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IQ
Live Music Intelligence

IQ122 AN ILMG PUBLICATION
SEPTEMBER 2023 | £25 | €25

**FROM
PUNK ROCK
TO PROMOTER**

FKP'S STEPHAN
THANSCHIEDT
PROFILED

**EUROPE'S
FESTIVAL
SUMMER**

A ROSTR X IQ
SPECIAL REPORT

**GOING
IT ALONE**

TEN OF EUROPE'S
TOP INDEPENDENT
FESTIVALS

**DUTCH
COURAGE**

THE NETHERLANDS
LIVE MARKET
BOUNCES BACK

**SUPPLIERS &
DEMAND**

PRODUCTION
MANAGERS & LEADING
SUPPLIERS DEBATE

**GREEN
GUARDIANS 2023**

LIVE MUSIC'S
MOST SUSTAINABLE
SUPPLIERS

FESTIVAL SEASON '23 WRAP UP

BILLIE @ SZIGET

THREE DECADES ON THE ISLAND OF FREEDOM



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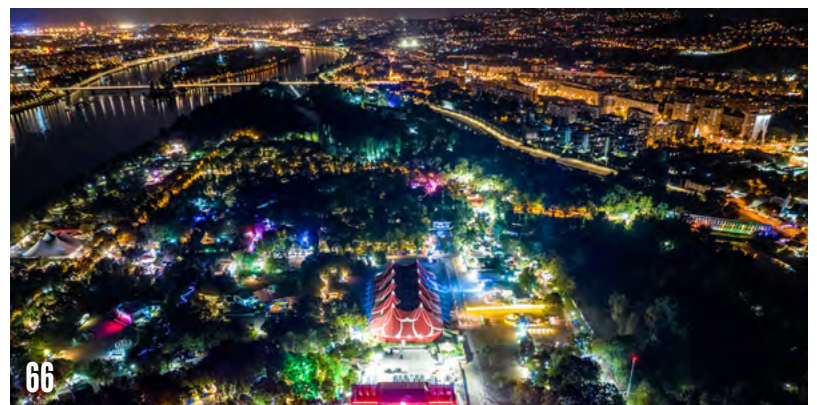
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FIELDS OF DREAMS



When the International Festival Forum launched in 2015, little did we know that the event would become such an integral part of the annual festival booking process that the search for headline acts can now begin years in advance of an actual event.

For emerging talent, IFF's goal was to introduce festival-ready talent to the organisers of some of the hundreds of gatherings that make up the summer season. And our agency partners duly obliged, with the likes of Lewis Capaldi, Tom Grennan, and Yonaka all having showcased at IFF over the years, using festival appearances to accelerate the growth of their fanbases.

With 1,000 delegates heading to IFF's new HQ at Omeara later this month, we thought that this would be an ideal opportunity to launch the inaugural festival summer wrap up edition of *IQ* – marking the end of another outdoor season in the northern hemisphere, while acknowledging the start of the hard work ahead of the 2024 season.

So with festivals at the heart of this special edition, we'll be celebrating the countless thousands of dedicated staff that helped shape the summer just passed, on the eve of the ninth edition of IFF – the largest gathering yet of the world's top booking agents and festival professionals.

On page 18, *IQ* has partnered with ROSTR to analyse 50 of the top European festivals, and the results make for fascinating reading, as you will learn for yourselves.

Meanwhile, Mark Beaumont visits Sziget Festival to join in the 30th birthday extravaganza (see page 66) and learn about the island event's rich history.

Whilst one of Europe's top festival creatives, Stephan Thanscheidt, marks his own 25th anniversary in music and shares some of the highlights of his career to date on his road from punk to promoter (page 42).

And with sustainability central to so many working in the festival scene these days, our Green Guardians List 2023 (page 56) outlines those at the sharp end of making live events greener, as well as identifying whom production directors should be working with to achieve carbon footprint ambitions.

Just in case that isn't enough to have you dreaming of 2024's fields of opportunity, Adam Woods packs his bags for a visit to the lowlands for this issue's market focus (page 76), and reports that the Netherlands continues to punch far above its weight when it comes to outdoor events.

I hope you enjoy our first festivals special edition of *IQ*, and for those of you registered for IFF from 26-28 September – safe travels. I will see you there!

Gordon Masson

IQ

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IN BRIEF INDEX

The concert
business digest



Legal firms instigate class action lawsuits against Live Nation over claims the company downplayed allegations that it had breached antitrust laws

The 1975 are served with a seven-day notice by promoter Future Sound Asia to pay more than 12.3m Malaysian ringgits in damages over the recent Good Vibes Festival furor

Dozens of fans require medical attention following a suspected pepper spray incident during a Travis Scott concert in Italy

Beyoncé's *Renaissance World Tour* is officially crowned as the singer's highest-grossing tour to date after generating \$295.8m at the box office

A Danish music venue that opened less than two years ago closes down with owners blaming a "contractual conflict" with its landlord

Lionel Richie and Earth, Wind & Fire cancel their sold-out concert at New York's Madison Square Garden on 12 August, an hour after it was due to begin

The Japanese government dials back visa requirements, making it easier for foreign artists of varying success to visit the country

Ticketmaster launches SafeTix, its anti-counterfeit ticketing technology, at festivals for the first time

Primavera announces its debut in Peru, with a series of concerts in Lima set for this November ahead of its 2023 Latin American festival run

Pink extends her Australian tour, after selling more than 725,000 tickets and becoming the country's biggest-selling run ever by a female artist

Summer in the City festival in Romania relocates just days before it was due to begin

Live music plays a key role in the Women's World Cup football tournament, with concerts from some of Australia and New Zealand's best-known artists

AEG joins forces with The EM District and UOB to seal a naming rights partnership for a new 6,000-cap venue in Thailand

The North American leg of Madonna's *Celebration Tour* reschedules to follow her Europe dates

Agent Josh Javor joins WME as partner and co-head of the London music department

Swedish festival Way Out West reports its highest attendance yet, with 55,000 fans flocking to the recent edition

The Danish concert business bounces back to near pre-pandemic attendance levels according to newly released figures

A new report sheds fresh light on a failed music spectacular in South Africa that was abruptly cancelled days before it was due to take place

Live music is credited with helping to rejuvenate tourism in Singapore ahead of record-setting 2024 tours by Coldplay and Taylor Swift

All Things Live expands in the Netherlands with a majority stake in festival promoter Loveland Events

Several concerts in Southern California are cancelled due to the first tropical storm to hit Los Angeles in more than 80 years

The Weeknd makes history in London again after smashing the ticket sales record at Wembley Stadium

Live Nation teams up with Chinese entertainment company Twenty Eight Group to launch the world's first multi-city contemporary Chinese music and arts festival

The first 100 tickets for the sequel of the infamous Fyre Fest sell out, despite a baptism of fire during its first edition in 2017

US superstars Ariana Grande and Demi Lovato reportedly split from manager Scooter Braun

Asian-American music powerhouse 88rising calls off its new festival, 88 Degrees & Rising, due to "unforeseen circumstances"

DICE steps up its global expansion plans after raising a \$65m round led by music-focused investment companies

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FESTIVAL COMINGS & GOINGS

It has been a summer of contrasts for festivals, new and old, around the globe.

