to get the sequence right that way first." But for many artists immersed in their own albums, it can be an arduous process.

"I never find it easy," says singer-songwriter Robert Vincent, who has worked with producer Ethan Johns on his last two albums. "With my album *In This Town You're Owned* (2020) Ethan had written the songs he thought were the strongest to record in no particular order with a back-up list, so the album pretty much went down as per the list, bar one song as far as I can remember. So that was pretty painless and also very organic."

A Subjective Process

It's worth noting that there are no rights or wrongs when it comes to sequencing an album. It's a subjective process, driven by the creative aims of the artist. But there are guidelines that it's worth observing when turning your collection of tracks into a coherent, single work of art. Whatever sequence you choose, the order should reflect the theme and emotion of the album and provide some kind of story or journey, whether that is lyrically, musically and/or emotionally. "I think it is important to try and take the listener on a journey, so pacing is essential to insert perspective into the flow," says Pulsford, who released his second solo album, *Losing Track* in January. It's a view echoed by Vincent. "I'm always trying to hold some sort of narrative myself," he says, "to create the best possible journey through the songs as I can."

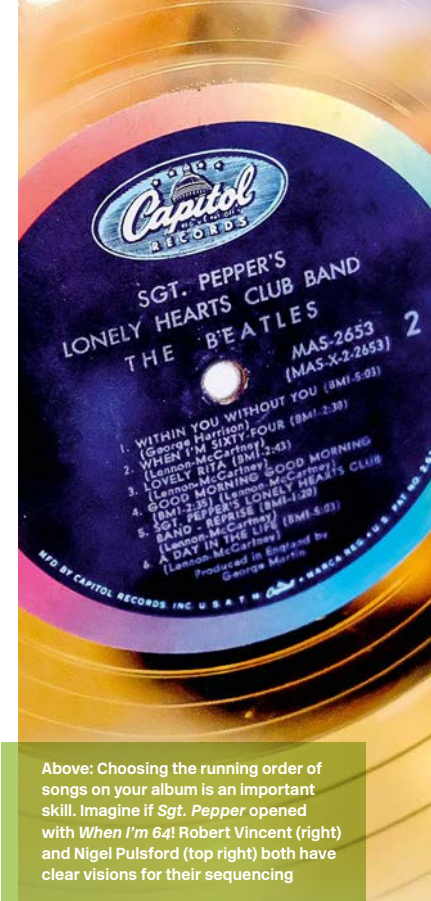
Natural Progression

Pacing and dynamics are integral to successful sequencing. Too much of the same thing quickly becomes boring. In many

ways, sequencing begins before you even record your first note, when you are selecting the tracks to include on the album. Strident, pacey tracks should be complemented by more intimate, reflective songs, and there should be a mix of time signatures and tempos across the album. Interludes and fades can be a useful tool in breaking up an album, but overusing them can, equally, disrupt the flow. The album should have a logical and natural progression, with each song complementing the next in a manner that elevates the overall experience, as Robert Vincent explains.

"Some songs need to be placed in a part of the album, say midway through the album, as you're hoping by this time the listener is invested enough to handle a longer song or more in-depth song, and then take them back into something more upbeat or lighter. Light and shade I think is key."

With vinyl now accounting for 55% of physical music formats in the UK, sequencing across two sides is also a consideration. The maximum running time of a 33rpm 12-inch album is 22 minutes per side. Anything longer



Above: Choosing the running order of songs on your album is an important skill. Imagine if *Sgt. Pepper* opened with *When I'm 64*? Robert Vincent (right) and Nigel Pulsford (top right) both have clear visions for their sequencing



Photos: Jonathan Stewart. © MU; Nicholas Hunt / Tim Mosenfelder / Getty Images



ESSENTIAL ADVICE

One common mistake is having too many songs in the same key. Most listeners will not be aware they are in the same key but they *will* notice it's all starting to sound the same. Equally, it's important to avoid using similar chord progressions on each track. "Always check the way one song goes into another," says Pulsford. "If one starts with the same chord that the previous song ended with then maybe the order should change. If you've got a long, intense song then it's good to have something lighter or less intense after, or before, to give perspective and relief even."

THE SECOND SONG

When it comes to packing a punch from the outset, another option is to open with a strong track that really sets the tone of the album, then place the potential big hit as the second track. This is what Fleetwood Mac did on *Rumours*, leading with the opener *Second Hand News* before launching into what is arguably their greatest ever song, *Dreams*.

than this will result in impaired audio quality. So anyone looking at a vinyl release will need to factor this in when sequencing their album.

"As it was all instrumental I tried to vary the feel throughout and approached it as a vinyl album as I intend to release it this way eventually," says Pulsford of his album *Losing Track*. "I edited down a couple of pieces so it would fit onto a single album without compromising audio quality. So I approached it as two sides, which helped in the sequencing."

