

## **Music for the Creative Industries (Top Up)**

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### **Pre-Production Portfolio**

**1,811 words**

I have chosen to put on a day festival for my project. This is because I am passionate about live music and enjoy promoting and managing live music events, especially those which are targeting up-and-coming artists who are from Bradford. In previous projects, I have put on live-streamed music events, concerts, and mixed-media showcases. This project will differ from these because it will push me to work with new venues, whereas in the past I have only used the same one. Ideally, I would be using the numerous bars and venues, which are all located on North Parade. This will be similar to the ‘Welcome Back Bash,’ also known as ‘North Parade Street Party’ which took place in July this year. It will also provide a challenge as it will be on a larger scale, with at least five times more artists performing and much more funding to find. I am planning for each bar or venue to provide a specific stage. For example, in the Rewired bar, I will put on bands of the rock genre but in Rumshackalack I would provide more acoustic performances. I believe that this project will give me the space to develop my skills and provide experience for roles in the industry which interest me such as promotion and sound engineering. After reading the events manager job description on gov.uk I know that these skills include: ‘attention to detail,’ ‘the ability to accept criticism,’

‘communication and customer service,’ fundraising, and promotion, among others. I will need to carry out elements of research, delegation, and show an understanding of financial management (Capell, 2013). I would like to improve and build on these skills by working with and consulting industry professionals such as Jim Mitcham (The Mill) and Gail Simpkins (The Underground), whilst also using my project as a means for providing opportunities for networking.

So, why do I want to involve both the city of Bradford and its musicians in my festival when Leeds is so close? Bradford’s music scene deserves a chance to grow, and I see it as an opportunity to grow my career alongside it. Due to our win of the City of Culture for 2025, Bradford has received millions of pounds of funding for the arts, meaning that there is a projected surge of “over 1000 new performances and events” (Bradford 2025), as well as many career opportunities and much more support from organizations such as Arts Council England. This is set to include the newly refurbished Bradford Live (formerly the Odeon), which will put-on musicians, comedians, and more, who are from both national and international areas. There are also brand-new events and smaller venues opening across the city, including Rewired, which is a venue who have reached out to work with me on smaller events leading up to this project.

According to a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), UK Live Music revenue is set to grow by 7.4% per year until 2027, generating £1.63bn in 2023 compared to £1.54 in 2019 (Barrett, 2023). This is said to reach £1.95bn by 2027 (a 27% increase since 2019).

Music festivals in the UK date back to the late 1960s, with The Isle of Wight Festival. This drew large crowds especially in its peak in 1970, where more than 600,000 attended to see performances from Jimi Hendrix, The Who and more (Baxter, 2023). The day after Hendrix died, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1970, Glastonbury began. This is of course now one of the most famous

festivals in the entire world but started out as a folk and blues festival with tickets only £1 including free milk from the farm and only 1,500 people in attendance (Glastonbury Festival - 1970). However, by 2022 that has now risen to a 210,000 capacity, with tickets costing up to £280 (Glastonbury Festival - 2022). As the years progressed, many small-scale events developed for new genres and subcultures. For example, in 1998 Creamfields was born, which was an independent festival for lovers of Electronic Dance Music by the likes of artists such as The Chemical Brothers (Baxter, 2023). Although these festivals are still popular today, more modern 'boutique' festivals are making a name for themselves as they include more family-friendly wellness-based programmes (Music Festivals: A timeline through the years), creating an opposite effect to the stereotypical festival activities of drug taking and violent outbursts.

These stereotypical environments can lead festivalgoers to feel unsafe. This is particularly relevant with female-identifying audience members. As a woman myself, I feel that safety and representation for females within the live music industry is of utmost importance. A YouGov survey shows that "over 4 in 10 women under the age of 40 (43%)" have experienced sexual harassment at UK festivals (Prescott-Smith, 2018). This comes in many forms but often ends with the victim feeling like it is "their fault," and this is due to venue security or even the police not believing them (Aubrey, 2021). In episode 3 of the documentary-style series: Trainwreck: Woodstock '99, Jonathan Davies (lead singer of Korn) said: "Girls should... have fun just like a guy". As an event organiser, I feel as though it is my responsibility to ensure that all the female attendees at my festival feel safe and can enjoy themselves. One way I plan to implement this is by ensuring the venues I use are familiar with the 'Ask for Angela' scheme. This enables anyone in an uncomfortable situation the help they need to get out, without needing to explain themselves if they do not feel they can (Ask For Angela, 2023). I may also use tips in the book Event Risk Management and Safety

(Tarlow, 2002), which although dated will provide me with many case studies and ways to carry out risk assessments.