Billed as “Glastonbury meets Disneyland,” the inaugural edition of Brazil’s The Town in São Paulo welcomed more than 500,000 fans over five days in September, with the help of headliners Post Malone, Bruno Mars, Maroon 5, and Foo Fighters.

The 105,000-cap festival, which took place at the Interlagos racetrack, is the brainchild of Roberto Medina.

“We are living history before our eyes,” says Medina, president and creator of Rock World, the company behind The Town and Rock in Rio. “Almost 40 years after the debut of Rock in Rio, in 1985, I feel again the emotion of witnessing the birth of a new festival, with all the quality, structure, and scope that São Paulo deserves.”

Festival brand Afro Nation expanded in the US in May with an event in Miami, Florida, presented by Event Horizon, SMADE, and Live Nation, and Detroit, Michigan in August, with a maiden edition in Lagos, Nigeria planned for December.

The third edition of Afro Nation Portugal, held in June, was its biggest year, attracting 40,000 people from 140 countries to see acts such as Burna Boy, Little Simz, Wizkid, 50 Cent, Booba, and Davido.

“A lot goes into selecting locations for an Afro Nation festival, the beauty of the site, event infrastructure, travel logistics, and accommodation for guests, but most importantly, everywhere you’ll find an Afro Nation event will be bringing joy to sites of cultural significance around the world,” says co-founder Obi Asika.

New 7,500-cap Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus festival in Sheffield, UK, also enjoyed a successful debut from 1-3 September, with performances from the likes of Noel Gallagher’s High Flying Birds, Happy Mondays, Natalie Imbruglia, Confidence Man, and Self Esteem, who also curated one of the days. The AGN-promoted event will return to the Don Valley Bowl from 30 August to 1 September next year.

“We knew Sheffield had an unbelievable reputation for hosting major live music events, and it was our dream to come here and continue that legacy,” says event organiser Ali O’Reilly.

Other 2023 debutants include Spex Festival, which took place in the Swiss capital of Bern; Rubix Festival, held in Porto Montenegro; Tivat World in Montenegro; and Power Trip, which launches at the home of Coachella – Empire Polo Club, Indio, California – in the US in October, with headliners including Guns N’ Roses, Iron Maiden, AC/DC, and Metallica.

Elsewhere, Primavera Sound has announced its debut in Peru, with a series of concerts in Lima set for this November ahead of its 2023 Latin American festival run.

The four dates, which will be held under the Road to Primavera Sound banner, will start with The Cure at the National Stadium on 22 November, with support from The Twilight Sad and Just Mustard.

Multiespacio Costa 21 will then host Bad Gyal on 1 December, followed by the Pet Shop Boys – who bring their *Dreamworld* greatest hits show to the venue on 7 December – and Bad Religion on 8 December.

The shows will act as a precursor for Primavera Sound’s second editions in Buenos Aires, Argentina (25-26 November) and São Paulo, Brazil (2-3 December), as well as the festival’s premiere in Luque, Paraguay (7 December) and Bogotá, Colombia (9-10 December).

The Cure will headline all four editions in their first shows in South America in a decade.

Organisers, however, confirmed that Primavera Sound Madrid will not return in 2024. The festival debuted in the Spanish capital in June, featuring acts such as Kendrick Lamar, Depeche Mode, Four Tet, Fred Again..., Skrillex, Rosalía, Calvin Harris, Måneskin, and St. Vincent.

But its first day proper was cancelled for “safety reasons” amid “persistent severe weather,” which impacted pre-production. There were also complaints from fans about long queues on the

other two days of the event, held at the 96,000-cap Ciudad de Rock (City of Rock) in Arganda del Rey.

Explaining their decision, promoters cited “external difficulties [...] in the final stretch of pre-production,” which led to “one of the most complicated” editions of Primavera Sound ever.

The future of Sweden’s Gefle Metal Festival (GMF) is also uncertain after organisers announced the 2024 edition will not take place. GMF has been held annually in Gasklockorna, Gävle since 2016, with FKP Scorpio stepping in to ensure this year’s festival could proceed following the collapse of promoter TADC Sweden.

“Gefle Metal Festival has never been about making any significant profits. It has been a festival driven by passion – because we truly love this,” says a statement. “At the same time, the finances have to add up, and the truth is that – even though we are proud of each and every year of the Gefle Metal Festival – it has been challenging to make ends meet every year.”

In addition, new US hip-hop festival, IYKYK was called off due to “irreparable damage” to the main stage caused by a recent monsoon.

The one-day festival, promoted by Relentless Beats and Universatile Music, was due to take place on 9 September at Phoenix Raceway in Avondale, Arizona, with sets from Lil Uzi Vert, Metro Boomin, Rico Nasty, Denzel Curry, Jeelel, and more.

IYKYK was the latest festival to be disrupted by extreme weather conditions in 2023, following in the footsteps of the likes of Bluedot (UK), Pitchfork Festival Chicago (US), Dutch festivals Awakenings, Bospop, and Wildeburg, and Alexandra Palace’s Kaleidoscope Festival in the UK.

Other festivals to have been cancelled or postponed for a myriad of reasons this season include Lights on Festival (US), 88rising’s 88 Degrees & Rising (Indonesia), Made in America (US), Fest Festival (Poland), Falls Festival (Australia), Rolling Loud (US), Summerburst (Sweden), Hills of Rock (Bulgaria), InMusic (Croatia), Wireless Germany, Hear Hear (Belgium), and Tempelhof Sounds and Tempelhof Sounds Presents (Germany).