The Opening Track

When it comes to discussion of sequencing albums, few subjects divide opinion quite like what to choose for your opening track. Certainly, the first song can set the tone for the rest of the album, so it's well worth spending time thinking long and hard about what your opening track should be. Music industry data suggests that the earlier a song appears on an album, the more likely a listener is to stream it. In recent years, the term 'skip rate' has been adopted to determine whether listeners make it through the first 30 seconds of a song. After that time, a stream will be registered for royalty purposes. So the objective is to keep the skip rate as low

as possible. With that in mind, many industry sources advise artists to "lead with your hit" – although it may not make for the most creative or fluid sequencing.

Grower Or Grabber?

"Opening with a hit seems a bit too easy and contrived to me, so I usually avoid that one," says Robert Vincent. "I lead with whatever seems to feel right. I think openers can be something that brings you in gently. Being a Pink Floyd fan, with their five minute intros into songs or instrumental intros, I've never really felt the urge to lead with a hit or lead track." But in an age of ever-shortened attention spans, it could make sound commercial sense.

"Of course, it's totally dependent on the intention of the album, and the genre," says Cameron Jenkins, producer, engineer, musician, songwriter and founder of Stranger Records, the first label to sign Lana Del Ray. Jenkins has also worked with Everything But The Girl, The Rolling Stones, The Verve, The Charlatans and John Cale among many others.

"A jazz album has different priorities to a pop album, which is going to top-load the singles. A singer-songwriter has a story to tell. But wasn't it only ever thus? With the amount of noise on streaming channels that you have to cut through, then I'll always put what I consider to be the best tracks at the top."

Albums As Art Forms

Like many, Robert Vincent recognises that the way people listen to records these days has changed with streaming. "And because of this the album has suffered as an art form in my opinion," he says. "More and more bands and artists think more in songs than albums, so therefore not really thinking about an album as a body of work. Myself and Ethan are very old school on the album as an art form, so we share most of the same feelings in that way."

On his latest album, *Barrier*, Vincent and producer Ethan Johns both worked on the sequencing. "Yeah, we passed it back and forth a bit," says Vincent, "although he's done it a few more times than me so I tend to heed his experience in the end." **MM**

Why I Joined The MU

Members explain why they value their Musicians' Union membership and how it connects with their working lives



MELISSA JAMES

Ahead of the release of my first record I joined the MU. Several years since that time and I am really glad I did. I have made countless phone calls to their London offices asking for advice on anything from releasing a record to getting advice on gigs and contracts. Through them, I have attended useful online sessions on funding and grant applications, networked with like-minded musicians and offered a workshop at one of their Members' events. If nothing else they are real people who have acted as a (very patient) friendly voice at the end of the phone. I remember feeling so grateful for their time and guidance when I first joined. My membership has proven itself beneficial time and again.

Melissa James is a Singer, Songwriter, Artist Performer, Activist and the creator of SING4SANE – a Big Sing and mental health initiative. Inviting members of the public to sing backing vocals alongside her at Caffe Nero in Heathrow, this pop-up event led to Melissa extending another invitation to join her at RAK Studios in London to record *Live Again* as a charity single with all sale proceeds going to the mental health charity, SANE. Melissa is currently working on material for a new album release and she is planning a large-scale Big Sing and performance to take place in 2024.

Photo: Christina Maseel



MARIANNE SICE

I've always been passionate about social change and in recent years have been lucky enough to have been given the opportunity to use my voice in a way that has been valuable for specific communities. So bringing my experience, knowledge and expertise to the MU felt like the next logical step. Recognising how my voice and contributions have made an impact in previous roles, I have been able to contribute to the women's and young people's networks as well as the MU Delegate Conference. I aspire that the recommendations myself and other MU members give will one day make a difference to those struggling to find support in the music sector.

Marianne Sice is a musician and interdisciplinary artist from north-east England. Marianne's work and practice has evolved to explore and raise awareness of social issues (e.g. specifically mental health, women's rights and the embodied experience of emotions and trauma) through the forms of performance, sound art, video art and projection. Alongside developing her artistic practice, Marianne is currently working with other artists as a mentor to empower them to navigate the music industry in a trauma-informed, person-centred way that caters to their mental and physical needs as well as working with young people who want a career in the music industry.

