

## **Policy Brief: The monetisation of livestreams of musical performances in the wake of Covid-19**

Live performances are a vital income source for over 80% of musicians.[1] The Covid-19-related lockdowns put a temporary stop to performances in concert venues, while social distancing measures restricted audiences for many months, with regular attenders deciding to stay at home and venues having to reduce capacity to adhere to government regulations. The result was a severe loss of income for musicians, which propelled many musicians into the livestreaming arena, in the hope to connect with audiences and to generate income.

The research investigated musicians' and audiences' experiences and expectations of livestreaming musical performances and aimed to share information on the practice of livestreaming concerts with musicians, with a view to enabling them to add livestreaming to their income generating activities.

[1] Musicians' Union, The Working Musician report, 2012

### **Policy recommendations [NB: written in April 2021]**

#### **1. A grant scheme is needed, enabling musicians to buy technical equipment and to acquire technical knowledge required for livestreaming musical performances**

Musicians' biggest concern is not being able to earn enough income to make livestreaming worth their while. There was firm agreement from 83% of musicians that this was a barrier preventing them from livestreaming or livestreaming more. Musicians' concern was not about the effort involved in livestreaming as such, which scored lower in the survey, but seemed about required effort and investment versus income gained. Livestreaming involves an investment in developing new skills and in buying or hiring equipment, which is a substantial commitment to make against a backdrop of uncertain income.

Additionally, investment from industry is needed. Currently, there are not enough venues suitable for livestreaming musical performances available to musicians. Venues and rehearsal studios would do well to invest in livestreaming equipment. This would result in an infrastructure that enables musicians and the sector as a whole to establish livestreaming as an income source.

#### **2. A legal review is needed, with a view to drawing up international agreements relating to the licensing of livestreamed performances**

Licensing for livestreamed concerts is a highly complex issue, which involves different strands of copyright. National licensing agreements differ from country to country, but livestreamed musical performances can be accessed worldwide. In the UK, musicians can obtain licenses from the Performing Rights Society but, because of the varying national agreements around the globe, are limited in terms of countries covered and permitted content. There is currently no licence that allows musicians to livestream any third-party content to any country in the world.

### **3. A government-funded national livestreaming platform would enable emerging and independent UK musicians to showcase themselves to an international audience and allow them to build up a following in other countries without having to tour physically to these regions**

Following on from Covid and Brexit, touring outside of the UK is currently costly (because of visas and/or COVID tests), often restricted, and administration heavy. While this might change at some point in the future, it is likely to prevent musicians, especially emerging musicians, from touring abroad. A government-funded livestreaming platform would enable UK musicians to showcase themselves to an international audience and allow them to build up a following in other countries without having to tour physically to these regions. While the majority of musicians are likely to want to tour in post-Covid times, reduced touring activities might also have an environmental benefit.

## **Summary of evidence**

The following five main findings of the research support the policy recommendations.

### **1. Livestreaming makes live music accessible**

**A large market has emerged of audiences that are unable or reluctant to visit concerts in physical venues.** The lower cost of 'attending' a livestreamed performance and the ability to attend without having to travel means that live music fans can now access live music concerts that they weren't able to experience otherwise. Individuals benefitting from this include parents with young children/single parents, disabled or elderly people, people with little disposable income, people living far from a city with music venue, and people suffering from claustrophobia or social anxiety. Crucially, this means that livestreaming concerts accesses audiences that are not reached by live concerts in physical venues. 90% of musicians and 92% of fans agreed live streaming will in future be a successful tool to reach audiences unable or unwilling to go to physical venues.

### **2. Emotional engagement matters**

**Both audiences and musicians highly value the emotional engagement that occurs during live performance.** Livestream viewers that feel connected to the performer(s) and fellow viewers watch more livestreams, while those that don't feel connected watch fewer. As it is difficult to replicate the type of communication in physical venues, new ways of engaging emotionally during livestreams are emerging. Online audience communities are forming around regularly livestreaming musicians across all genres, with community members providing emotional support to each other.

### **3. Audiences are willing**

**The practice of livestreaming performances is still in its infancy and the value of livestreams is still under consideration.** Tickets to livestreamed performances were seen as less valuable than tickets to performances in physical venues. However, audiences broadly agreed that livestreams should not be free to access and felt that the cost of accessing livestreams behind paywalls (i.e., those that can only be accessed through payment) didn't constitute a barrier to watching livestreams. There was particular willingness to pay for livestreams of good audio and video quality, for livestreams from locations that would otherwise be out of reach, and for livestreams

that made viewers feel more connected with the performer and other viewers.

#### **4. Musicians are dissatisfied with income**

**Musicians' biggest concern about livestreaming was not being able to earn enough income to make it worthwhile, particularly in the light of initially having to invest in technical knowledge and equipment.** While musicians with a large following are able to monetise livestreamed performances through ticket sales relatively easily, the majority of participating musicians were dissatisfied with the income they generated through livestreaming during the pandemic year. Livestreaming does have the potential to generate income for musicians, however, it needs to be seen as an additional rather than the main income source.

#### **5. Livestreaming is here to stay**

**A large percentage of musicians and attendees, 71% and 68% respectively, broadly agreed that once venues are safely open again, livestreaming will be a significant part of the music sector's landscape.** There was also agreement from both groups that livestreaming will be a successful tool for reaching new audiences from geographical locations the artist has not toured to, and for reaching new audiences that might be reluctant or unable to visit physical venues. Questions remain about how livestreamed concerts will be used within the music industry's ecosystem but there is little doubt that the format is here to stay.

#### **Sources and further reading**

- Haferkorn, J., Kavanagh, B. and Leak, S., 2021. Livestreaming Music in the UK: Report for Musicians. [www.livestreamingmusic.uk](http://www.livestreamingmusic.uk)

#### **About the authors**

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