The Town sold 500,000 tickets for its opening edition in September



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“In order for live music to thrive in the future, it must thrive at the grassroots, in our local communities”

SHAIN SHAPIRO

Since we emerged from the lockdown, live music has bounced back. However, the majority of growth has been in tickets sold for gigs in arenas, stadiums, and large venues, demonstrating that fans have prioritised music they are already familiar with.

Yet, this growth has not been without its challenges.

Spend on tickets to see grassroots music venues has stagnated. Many artists have reduced or cancelled tours because of the toll it takes on their mental health, while the accelerating climate emergency is causing cancellations and insurance premiums to increase, and higher costs are making it less approachable to tour as a primary source of income.

With all this change, preparing for the future is challenging. And I believe for us, as a sector, to do so to the best of our abilities, one of the best places to start is in our local communities, no matter how large or small.

In order for live music to thrive in the future, it must thrive at the grassroots, in our local communities. While this includes a need for purpose-built arenas and stadiums to facilitate larger, more familiar artists, tackling some of the most existential challenges the sector may face in the future starts in smaller spaces and places and the policies, procedures, and people responsible for governing them. This is why for live music to thrive in the future, it must be better engaged with local government. In doing so, not only can we reap the rewards that are clearly being made at the top of the sector, but we can grow it from its grassroots as a partner and solutions provider to addressing some of the biggest challenges we face in all our communities.

More local venues could lead to less touring. Better local permitting and tax frameworks could spur, and sustain, local green investment in venues or festival infrastructure. More educational opportunities and vocational training built into skills policies could help create a future workforce both in the front- and back-of-house. And stronger partnerships, be it with the police, licensing authorities, or planning committees can help reduce decision times and save costs. But all of this starts at home.

This is why I wrote *This Must Be The Place: How Music Can Make Your City Better*.

The influence first came from getting involved as a volunteer in the Live Music Taskforce, a volunteer committee to address why, at the time, 35% of small-to-medium-sized music venues had closed. I was given the opportunity to contribute to the Grassroots Music Venues Rescue Plan, which initiated a series of changes in London and later throughout the UK, to strengthen

planning laws to – theoretically – better protect music venues.

When reflecting on what happened, I realised change can only happen if those responsible for it – in this instance, local planning officers – were aware of what the change was and how to implement it.

Fast-forward nearly a decade and I have been involved in similar conversations in over 100 cities, and everywhere I go has the same problems. Density breeds environmental health challenges, such as sound and noise complaints. Permitting and tax frameworks remain anachronistic. Relationships fray because decisions taken for decades remain, simply because that is the way it has always been.



In the book, I propose a different path; if we take an active approach in how our cities, towns, and places are governed, we can foster better conditions not only for ourselves but for everyone. And if we took an active, intentional approach – in all our local councils – to partnership, it would mean less noise complaints, cheaper permits, or more support for, and recognition of, live music over time. And as we face a series of headwinds that will force us to adapt, having this seat at the table – in all our towns and cities – will insulate our business and, over time, improve our bottom lines.

The book contains a blueprint for how to do this. It is not solely about live music – I focus on the wider music ecosystem, which includes education, health, and wellbeing, for example – but it often starts with, and is most influenced by, live music.

In 2018, I co-wrote a report with the UN World Tourism Organization arguing for music tourism to be recognised as a standalone sector. This would mean more analysis, more investment and, I believed, more engagement to support music. It was welcomed but little changed.

Five years later, every city that hosted a Taylor Swift concert is lauding the impact of music on tourism and the local economy.

With all live music, large and small, now is our opportunity to increase our value and influence. But we need to work together and recognise that for the future of live music to succeed, we need all our cities, towns, and places to thrive. And we can, and should, lead that change. **IQ**

Shain Shapiro is director of the Center for Music Ecosystems, and founder and executive chairman of Sound Diplomacy. His new book, *This Must Be The Place: How Music Can Make Your City Better*, published by Penguin Random House, is available in all good bookstores through all the usual online retail outlets.

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NEW SIGNINGS & NEW MUSIC



Tracking the artists with new representation at booking agencies around the world.

SAM QUEALY (AU)

AGENT **Laetitia Descouens** | Primary Talent International

A ‘techno-pop princess’, Sam Quealy deftly mixes gritty and glam with her otherworldly sound and avant-garde stage presence. Her wildly erotic and provocative singles have captivated audiences worldwide, championing a sense of liberation and independence with a campy flair.

Making waves since her debut in 2021, she released a five-track EP *NIGHTSHADE* last year and has since released a handful of singles in preparation for her debut album, set to release this October. She graced the festival circuit this year with performances at Popkultur (DE), Waves (AT), Lila Queer Festival (CH), and Reeperbahn (DE), and she’s set to return to her Australian home with a performance in Sydney early next year.

WHEN CHAI MET TOAST (IN)

AGENT **Rich Quarterman** | Midnight Mango

With a contagious sound that blends indie folk and pop rock and swirls lyrics in English, Hindi, and Tamil, When Chai Met Toast have established themselves as genre pioneers. Within its seven years of existence, the quartet has embarked on two sold-out tours of the UK and Ireland, headlined numerous Indian festivals, and performed at the 2022 Singapore Grand Prix and Expo 202 Dubai. They’ve created a loyal fan base in a nation where mainstream media thrives almost solely on Bollywood and regional music.

Building on two EPs, they released their debut album *When We Feel Young* in 2021, which helped propel them to fanbases worldwide. They recently released their third EP, *LYTS*, in May, cementing their joyful, heartwarming sound.

IQ HOTTEST NEW ACTS SEPTEMBER 2023

Fastest growing artists in terms of music consumption, aggregated across a number of online sources.

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH	ARTIST
1	-	SNOW WIFE (US)
2	7	ISSEY CROSS (UK)
3	-	JUJU<3 (US)
4	2	1017 ALYX 9SM (US)
5	-	DYLAN GOSSETT (US)
6	14	SLAUSON MALONE 1 (US)
7	165	TEEZO TOUCHDOWN (US)
8	-	GLASS BEAMS (AU)
9	-	WHATSAHEART (US)
10	90	GROOVY (US)
11	161	SOFIA ISELLA (AU)
12	30	DIXON DALLAS (US)
13	-	RUSHY (UK)
14	4	GARRETT ATTERBERRY (US)
15	8	HEADACHE (UK)

Predictions for October

Ceechynaa (UK), Amira Daedric (US), Skeet Bassstripper (BE)

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SLATE OF INDEPENDENTS

With so much of the European festival scene now falling under the management of multinationals, *IQ* news editor **James Hanley** spoke to ten of Europe's brightest indie gatherings to find out what makes them so special – and why they remain so fiercely free...