Photo: Joseph O'Connor

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

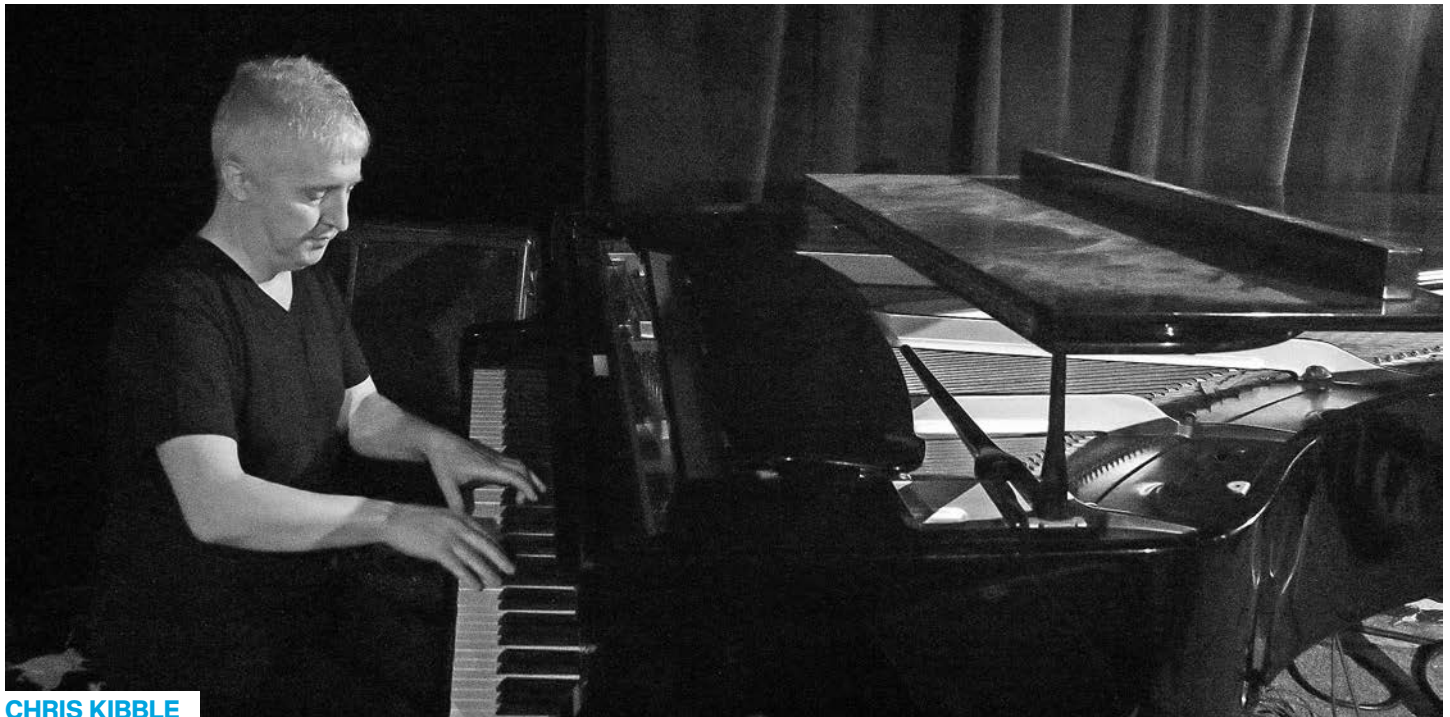
We try to help as many members as possible, and preference is given to members not previously reviewed.



Reviewer: Roy Delaney

reviews

A look at some of the new albums, EPs and downloads released by MU members for 2023, together with links for more information on the featured artists



CHRIS KIBBLE

43

Photo: Mamos Felice Art

The very definition of a musician's musician, Chris is a pianist, arranger, composer and tutor. Playing sessions with acts like Terry Callier, Snowboy and Geno Washington, he's also got a massive file of library music behind him, and is a well-respected music tutor, teaching piano and composition at some prestigious schools.

But alongside that he frequently releases albums of his own work, across a refreshing range of genres. But surely nobody could have predicted that he was going to unveil a collection of harpsichord improvisations based around the motifs of classic David Bowie songs from the seventies. As it turns out, it's an absolutely terrific idea.

Riffing over programmed orchestral parts, Chris takes the underlying melody line and improvises all over it, drawing you in to its baroque style and making you listen hard to drag out the Bowie references. And it's such unabashed good fun, that pretty much anybody can enjoy it. Even the cover's a hand-drawn play on the original. Great stuff!