Other women involved in live events, however, include those both performing and backstage. It is important to have gender equality in the live music industry. Statistics show that less than 5% of audio engineers are women (Joshi, 2019). These extreme numbers are due to a multitude of prejudicial reasons, and this can then make the industry seem off-putting to those who are interested in working in it. In an interview with The Independent, Beverley Whittrick (co-founder of Music Venue Trust) said, “It’s easier to be working in the office-based side of the industry... we get to the point where no woman is asked if she’s someone’s girlfriend,” (O’Connor, 2021) and this really shows that women are not expected to be in roles of importance or any roles at all within the crew side of live music.

Not only are women struggling in the industry but due to a multitude of factors, small venues are closing. This is a vital issue to highlight because without small venues, there are no small freelance industry professionals. So why are these venues closing? From the cost-of-living crisis to the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic, both owners and customers are now unable to afford running costs or ticket prices. Especially because the products offered by the entertainment industry and more specifically the music and live performance industries are simply not essentials to living. To combat this, Music Venue Trust has backed a crowdfunding campaign to save ‘at least 9 grassroots venues’ by giving them to community ownership (Butler, 2023). This can be done by offering shares to the community, who then become part owners of the company, which also allows for quicker turnaround on development costs. Eventually, this allows for music venues to be successful for longer and provides jobs and skill-building opportunities for those who are part of the community and want to get into the industry (Wray, 2022). But what about festivals, which are not able to be

saved by community ownership? Although they can be supported by the community through crowdfunding, sometimes that just is not enough. That can be said of the Long Division Festival, a celebration of grassroots culture and education for the youth of West Yorkshire, which has sadly had to end. The director of the festival Dean Freeman said, “It’s a long, twisting story but if we really hone in on the cause – it’s money. Brexit, Covid, The Cost-of-Living Crisis.” After the festival saw a dip in finances after the interruption of the 2020 lockdown, they relied on crowdfunding to continue. Freeman goes on to explain, “Long Division is expensive to put on... The cost of hiring venues, technical equipment, the marketing to persuade people to come here. (2023)” And to top it all off, sponsorship, which was heavily relied on, had to pull out leaving the Board of Directors to pull the plug. The cost-of-living crisis is certainly a factor that will impact on my festival due to location. A large majority of residents of the Bradford area are struggling financially, with childcare, heating, electric and even fuel costs rising. Taking this into consideration, I would like to make the event as inclusive as possible and plan to limit the cost of tickets as much as possible so that people of all backgrounds will have the opportunity and means to attend.

As mentioned above, an impacting factor to the live music industry is Brexit. Ever since the UK left the EU, it has been virtually impossible for touring musicians and their crews to find work within the EU. Harriett Sherwood (The Guardian’s Arts and Culture Correspondent) wrote that, “Almost half of UK musicians... have had less work... and more than a quarter have had no work at all (Sherwood, 2023).” Music Week reported on a survey by UK Music (carried out between April 4<sup>th</sup> and June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023), shows the statistics of how this has affected touring musicians. Firstly, ‘30%’ of the ‘1,461 responding music creators said that their earnings had been affected since January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020’, and ‘82%’ of those had stated this was a ‘decrease’ to previous earnings. ‘43% say it is no longer viable to tour within the EU, Artists including Kate Melua say this is due to the reported 30% rise in costs.’ Additionally,

their largest problem is the cost of ‘securing visas and work permits, 59% see this as a major issue.’ Other costs include ‘transport, shipping, production, carnets and restrictions on haulage.’ (Paine, 2023). Thankfully, as a small UK-based event organiser, Brexit and touring costs do not currently affect me or by extension this project. However, these costs are important to be mindful of in my future career as a live music event manager.

In conclusion, although this project may seem ambitious, I am ready to take on the task and feel excited for the outcome. The project is relevant for the industry and its development due to its connections with up-and-coming local artists and links with the City of Culture bid. I am aware that there are many factors which affect the success of live events and what potential problems can cause them to be unsafe or unsuccessful. It will benefit my future career by allowing me to build a reputation for my brand: Violet Live Events and create new connections with other event managers, venue owners, promoters and artists, most of whom will be based locally.

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