SHAMBALA (UK)

Becka Whiteley: Shambala Shambala was born when a group of mates opened a little vinyl store in Birmingham (Jibbering Records) and started throwing parties. The parties got bigger and bigger until we had to make them somewhat more official and thus, Shambala was born! Over two decades later, Shambala is still wholly owned by the same five mates. It takes place August in a (terribly kept) secret location in Northamptonshire. As well as being known as a legendary party, Shambala's sustainability efforts and achievements are

considered globally pioneering. Expect an incredibly creative, joyful, silly, family-friendly, four-day escape from reality – with quite possibly the most colourful and friendly audience on the planet.

- ▶ **Daily capacity:** 20,000
- ▶ **Next event:** August 2024
- ▶ **2023 lineup:** Congo Natty, Say She She, L'Entourloop, The Go! Team, Grove, Fabio & Grooverider, Chali 2na, Dutty Moonshine Big Band colourful and friendly audience on the planet.
- ▶ **Stages:** A frankly ludicrous amount for an event of this size. We have over 45 venues in total, 18 of which are music-based – or at least 18 of the

ones we'll tell you about are – there are a few secret music spots to stumble across such as top-secret jazz clubs and a secret woodland ska bar.

▶ **Sponsors:** Absolutely no one – not our style. We fully appreciate this is essential for most festivals to make things work financially but for us personally, it's a total no-no, and we just have to make it work. We're about adventures in Utopia, not adverts in Utopia.

▶ **How it stands out from the crowd:** The total lack of brand sponsors is pretty unusual, even within the independent festival scene. However, the big things that we feel set us apart would be our pioneering sustainability credentials (we've reduced our carbon footprint by over 90% in the past decade; been proudly meat- and fish-free since 2016; been 100% renewably powered for years; and banned plastic bottles and disposable bar cups around a decade ago. And, last but certainly not least, the lineup!

We prioritise putting together a wicked soundtrack that complements the weekend over bringing in the big names you see play at every festival that year. We also try and avoid having a 'two-tier' society within the festival. There are showers across site that are totally free to use, no pamper parlours or swanky expensive feasts – it's more of an old-school, DIY vibe, which we love.

▶ **What is the biggest challenge about remaining independent in 2023?** Budgets are far, far tighter, across the board without any sponsorship money or corporate investment coming in. And, unlike a lot of large, corporate event companies, we can't cut multi-event deals with suppliers or artists, which makes everything a bit more difficult – but it's completely worth it.

▶ **What are the benefits of remaining indie?** The freedom to make radical decisions about our own festival – and the freedom to be as political and gobby as we wish to when there's a cause or issue we want to shout about, which there almost always is.



EXIT (SERBIA)

Dušan Kovačević: EXIT Festival is an award-winning music and cultural event held in Novi Sad. EXIT was born out of the fight for freedom in the year 2000, which will forever be remembered by the unity of many young people who gathered to bring peace through culture for everyone in Serbia and the Balkans.

It takes place at the medieval Petrovaradin Fortress on the banks of the Danube, which provides a unique and picturesque backdrop for the event.

It has grown into one of the biggest independent festivals in the world and gained three best major European awards to confirm that. Attracting an increasingly diverse range of artists and musicians from various genres, as well as audiences from all over the world, EXIT has become a synonym for great entertainment and unforgettable experiences.

EXIT has evolved from a student-led protest into an internationally acclaimed music and cultural event, promoting social engagement, tolerance, and unity. Today we represent one of the biggest independent festival groups in the world, with more than 26 events in ten countries in the last year alone.

► **Capacity:** 50,000

► **Next event:** 11–14 July 2024

► **2023 lineup:** The Prodigy, Wu-Tang Clan, Skrillex, Eric Prydz, Alesso, Chase & Status, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Nina Kraviz

► **Stages:** 40 stages featuring many genres. One

main stage devoted to live performances by bands and live performers and another to dance and electronic music.

► **Sponsors:** We've been supported by national telecommunications company MTS and many international partners. This year, we established a great sponsorship agreement with one of the biggest F&B Serbian brands Gorki List.

► **How it stands out from the crowd:** Our festival has tradition, it is massive, it has a very specific and important location, but the most important thing is its eclectic spirit. When coming to EXIT you get a kaleidoscope of experiences.

The location allows us to showcase many genres without one overpowering the other. Yes, the biggest stages are the most popular but the small stages are the spirit of the festival.

► **What is the biggest challenge about remaining independent in 2023?** The increasing costs. Corporate-backed festivals often have significant

financial resources and more established connections that allow them to obtain funding in times of crisis. The pandemic was by far the biggest challenge of that kind, yet it is not the only one.

► **What are the benefits of remaining independent?** Freedom is undoubtedly the greatest benefit. Independence allows us to think and grow beyond financial reports. Excel sheets are not the ultimate god of the festival; creativity and artistic expression are. This way we get to cultivate the spirit of the festival that made it so magical in the first place.

We are dealing with people's emotions, and staying independent allows us the freedom to express our vision and nurture the soul of the festival without having to worry about short-term financial influences that would significantly limit us.

Being able to maintain a strong bond with our community while bringing positive change to society is one of our organisation's top priorities, despite it sometimes not being a profitable activity.

MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL (SWITZERLAND)

Mathieu Jaton: Created in 1967 by Claude Nobs, the Montreux Jazz Festival has become an essential event, generating fantastic stories and legendary performances. Nearly 250,000 spectators come to the shores of Lake Geneva every year to enjoy a breath-taking setting and concerts with renowned acoustics.

Nina Simone, Miles Davis, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Leonard Cohen, and David Bowie have all delivered historic performances in Montreux. Deep Purple (*Smoke on the Water*) and Prince (*Lavaux*) penned songs about the legendary location, while David Bowie and Freddie Mercury came to live in the region and record albums, the latter both solo and with Queen.

While jazz and blues are at the heart of the event, more recently, Muse, Radiohead, Kendrick Lamar, Pharrell Williams, Ed Sheeran, Alicia Keys, Adele, Lady Gaga, Tyler The Creator and Rita Ora have played.