» CHRIS KIBBLE Ziggy Played Harpsichord

Chris had the beautifully barmy idea of converting eleven of David Bowie's finest songs from the early 70s into baroque harpsichord works. It really shouldn't work, but boy is this both fabulous and fun.

chriskibble.com

instrumental



>> UNFURL Sleeping Giants

Manchester-based violinist Olivia Moore rolls out her *Unfurl* project once more, taking in gentle instrumental sounds of many flavours, adding hints of the East, touches of jazz and more contemporary beats into a heady and exciting mix.

oliviolin.com



>> ALESSANDRA POMPILI Alan Hovhaness Piano Works Vol 2

Championing the work of a lesser-known Armenian-American composer, Alessandra shows the deft touches and accomplished feel of a musician with vast talent and experience.

alessandrapompili.com



>> STELIOS KYRIAKIDIS Agalia

Beautiful solo guitar work from this Greek-born virtuoso, fusing the classical with more modern themes from folk and film music. An ideal soundtrack to both sunny days and stormy nights. Genuinely beautiful.

tinyurl.com/stelkyriakidis



>> AYAKO FUJIKI Four Seasons Of Japan For Four Hands

A delightful collection of timeless piano playing, where Ayako duets with herself using Steinway's newest technology. Each piece evokes feelings of the year's four seasons.

ayakofujiki.com

ambient



>> FIONA SOE PAING Sand, Silt, Flint

Inspired by the folklore and landscape of the North East of Scotland, each song here connects to a specific location. The gentle, almost dreamlike treatment of the songs marks this album out as a distinct folk outlier, and quite different from anything else in the genre.

fionasoepaing.bandcamp.com/album/sand-silt-flint-3



>> SARAH MCQUAID If We DUB Any Deeper It Could Get Dangerous

Taking what was already a smashing slice of ambient folk, Tim Norman of trance legends UVX adds his own dreamy swirls to this cautionary tale about what humans are doing to the Earth.

sarahmcquaid.com

pop rock



VOLDO Silky

A deep remix by Invisible Squirrel from their *Melting Pot* album, this dreamy track evokes feelings of The Beta Band and Toploader at their best. File under silky summer sounds.

tinyurl.com/voldo



ROBBIE CAVANAGH Tough Love

A winning collection of country-tinged rock songs with sublime steel guitar, from the rousing *Thinkin' Of Leaving* to the more delicate end pieces of *Hey, It's Alright* and *Look Out Below*.

robbiecavanagh.co.uk



GRICE Polarchoral

The complex swirling beats of the opener *Involution* soon make way for more traditional inspirational pop songs, all underpinned by Grice's unique and welcoming voice.

gricemusic.co.uk

STAND OUT

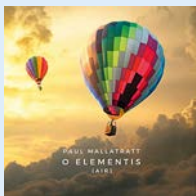
This month's highlights include a delirious female empowerment pop tune, and a collection of beautifully chilled and swirling pastoral electronica



KALA CHUNG Run With Wolves

South Bristol's official happiness champion delights us once more with a huge slab of atmospheric pop. Delirious beats are counterpointed by swirling electronic sounds, while Kala's singular voice emotes a fine empowerment ballad.

kalachung.com



PAUL MALLATRATT O Elementis (Air)

The first in a series of albums exploring the four classical Greek elements, bass player Paul turns to electronic means to deliver gentle swirls of sonic sculpture that evoke birds on the wing and a countryside in bloom.

paulmallatratt.bandcamp.com/album/o-elementis-air

jazz

**MAMA TERA**
The Summoned

Big bustling soundscapes and deep smooth jazz stylings flood through this release on the seminal Acid Jazz label. That's a company that knows what it's talking about, and these boys are no slouches. Love to see them live. tinyurl.com/mamaterra

**GAZ HUGHES TRIO**
Beboptical Illusion

Ace drummer Gaz gathers his trusty gang of Andrezej Baranek on piano and Ed Harrison on double bass to swing forth on eight red hot originals. The title track and the beaty *Sticks & Stones* stand out, but they're all fab. gazhughesmusic.com

**GABRIEL LATCHIN**
Viewpoint

Gabriel's fourth long-player is perhaps his finest. His first to consist of entirely original pieces, the work here shows of both his skills of creation and his deft musicality. Rampaging opener *Says Who* is our fave. gabriellatchin.com

singer/songwriter

**KIM EDGAR**
Consequences

A selection box of delights here. Kim's warm yet vulnerable voice explains tales of sadness and positivity in a variety of styles, from the gentlest of piano ballads to big and beaty filmic sweeps. Great stuff. kimedgar.com

**PAM MESSER**
Grovers Garden

DIY in the best possible way, Pam recorded this album herself using a microphone and an iPad. This gives it a lovely intimate feel on gentle tunes like *I'll Never Win*, and more driving rock affairs like *Get Out My Head*. pammesser.co.uk

**ROISIN QUINN**
Concrete And Trees

Lured in by a sparse piano prelude, as soon as the beats kick in we're met with a warmer, more rootsy urban edge, with Roisin's warm voice guiding us around what feel like tales of her daily life. roisinquinn.co.uk

folk & acoustic

**HARBOTTLE AND JONAS**
Saving The Good Stuff Volume One

Rootsy pastoral Englishness wrapped up in a delicate yet uplifting package. Opener *Cornwall My Home* is a delightful treat while a glacial cover of Joy Division's *Love Will Tear Us Apart* will knock your socks off. harbottleandjonas.com