Since its creation, the festival has been a forward-thinking organisation that has carefully recorded all its concerts. With more than 11,000 hours of live music, this unique collection of audio-visual archives is now registered in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

► **Capacity:** 15,000

► **Next event:** 5–20 July 2024

► **2023 lineup:** Bob Dylan, Lionel Richie, Lil Nas X, Sam Smith, Simply Red, Iggy Pop, Generation Sex, Norah Jones, Seal, Joe Bonamassa, Nile Rodgers & Chic, Mark Ronson

► **Stages:** 13, 11 of which are free

► **Sponsors:** Audemars Piguet, Accor, Julius Baer, Super Bock, Vaudoise, Swisscom

► **How it stands out from the crowd:** An eclectic lineup of legends from the past, present and future. A privileged relationship with the artists. A unique proximity between artists and audience. A rich history that has put the festival firmly on the map of the world's most important music events. A magnificent setting between Lake Geneva and the mountains.

► **What is the biggest challenge about remaining independent in 2023?** Maintaining our position as a key summer music event in an increasingly competitive market and how to continue to offer a rich, high-quality programme in such a small capacity.

► **What are the benefits of remaining indie?** Freedom.

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SUPPLIERS & DEMAND

Production suppliers might only be involved with major tours and festivals on a contract basis, but they can play a key role in helping them keep fans, artists, and sustainability officers smiling. *IQ* spoke to four leading production managers and some of the most innovative suppliers that they work with.

Words: Derek Robertson

Whilst touring schedules and calendars have returned to something approaching normality – and fan demand for live music remains high – challenges remain when setting up and executing world-class events. Behind the scenes, the real champions are the legions of experts responsible for staging and lighting; sound, screens, and video; security; fencing and barriers; trucking, bussing, and freight; and general infrastructure (production offices, toilets, etc) – the very building blocks of an event's success.

As Lars Liliengren from Roskilde Festival put it: "Our suppliers' input, professionalism, and perspectives are essential for us to create the best-possible audience experience."

We wanted to find out who some of the suppliers of choice are, who's doing the most to improve their carbon footprint, and who they champion because of their innovation, sustainability, creativity, and overall operational brilliance. Plus, of course, tales of when things went wrong, and the extraordinary lengths suppliers have gone to ensure the show goes on.

Our virtual debate guests were Lars Liliengren, head of production at Roskilde Festival; Andy Grey of Andy Grey Productions Ltd (Download, Wireless, Finsbury Park, and Leeds festivals); Stefan Elenkov of FEST Team Bulgaria, the biggest live music promoter in Bulgaria; and Mark Ward of Proper Productions (BST Hyde Park and All Points East festivals).

Which suppliers do you automatically turn to when you begin planning a new event?

Stefan Elenkov: For every event – whether in Bulgaria or abroad – it's Joker Media Rental.

Mark Ward: We don't have a "we always use" set of suppliers – we try to take a much broader approach and use whoever is most appropriate for the job. However, we tend to stick with suppliers once we have slotted them into a job and they've performed well at sane pricing. My view has long been: "It's now your job to lose," – another supplier coming in and saying they'll do it cheaper has to back that up with a lot of substance before we take that approach seriously. The incumbent supplier will always be given every reasonable opportunity to keep the gig.

Is this quite a common practice? It seems a fair way of doing it.

Andy Grey: It's the same for me. I don't favour any particular suppliers when planning a tour or festival, though I do have a "top three" or so in each discipline that I will reach out to and ask for a quote. Over the years, I've worked with many different suppliers who all have their individual strengths, so I can narrow down the choice to a few different options on a show-by-show basis.

Lars Liliengren: Yeah, we have long-term relationships with all our suppliers, too – many of them have been with us for the last ten or so years and some for over 20! We work with all our suppliers from when we start planning the next festival, from as early as August, as we like to engage suppliers in the planning as early as possible.

Sustainability is an understandably hot topic. Who, in your opinion, is the supplier that's doing the most to improve their carbon footprint, and, therefore, the live music industry as a whole?

Stefan: Bulgarian suppliers have to develop further in this direction. From our perspective, we have plans for how to best improve our carbon footprint, following the good practices of the music industry, but to be honest, we do not receive a lot of support from our partners when it comes to actively working towards this goal. We hope that with time, and following international and global trends, this will start happening soon.

Andy: PRG seem to be the most visibly proactive supplier with regard to their sustainability protocols, though they are not alone in this.

Lars: All our suppliers pay attention to their carbon footprint, but it's a challenge, as we are a festival and, therefore, a temporary event. Suppliers are always looking at how transport can be handled with a lower carbon footprint.

To give two examples, all our internal artist transport handled onsite is done with electric

minibuses, and the stages at Roskilde Festival are all on City Power. Furthermore, we are testing a battery backup solution to replace conventional backup generators.

Mark: It's hard – if not impossible – to pick just one. Here at Proper, we've been involved in the push for sustainability for a very long time; Stage 3 at the Isle of Wight festival was powered by sustainable recharged batteries 17 years ago, and we did a lot of work with Coldplay during and after their *Twisted Logic* tour to start them on the road to sustainable touring.

But we've long been supporters of the fabulous folks at AGF and all they do across multiple platforms to push for meaningful change – not just numbers and lots of talk about “working towards” doing better. And many companies are doing great work now – special mention must go to Globalmotion for their work alongside DHL to take sustainable thinking to a massive global operator.

Can you think of any instances where you've had an emergency situation where a tour supplier has gone above and beyond to ensure the next performance has happened?

Mark: Many, many times! And not just suppliers but other artists' teams, festivals, and promoters, too, all helping out when stuff doesn't show up or breaks.

One for all and all for one?

Mark: Yeah, exactly! The standout for me was with Duran Duran, many moons ago. [Sound engineer] Kevin Pruce's front-of-house desk went up in flames for no particular reason during soundcheck at a shed show somewhere in middle America. M.L. Procise III was our account handler at Showco at the time, so I called him up. He said: “Big hitter – I luv ya, but please stop talking! Let me get on the phone to someone that isn't you and get you another one.” It was there a few hours later.

Andy: It's difficult to cite any one instance when things have gone very wrong – which is a pretty rare occurrence, thankfully – but I can't think of an instance where a supplier has not gone the extra mile to make a show happen. The suppliers and people who work in our industry are incredibly self-motivated and resourceful, and failure is simply not an option.

Things must have gotten somewhat more complicated over the last few years, too, with all the disruption around Covid and various other crises.

Andy: Yeah, the post-Covid situation has created a huge number of challenges, most centering around the availability of crew, equipment, and transport. Download 2022 was a particularly difficult show for these reasons, particularly with regards to the availability of riggers. The

three headliners – Kiss, Iron Maiden, and Biffy Clyro – all had huge productions with no commonality, meaning that PRG and I had to completely change the way we normally build the show and come up with a plan that enabled us to deliver three complex productions on consecutive days.

Festivals must be particularly challenging in that regard.

Lars: Absolutely! At every festival, we have situations – they vary in scale and can be anything from lost, broken, or delayed gear to more complicated stage-specific solutions. But whenever a situation occurs, our suppliers help across stages. We try to work with an open and trustful mindset and always involve anyone relevant.

I can't point out one supplier as standing out, because they are all outstanding and always ready to work together with the festival and each other. Involving suppliers as much as possible in this way creates trust, and we benefit from this whenever situations occur. We are all in it together.

And we guess the international element can add an extra dimension to existing challenges, too?

Stefan: Many emergencies occur because logistic companies face difficulties in crossing borders fast enough, since Bulgaria is not a

part of the Schengen Agreement yet. That's why they always ask for our help, so they can stick to their schedule and arrive on time for our gig or their next gig. We hope that when we (eventually) join Schengen, this won't be a problem anymore.

One example was a very tricky situation with our sold-out Arctic Monkeys show, in summer 2022. It just so happened that the whole production for the show exited the EU with trucks that did not have the proper documents to enter back into Bulgaria from another EU country, one that was not in Schengen. The situation was even worse because the logistics company was British, and back then, there were extra obstacles because of Brexit. We needed to solve this extremely quickly so we could transport the production and start the show on time.

We found a Bulgarian logistic partner who sent Bulgarian trucks to Turkey, they reloaded all production elements and got back to the border. But then we faced another problem – a four-kilometre queue of trucks waiting to enter Bulgaria! So, we had to cooperate with the Bulgarian and Turkish border authorities to get our trucks to the front of the line and across ASAP.

And all the effort was... Rental did everything... time, so the running... change and, in the... success.



Behind the Scenes at Coachella 2023: The IT infrastructure/data services crew, including teammates from Clair Global, Britannia Row Productions, and AudioRent Clair, on-site for 49 days

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FROM PUNK ROCK TO PROMOTER

Having made a name for himself at a renowned music magazine, Stephan Thanscheidt was head-hunted to join burgeoning promoter FKP Scorpio.

Now, 15 years later, he co-heads one of Europe's biggest promoter groups and festival organisers, having become a much-respected industry leader in the process.

Gordon Masson learns more about the football-loving former punk's journey...

Growing up midway between Düsseldorf and Germany's border with the Netherlands, music was always in the air for young Stephan Thanscheidt, as his mother played both clarinet and saxophone in a local orchestra.

Any notion of teenage Stephan taking up a woodwind instrument was out of the question, however. "I was a punk playing in punk bands," he says. "I started with guitar, but I also played bass guitar when the other guitarists were better than me, which was quite often the case. And I was also singing, which is something I absolutely cannot do, but for the early-to-mid-90s punk bands, it was good enough."

Performing in those bands – "There were quite a few of them" – took Thanscheidt around

venues in his native Mönchengladbach, as well as regular slots in the likes of Krefeld, Aachen, Düsseldorf, Cologne and other nearby cities. A flame had been ignited, and his natural curiosity found him wanting to discover more about the mechanics of the live music business.

"At some point, I started booking my own band," he says. "But this was in the days where there were no mobiles or the Internet or email. I'd use the old, green rotary phone in my parents' living room, and I'd just call up venues and bars and stuff, as well as some school and university places. And then I also started doing the same thing for the bands of my friends."

"At the same time, I'd started working in youth centres. We had two great ones in Mönchengladbach, and I did everything there –





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GREEN GUARD

**SUSTAINABLE SUPPLIERS
AND INNOVATORS 2023**

GUARDIANS



Welcome to **IQ Magazine's 2023 Green Guardians** – our annual recognition of those eco-warriors and innovators at the forefront of the battle to make the live entertainment industry more sustainable.



The Green Guardians is spearheaded by *IQ* and an international panel of sustainability experts to highlight and congratulate companies and organisations who are improving the live music business when it comes to being more environmentally friendly.

This year's list of Green Guardians includes 20 entries across a wide range of event suppliers, campaigners, and solutions

providers, all of whom are working tirelessly to reduce the carbon footprint of the entertainment business. One of the Green Guardians initiatives is to help decision makers toward sustainable choices. We hope these credentials, and initiatives provided, will make a cleaner world in the future.

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ISLAND OF FREEDOM

SZIGET FESTIVAL TURNS 30

Photo © Alain Dodeler



As Sziget Festival chalks up its landmark 30th anniversary, **Mark Beaumont** reports that its evolution from student event to global phenomenon shows no signs of waning, as it looks toward the future.

For 30 years, the old railway bridge across the Danube to Old Buda Island has, for six days each August, become a portal to another world. A place where gigantic inflatable sculptures of heads made from eyes rise from the earth. Where sci-fi corridors of light guide you to arenas rammed with drag queens and late-night ravers. Where the world's greatest circus performers, dance troupes, global ensembles, and theatrical extravaganzas come together; the biggest stars and most exciting rising acts blast brilliance from the main stages; and on every pathway, you might come across a real-life Super Mario race in progress or gigantic antique steampunk DJ engines honking out cranky gramophone dance music.

This is Sziget – dubbed the Island of Freedom – where any prejudices and bigotries are left on the mainland and 500,000 annual visitors from across the world are encouraged to live their true selves during one of Europe's biggest, most inclusive, and most broad-minded festivals: Hungary's own Glastonbury and a unique key player in the global festival season.

In this 30th anniversary year – the 29th event, due to the Covid break – fans at the main stage lose the chance to see Guetta's laser-strewn electro-pop, Eilish's dark-hearted alt-pop, or Machine's pagan worship. The FreeDome tent, the main stage, and the xx fill the campsite with the

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MARKET REPORT
THE NETHERLANDS

DUTCH COURAGE

As a barometer for the health of the international live music industry, the Netherlands is a pretty good bet. The nation's promoters have bounced back post-Covid, albeit with a series of challenges that their peers internationally will recognise. But **Adam Woods** learns that a clampdown on tourism in Amsterdam might provide the rest of the nation with opportunities...