**SEANY CLARKE**
First Aid Kit

Conversational and wry story songs, stripped back to just a guitar and a breathy voice that draws you into the tale. Fusing elements of soul, folk and jazz, but making a sound all his own, Seany is definitely one to keep an eye on in the future. Smart and funny. seanyclarke.com

**THE BUSTLING TRAM SOCIETY**
It's Clear

The jangling gypsy jazz and wonderfully raggle taggle folksy workouts kick in from the word go. From the poppy shuffles of *All Around Me* to the more meandering likes of *Float Away*, each song takes you on a whimsical journey to a warm and happy place. thebustlingtramsociety.com

eclectic

**THE EMPTY PAGES**
Too Much Pressure

Some good old fashioned rockin' boogie blues rock from guitarist Kieran Wade. Each one of these cuts will get your feet stomping, but *One More Day* is the pick of the bunch. theemptypages.co.uk

**EMILY SAUNDERS**
Moon

Emily takes an eight-year-old song and works it into something entirely new, with atmospheric textures, jazz-tinged key changes and a delightful scat vocal. emilysaunders.co.uk

**BRAVADO CARTEL**
Revolution On The Lips

This Huddersfield-based rocking pop act put the world to rights on this stomper of a track, with singer Will Bloy unafraid to show his accent and his anger. tinyurl.com/bravadoc

tributes

Tony Coe

Versatile doyen of the saxophone and clarinet

Regarded as one of the most skillful saxophonists and clarinetists of his time, Tony Coe played with many of jazz's most iconic figures – including Dizzy Gillespie, Stan Getz and Humphrey Lyttleton. And while he never became a household name himself, his standing within the industry was as one of the very best.

Indeed, in 1995 he became the first non-American to be awarded the Jazzpar award (often known as the Jazz Nobel) for his 'extreme instrumental skill'. However, to non-jazz fans he is probably best known for his contribution to Henry Mancini's title theme to the *Pink Panther* movies. The instantly recognisable slinky sax refrain? That's him.

Born in Canterbury, Coe learned clarinet as a child and joined Joe Daniel's Dixieland band in the early 50s. His big break came when he was recruited for Lyttleton's band in 1957, initially as an alto saxophonist/clarinetist, though as the 1960s unfolded he increasingly shifted to the tenor sax.

He left a full-time position with Lyttleton in 1961 to form a series of his own outfits and began to release his own records. He also had a spell with the Kenny Clarke-Francy Boland Big Band, and began a long association with Stan Tracey. It was also around this time he turned down an opportunity to join Count Basie's band, later claiming that he "wouldn't have enjoyed travelling all over the world in a big band".

His versatility was legendary – he played on the soundtracks to *Superman II* and *Victor/Victoria*, and of course the *Pink Panther* films. He also composed *Zeitgeist*, an orchestral jazz-rock work based on the poems of Jill Robin, and his smoky tenor sax can be heard on John Martin's landmark 1973 album *Solid Air*.

In 1990 he composed and arranged *Les Voix d'Ixassou*, a multilingual collection of global protest songs performed by orchestra and vocalists including Ali Farka Toure and Marianne Faithfull. Coe was still recording into the late 90s and early 21st Century with, amongst others, Norma Winstone, Tina May and Lol Coxhill.

Will Simpson



Photo: Ross Gilmore / Getty Images

Rab Noakes

Singer, songwriter and long-term Musicians' Union Official

Rab was born in St Andrews, Fife, in 1947 and spent his early years in Cupar. He was best known for his performances with Gerry Rafferty, Lindisfarne and Stealers Wheel in the 1970s, but was renowned as a solo artist, releasing more than twenty albums following his debut in 1970. He also played a key role in the Scottish music industry thanks to a career with the BBC, where he became senior producer of music on Radio Scotland.

His long-term involvement and commitment to the MU began in the 1970s and he was an active member continuously for over forty years. He was first elected to the Union's Executive Committee in 2004, and re-elected unopposed from 2008 until he stood down at the end of 2020. Rab then took up the role of Vice-Chair on the MU's Scotland & Northern Ireland Regional Committee and highly effectively represented the MU on the Scottish TUC General Council. Furthermore, he was a regular and popular Conference delegate, where his knowledge and experience as a musician and activist were much valued.

Naomi Pohl, MU General Secretary, said: "Everyone at the MU was heartbroken at the news of Rab's passing. He was a wonderful man, a great musician, committed union activist and a champion of diversity... He will be greatly missed."

"He was a wonderful man, a great musician, committed union activist and a champion of diversity"

Caroline Sewell, MU Regional Organiser for Scotland & Northern Ireland, said: "It was a genuine privilege to have worked so closely with Rab for a number of years. He consistently used his platform and considerable influence to fight for what was right and fair. He was a proud male ally in the struggle for gender equality in a male dominated industry as well as striving for equality in all other areas. It is hard to imagine an MU without Rab Noakes. He will be sorely missed."

Rab Noakes died on 11 November 2022 at the age of 75.

Keith Ames



Photo: Heritage Images / Getty Images

Michele Strong
Orchestral double bass
player and teacher

For many of her colleagues in the Ulster Orchestra (UO), there were two things we immediately associated with Michele: her smile and tinsel. A smile that was a constant and conveyed her love for life and the orchestra; as for the tinsel, at UO Christmas concerts over many years she would decorate all our music stands and the double bass section with tinsel and get us all into the Christmas spirit.

Michele was kind, unassuming and selfless. I should also say that she lived up to her name. In her 37 years as sub principal double bass with the Orchestra she was the definition of dedication and commitment.

Michele devoted time and energy representing the Orchestra as secretary and member of the Orchestra Players Committee, and as a diligent and dedicated MU Health and Safety Officer. She served on the Scotland & N Ireland Regional Committee for four years.

She was also an inspiring music teacher and spent her Saturday mornings with the City of Belfast Youth Orchestra. A life truly fulfilled, Michele leaves a huge gap in our lives and we will miss her greatly.

Helen Neale

Chez Chesterman
A true stalwart of
UK traditional jazz

The trumpeter Graham Robertson 'Chez' Chesterman died on 13 February, 2023, having long been sidelined by dementia. As his old bandmate, the bassist Ken Ames, put it: "My memories are of a brave man fighting his ill health in later years. Always great company and admired for his solid lead trumpet and vocals – we have lost a considerable contributor to the jazz scene."

Although Putney-born, Chez was raised in Yorkshire and identified strongly with its regional character even after returning to London. He moved seamlessly through a series of nationally recognised traditional bands. First prominent with trombonist Max Collie, he was then with pianist Johnny Parker's Goodtime Band before leading his own group on Jimmy Young and Terry Wogan's radio shows. He then moved to the Midlands and linked up with the Zenith Hot Stompers.

Chez was associated with the revived Happy Wanderers, a group of fondly-remembered jazz buskers. In later years Chez freelanced and was a cheerful and valued presence on the London traditional scene until he could no longer play.

Peter Vacher



Photo: Peter Symes / Getty Images

Wally Fawkes
Much-loved clarinet
player and cartoonist

Wally 'Trog' Fawkes, who died in March aged 98, found fame as a political cartoonist whose work graced papers across the political spectrum. But he was also a highly acclaimed clarinetist.

Born in Vancouver, his family emigrated to the UK when he was just seven. He fell in love with the jazz of the 1920s, and during the war he joined up with George Webb's Dixieland band, where he met Humphrey Lyttleton. When Humph left in 1948, Fawkes joined him and the Lyttleton band became one of the biggest names in 1950s jazz.

As his Fleet Street career took off he decided to keep music as a sideline. During the 1960s he started a jazz session at the Six Bells in Chelsea, which became known affectionately as Trog's Club. He later played with John Chilton's Footwarmers, and enjoyed regular reunions with Lyttleton.

Will Simpson

Tony Wagstaff
Percussionist, polymath
and bon viveur

Tony spent his esteemed career in the world of musical theatre, where he developed an extensive network of admiring colleagues. Graduating from the RCM in 1978, he immediately embarked on work in both London's West End and the National Theatre, as well as touring, which generated a fund of anecdotes with which he entertained all who knew him. He was a committed MU activist – a member and later vice-chair of the London Regional Committee for many years, drawing on his extensive experience to offer insightful and principled contributions to debate in support of his fellow musicians – there is even a balloting procedure fondly referred to as the 'Wagstaff Clause'!

Tony was great company in the down time between shows at the show *Blood Brothers* where he worked for many years. His love of life was broad. He was an expert chef, but also had a brilliant mind. He gained a degree from the OU in English in his fifties, and was a respected philosopher specialising in relativity – the editors of *Philosophy Now* wrote of him 'Tony Wagstaff is the finest thinker in his field...' He will be sorely missed by his many friends.

Rick Finlay

Andre Messeder
Jazz bass player who
worked with the greats

Jazz bass player Andre Messeder was born in Brixton and raised in Jersey, where he had an idyllic childhood – swimming in the sea and playing football.