Industrious, outward-looking, and well-located in the heart of Europe, The Netherlands isn't immune to bad times – but when there are good times to be had, you can generally assume the Dutch are getting their share of them.

In August, the Association of Dutch Music Venues and Festivals' (VNPF) *Poppodia and Festivals in Figures 2022* report, showed that 48

key music venues and 55 festivals drew 7.6m visits in 2022, compared to 883,000 in 2021 and 8.6m in the last pre-Covid year of 2019.

And while rising costs and an accompanying spike in ticket prices offer their own challenges, the anecdotal health of the business in 2023 – proclaimed by just about everyone in the industry – indicates that we can probably declare The Netherlands' comeback to be complete.

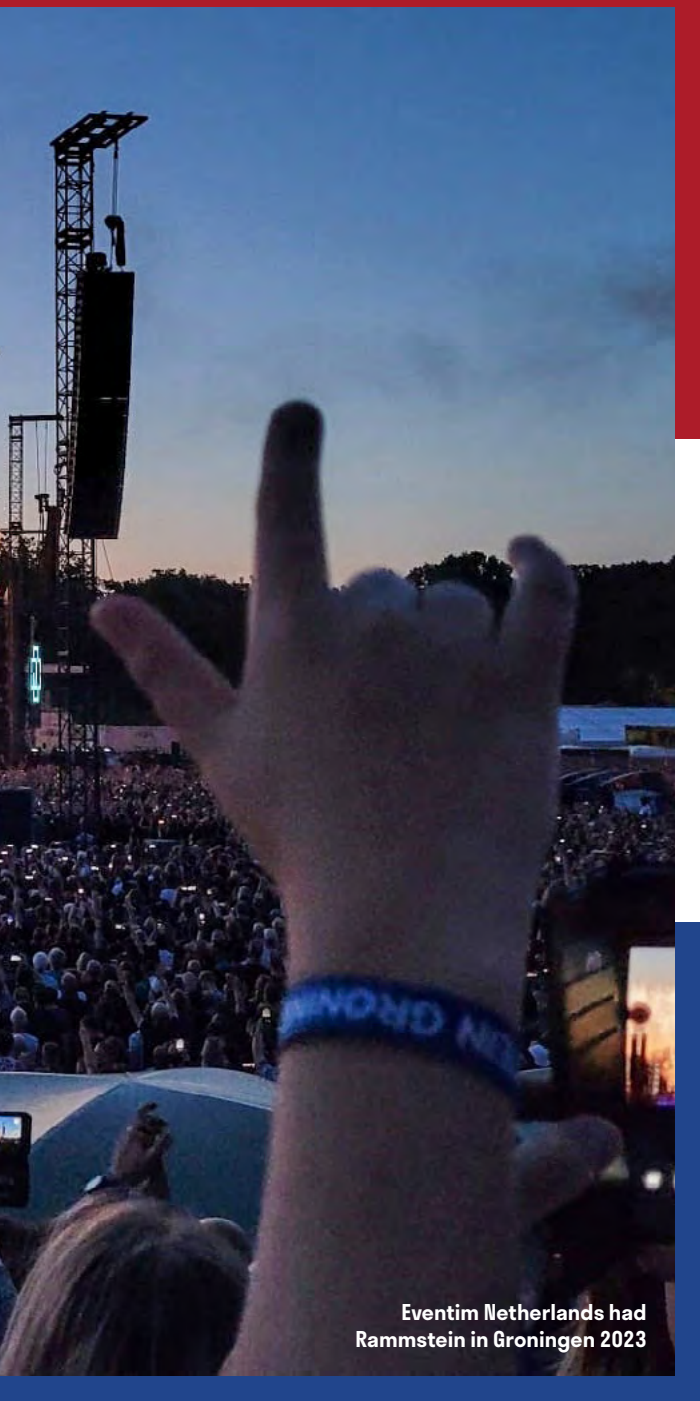
Mojo Concerts, the local Live Nation arm and by some distance the biggest promoter in The Netherlands over 55 years, has had another banner year, to add to a barnstorming 2022.

"This whole year has been an amazing year for us again," says Mojo head promoter Kim Bloem. "Last year was already crazy because in nine months, we had more visitors than we normally had in a year.

And 2023 again is a record year, specifically for stadium shows."

Mojo chalked up 17 of them in 2023, most in Amsterdam's 55,855-cap Johan Cruijff ArenA (AKA Amsterdam ArenA) – four Coldplays, three Bruce Springsteens, three Harry Styles, two apiece for The Weeknd, Metallica, and Beyoncé, and one for Guns N' Roses.

"We never have that many stadium shows in one year," says Bloem,



Eventim Netherlands had Rammstein in Groningen 2023

“but for obvious reasons, 2022 was not a good year for those acts – it’s such a huge investment to tour on that level, and with all the uncertainties and travel restrictions still in place, it just didn’t make sense. It was a challenge to get everything lined up, and it’s amazing that it all fitted in so well.”

The Netherlands has form for fitting things in. With a population of around 17.5m in just 41,526 sq

km, it is more densely populated than any other substantial country in Europe, and its level of consumer demand puts it firmly on the agenda of any tour of any significance.

Its festivals – Lowlands, Mysteryland, Pinkpop, Amsterdam Dance Event, Awakenings, Best Kept Secret, North Sea Jazz, and the rest – have local appeal and major international pull; and secondary markets such as Rotterdam (while very

“2023 again is a record year, specifically for stadium shows.”

Kim Bloem | Mojo Concerts

much ancillary to Amsterdam), have a growing appeal of their own.

So, what’s the secret of Dutch success? Joost Aanen, co-founder and CEO of Amsterdam- and Eindhoven-based ticketing platform Eventix, thinks he knows.

“What I think is unique about The Netherlands and Dutch culture is that because it’s such a small country, without a lot of natural resources, the culture is very much focused around trading with neighbours,” he says. “It’s always been a country of merchants, with a global orientation.

“So, it’s a good foundation to build an entertainment industry. If you look at the Dutch DJs, they also have this global focus. And meanwhile, Dutch culture and government governance was always quite lenient here, so festivals developed very early on, and that side of the industry is very experienced.”