Andre's parents were musicians, and he grew up surrounded by music, first playing guitar and then double bass, honing his busking skills playing nightly in clubs and pubs around Jersey. In 1969 Andre was invited to join the maiden voyage of the QE2 with Ray Ellington's Band. After touring the world he moved to London where his career took off – playing with Roger Whittaker, Buddy Greco, Charles Aznavour, Shirley Bassey and many other greats. He played eight seasons of *Come Dancing* with Andy Ross, during which time he met his first wife Jan. Andre worked with Chris Dean in all of his bands. When Chris took over the Syd Lawrence Orchestra in 1996 Andre joined, a position he held until retirement.

Sadly, in 2012 Andre was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia. His second wife Tracy took the brave and loving decision that she would care for him at home, where he eventually died peacefully. He is greatly missed.

Sarah Williams

Raymond Pigott

Leading violinist and lifelong educator

Born and brought up in Nottingham, Ray started playing aged eight and his outstanding talent soon started winning awards. In 1951 he was accepted by the Royal Academy of Music.

He took a break to do National Service and played with the Royal Army Medical Corps Orchestra from 1954-1956. He returned to the Royal Academy and met fellow music student Sheila May Filmer, who he married in 1959. He taught in Oxfordshire and London before moving to Wakefield in 1962 to become leader of the West Riding String Quartet.

In 1968 he took up the role of Head of the String Instrument Department for Sheffield Education Authority and two years later became a music lecturer at Bretton Hall College near Wakefield. In 1980, he moved to Devon, where he was appointed Head of Instrumental Music, based in Exeter. Ray took early retirement in 1985 but continued teaching the violin and playing as a freelance musician. In 1995 he and Sheila moved back north to Dore, Sheffield, to be closer to family. He was proud to be a member of the Musicians' Union, which he joined in 1962.

Andy Pigott

Pete Blannin

Bass player to the greats of UK jazz

Highly rated in jazz circles, bassist Pete died in late 2022 at the age of 96. Always versatile and something of a wanderer, he performed with Tubby Hayes and Tony Kinsey. Born in East London in May 1926, Pete tried guitar and drums before settling on the double bass. Following service in the Merchant Navy, he played with The Jive Bombers, a pioneering bebop combo, and toured with organist Robin Richmond.

He embarked on the liner *Caronia* in 1949 to play for a world cruise under bandleader Jock Scott, the father of Ronnie Scott, who was also in the band. He was then on the liner *Queen Mary* with pianist Ronnie Ball and studied with US bassist Arnold Fishkind while in New York.

Back in London in 1953, he veered between club work and jazz gigs, depping in the Ted Heath band before joining Tubby Hayes' classy octet in 1955. Pete spent four years with the Humphrey Lyttelton band, before a brief turn with singer Long John Baldry's combo. He left full-time music in the mid-1960s to train as a teacher before resuming regular playing and leading his own groups around the Hertford area.

Peter Vacher



Geoff Foster

Jazz clarinetist and MU committee member

Geoff was a prolific jazz reeds player and former SW London Branch committee member. Throughout his life he was active on the jazz scene, touring professionally with Ken Barton's Oriole Jazz Band from 1959 to 1962, and playing with musicians such as Micky and Mary Wilkinson, The Foster Shaw All Stars (with Fred Shaw), Sonny Morris's New Crane River Jazz Band, The Chicago Rhythm Kings, The Frog Island Jazz Band, Bill Brunskill's Jazz Band, and with Max Emmens' Dirty Rats and One More Time.

He played in New Orleans on six occasions, including with the Ken Colyer Trust, and on his honeymoon in 1994 with his wife Pam. In later years he moved to Folkestone, where he played with Geoff Foster's Big Easy Band and several others in Kent. He loved music and was a true advocate for the New Orleans style.

Nicholas Foster

John Woolsey Crawford

Pianist, composer, teacher and MD

Born in Glasgow in 1940 John soon developed a love for music. He studied violin and piano at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music, gaining a Diploma in Musical Education. His earliest professional work came with The Johnny Victory Show and Ronnie Coburn as well as with Peter De Rance and the Lex McLean show before becoming MD for The Kaye Sisters.

John was an active member of the MU for over 60 years. His career saw him work all over the world, touring with artists like Andy Stewart, Jimmy Logan, Jimmy Shand and Alastair Gillies. Recently, John worked for the charity Music in Hospitals and Care, and the Not Forgotten Association, ensuring his musical gift could be used to spread happiness and improve wellbeing. He'll be sorely missed. His kindness and humour was loved by all who knew him but his legacy lives on through his music.

Lorna Crawford

The MU also notes the sad passing of Robert Armstrong (vocalist/composer), Cyril Bass (drummer), Bob Guthrie (drummer), Martin Kemp (clarinet), Nicholas Lloyd-Webber (composer/producer), David McLaren (violin), Geoff Palmer (violin) and Henry Roche (piano). Please visit theMU.org for full tributes. Further tributes will appear in the next issue of *The Musician*.

Eddie Taylor

Popular jazz drummer for all the big names

Eddie Taylor, the jazz drummer widely valued for his modernist style, died in December 2022 in Newark. He was 93. Born in Oldham in 1929, he came to jazz fame with The Johnny Dankworth Seven, which he joined in 1951.

When the Seven dissolved he played on the *Queen Mary*, relishing the chance to hear his jazz heroes in the New York clubs. Back in London he recorded and performed with many fellow modernists including a two-year stint with Tommy Whittle's sextet, before joining The Humphrey Lyttelton Band in 1956.

He joined John Chilton's Feetwarmers in 1990, supporting the rumbustious George Melly. When Chilton broke up the band, Eddie resumed his freelance jazz work, finally retiring in 2012. Known for his dry wit and clean-cut drumming technique, Eddie was a true UK jazz luminary.

Peter Vacher



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](https://www.themu.org)

- **Summary financial statements**
Available in June/July 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](https://www.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.

Tools Of The Trade

Flautist Andy Findon on the importance of repairers and maintaining his instruments in a busy working schedule

Report by Neil Crossley

Andy Findon was midway through a matinee performance at London's Donmar Warehouse when he watched in horror as his alto flute got knocked off its stand. It was September 2022 and Andy was one of a seven-piece onstage band performing in the critically-acclaimed stage musical *The Band's Visit*. "A costume hat fell off someone's head," he says. "It was like a frisbee and it just knocked the flute over."

The accident left the flute with a dent halfway down the body, and bent rods, which resulted in one of the pads not covering the hole. "It happened on a Thursday matinee, so I did the evening show with half the notes missing. Luckily it was an improvised part!"

Andy took the damaged alto flute to a highly skilled repairer who had been maintaining his instruments for decades. "I just took it to him the next morning and he put all his other work aside. He had it back the following evening in perfect working order. That kind of relationship is unbelievably valuable." This person recently retired and Andy says there is a real shortage of skilled repairers. "There are no young people coming into that business, which is weird because we really need them."

Special Instrument

Andy owns a range of instruments, but one in particular stands out for its playability and tone. This is an instrument developed from a late-19th century Louis Lot flute. It was

"I've never touched an instrument that was so responsive"



Photo: Julia Findon

Andy Findon and the platinum Gilbert flute, which uses keys from a late-19th century French instrument

created by Geoffrey Gilbert, flautist with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, who in 1950 commissioned a craftsman to customise it. "Someone took the keys off the old French flute, which was on a silver tube, and in 1950 Gilbert asked a craftsman to put them onto a platinum tube. So he provided the platinum tube and it has this old key work on it."

In 2008, the instrument came up for sale and Andy bought it. The bond was immediate. "I've never touched an instrument that was so responsive. It's like a fine wine when you get the roundness in the mouth with no edges."

Regular Check-Ups

Andy gets all his instruments checked over by his new repairer every two years but also pays a visit more frequently. "I'm paranoid with little rattles and noises," he says. "Metal on metal is a quite offensive noise to me. I am very fussy."

But despite such preventative measures, there are times when he has to do some instrument first aid himself. On 16 April this year he was in rehearsals at Cadogan Hall when he noticed that something was wrong with his platinum flute. "I just felt one of the notes wasn't coming out. A little piece of the cork had fallen off. And it happened during the rehearsal of a very difficult programme. With the help of the second flautist I managed to patch it together. I found a piece of paper,

stuck it in, used a sharp screwdriver, and made sure the paper was going to do it. We got through the gig but it was quite a tense moment. I took it straight to my new repairer after that gig and got it fixed."

One of the items Andy always carries with him to gigs is *papier poudre* – thin make-up paper that absorbs moisture. "If there's humidity around, moisture can make the pads on flutes feel sticky. And so there's delicate make-up paper, which has got a very thin film of talcum powder on it. In the long term though, they're not very good for the instrument, because the powder sits on the cork."

Carry A Spare

Like many musicians, Andy always carries a spare instrument to cover all eventualities. In addition to his platinum flute he has a gold Pearl flute. But he actively avoids carrying both instruments to a gig. "I am not happy getting on the train with two valuable instruments. It just doesn't sit well with me – the horror stories of people losing instruments every week on Facebook! I've got a third metal flute, which I carry in an emergency. But I certainly wouldn't take the gold and platinum. I want them in different places. It's just like the president and the vice-president." 🍷

To find out more about Andy Findon and his range of work please visit andyfindon.com

Have you registered for your MU benefits?

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

MU website

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

Contract advice – before you sign

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

Instrument and equipment insurance

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

Partnership advice

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

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

Motoring service

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

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

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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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