That doesn’t entirely account for the bulletproof demand, however. Friendly Fire promoter Lauri van Ommen believes the market in 2023 might have already outstripped its pre-Covid form.

“I think it may be even stronger than it was,” she says. “A lot of people realised during Covid that they want to go out, they want to enjoy a concert, that it’s their time to relax. And I think people also want to travel again, and The Netherlands is convenient for the UK, for Belgium, for France. It’s so easy to get to.”

But while promoters, venues, and the vast majority of festivals report good times, like most European markets, The Netherlands has certain structural issues to contend with.

Last year’s staff drain has not entirely been reversed, with reports of elevated rates for experienced technical professionals. Supplier costs have bitten hardest among areas of the market that can least afford it, including free festivals, and the increasing conservatism of ticket-buyers, while good news for

well-known names, has left smaller venues and newer artists struggling for their share of attention.

“At the moment, I think the excitement is mainly at the financial departments of the promoters who promote the big shows and festivals,” says Jacco van Lanen of independent Double Vee Concerts. “Doesn’t matter what the prices are, the people buy tickets.

“On the smaller level, I see more challenges than excitement. More and more venues have stopped booking support acts because it’s too expensive to have one due to longer working hours, higher wages, and more catering costs. The most exciting thing is that there are, luckily, still many very talented young people who are incredibly creative in getting attention and trying to build their way up.”

Promoters

While Mojo remains dominant, the well-told story of the past dozen years or so among the promoters of The Netherlands has been the rise to prominence of a healthy range of big-hitting competitors. These include FKP Scorpio’s Friendly Fire, the independent Greenhouse Talent, and the Dutch-talent-focused Agents After All, which last December became the latest acquisition of the increasingly sizeable All Things Live group. The clear impression is of a market that can accommodate a bit of healthy rivalry.

“It is a competitive market, but it is a good one. It just feels stable,” says Greenhouse Talent promoter Wouter de Wildt. “I believe international agencies appreciate a range of choices.”

“We see a lot of agencies coming to us,” he says. “Something different, and we have to promote it.”

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YOUR SHOUT

What is your most memorable moment from the 2023 festival season?

TOP SHOUT

For this year's Roskilde Festival, our lineup was bestowed with some young, diverse, and extraordinary headliners, including Rosalía, Lil Nas X, and Burna Boy. They all delivered spectacular shows, and to see our festival crowd embracing such amazing artists and their powerful messages of hope and inclusion really bodes well for the future of our festival. Especially because we see these themes running through the lineup all the way to the rising stars that joined us from around the globe.

Anders Wahrén | Roskilde Festival

At big gigs, I spend most of my time checking on the audience and not watching the show. At Imagine Dragons, at Lovestream in Bratislava, there was a six- or seven-year-old boy with his mum by the front barrier. The boy was in total ecstasy for the whole show – screaming, howling, clapping, cheering, jumping, beaming, singing every word. Magic!

Nick Hobbs | Charmenko

The Prodigy at Mad Cool – I suffered for it the next day, but I danced like a teenager for the entire time they were on stage and had a blast. And of course, getting to spend three days at Mad Cool with my favourite Scottish magazine editor!

Gill Park | MGR

Looking back at this summer's festival season, two memories will remain. First of all, German punk rock veterans Die Toten Hosen closing the

main stage of Rock am Ring with *You'll Never Walk Alone* with bengalo lights, smoke pots, and giant flags in the audience. And seeing the legendary Billy Joel at BST Hyde Park in London was one for the books.

Dirk Dreyer | Verti Music Hall Berlin

At FestForums this year, we honoured Michael Lang of Woodstock, George Wein of Newport Jazz Festival, and my dearest friend, Robert Richards of Glastonbury Festival. Hundreds of people watched the memorial that we did for these legends, and I laughed and cried as I watched the footage of these seminal men in the festival world. Let's hope they're making music in the heavens above!

Laurie Kirby | FestForums.com

Of all the artists you'd expect to see in Hull, Sean Paul must be up there with the unexpected, but

of course, up there with the best. We had the pleasure of hosting Sean Paul for our launch night with the venue's new naming partner, Connexin Live. The sold-out show saw the crowd bouncing off the *Temperature* brought to East Riding of Yorkshire from Kingston, Jamaica.

Raven Twigg | ASM Global

Robbie Williams telling his life story to include hanging out with Oasis, which gave him the excuse to play *Don't Look Back in Anger*!!

John Giddings | Solo

Rick Astley and Blossoms playing The Smiths at Glastonbury. They should have played the Pyramid Stage.

Dmitry Zaretsky | Honeycomb Live

Personally meeting (and for the first time seeing live) our new agency signing BIRDEATSBABY from Bristol, UK, at a small unknown festival in Germany.

Frank Süpfle | International Touring and Management GmbH

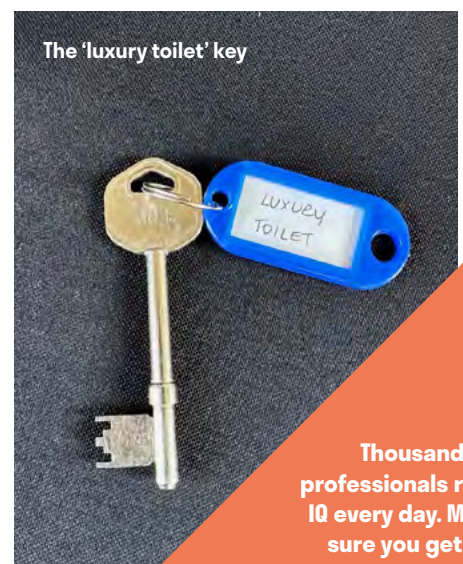
Graspop Festival Belgium – they had this under-stage tunnel all LED lit, which took you directly to the FOH desk, which was so helpful for crew and bands, and it also looked uber cool!

I have so many fave bands at the festivals for 2023 and am of course biased towards the acts K2 represent; it's great to be a fan of the music you are lucky enough to represent. However, a band that's not on the K2 roster that was A LOT OF FUN to watch and have a boogie to was Electric Callboy – I loved their set at Tuska!

Sharon Richardson | K2 Agency

This would be a highlight for sure [see below]. The perks of touring with Ms. Grace Jones!

Suzi Green | Tour Manager



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