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IQ139 AN ILMC PUBLICATION
OCTOBER 2025 | £25 | €25

IQ
Live Music Intelligence



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ILMC 38
LONDON 2026
24–27 FEBRUARY

LIMBERING UP FOR ILMC 38

SOLDIERS OF STEEL
The staging sector in 2025

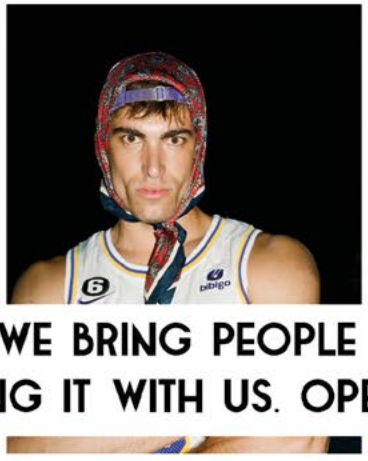
METROPOLITAN MILESTONE
40 years of Metropolis Music

PHOTOGRAPHED BY: ZUZA KRAJEWSKA



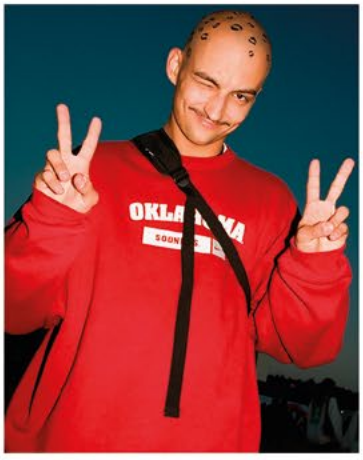







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THE OFFICIAL ILMC CAMPUS NEWSLETTER 38.ILMC.COM 24–27 FEBRUARY 2026

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ILMC'S RETRO SPORTS DAY OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES!

ILMC 38
LONDON 2026
24–27 FEBRUARY

In a business where rivalry can be too serious, ILMC 38 is leaning into the lighter side of competition, channelling the school sports day spirit for three days of relay-tionship building, high-stakes networking, and gold-medal deal-making.

Swapping the festival field for the sports field and switching live performance for (barely) athletic performance, the starting gun has been fired for the 2026 edition of the global live music industry's largest gathering.

This year, every ILMC delegate will be put in a team, and the race will be on to gather points around the conference. More details on this will be revealed nearer the time, but there are sensational prizes to be won, as well as glory and bragging rights.

Whether you're a veteran athlete, the underdog, or the wild card, 3,000 competitors from across the global live music industry will head to London for ILMC 38. To score one of the available places, head to 38.ilmc.com.

It's game on for live music's biggest players!

The most competitive agenda ever!

LMC 38 will see a winning mix of panels, roundtables, bite-size workshops and presentations, plus whole-room debates where everyone is encouraged to get involved and share their expertise.

As the live music business expands, and with its ever-shifting goalposts, so too must the topics on our agenda increase and diversify – so expect ILMC 38 to have an all-star agenda worthy of the top step of the podium.

The annual race to speak with 100+ key professionals and shape the ILMC agenda is well underway. We're expecting 150+ speakers, so if you have a great idea for a session or know someone keen to share their expertise:
jonathan@ilmc.com



The ILMC 38 agenda will be published in the coming weeks.

SPORTS DAY VENUE IS SET

ILMC's sporting extravaganza will take place at the Royal Lancaster, a five-star hotel just a hop, skip, and a jump from Central London and boasting stunning views of the iconic London skyline, weather permitting.

All 400 bedrooms and suites in the hotel are reserved exclusively for ILMC's sports day competitors, with generously discounted rates on all room types.

The room rates increase the closer to ILMC kick-off we get, and rooms do sell out in advance, so to stay in the conference hotel, give yourself a sporting chance and book early.
38.ilmc.com/accommodation



CHAMPIONS STEP UP TO SUPPORT ILMC

An incredible lineup of companies has already stepped up to the plate to support ILMC 38, without whom the conference would look very different indeed.

ILMC's platinum partners are once again Live Nation and Ticketmaster; gold partners are CTS Eventim and Legends Global; and the event's silver partners are AXS, BWO, DEAG, Showsec, and Tysers

To find out more about partnering with ILMC:
marketing@ilmc.com
+44 (0) 203 743 0302
38.ilmc.com/supporting-ILMC



What's up for grabs?

An ILMC conference pass comes with a host of benefits, including:

- Access to all ILMC panels, presentations, networking areas, and most events.
- Access to ILMC Futures Forum and ILMC Touring Entertainment LIVE.
- An invitation list restricted to the industry's top movers and shakers.
- Complimentary five-star lunches.
- Complimentary tea and coffee breaks.
- Heavily discounted accommodation rates.
- Access to the ILMC Networking Scheme.
- The Globetrotters Conference Guide, which includes contact information for all delegates.
- An ILMC delegate bag.
- Free entry to shows across London during ILMC via Soho Calling and Access All Areas.
- Discounted entry to the Green Events & Innovations Conference.
- The first-class facilities of a luxurious London hotel.
- Significant prizes to be won and with proceeds going to charity.
- The opportunity to take part in the biggest music industry sports day competition ever held!



FREE SPOTS FOR JUNIORS!

LEGENDS GLOBAL

The Alia Dann Swift Bursary Scheme will offer a complimentary conference pass and mentoring opportunities to a whopping 30 young professionals in 2026! All thanks to the legendary Legends Global. The scheme is intended to provide a route for live music's brightest upcoming executives to participate in ILMC for the first time and build their network.

Each bursary place holder will be twinned with a dedicated industry mentor and benefit from additional networking opportunities both during and after ILMC via the Legends Global family. The scheme is a fantastic opportunity to share knowledge and ideas and to build new contacts within the industry.

In addition to activity during ILMC itself, the scheme also includes six months of additional mentoring and access to Legend's senior management during that period.

The scheme is open to international applicants and encourages applicants from a diverse background.

Get in there!

38.ilmc.com/bursary



The full programme

The following is provisional. The full agenda will be announced over the coming weeks and many events are yet to be announced.

Tuesday 24 February

PRIVATE COMPANY MEETINGS
09:30–18:00

PRIVATE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS
09:30–18:00

GREEN EVENTS & INNOVATIONS CONFERENCE
09:30–21:00

The **Green Events & Innovations Conference** (GEI) is the longest standing, world-renowned event for leading discourse on sustainability for the live events sector.

With a conference programme that includes presentations, case studies, and debate, GEI addresses the role and responsibility of the event and entertainment industries in tackling the challenges of our transport, food, power systems, and design and materials usage for circularity. Other topics include equality and inclusivity, climate justice, biodiversity, and communications.

GEI takes place in the same venue as ILMC. Entrance to GEI is with a separate ticket, but all ILMC38 delegates can take advantage of a discounted registration fee.

38.ilmc.com/gei

ILMC ASSOCIATION SUMMIT
13:30–17:30

The Summit draws together leading live music associations to meet, network, and present best-case ideas and initiatives. For further information or to represent your association at the meeting:

jon@livemusic.biz

INTERNATIONAL AGF AWARDS
17:15–18:00

A Greener Future presents awards to the top sustainable festivals, venues, events, and suppliers from the global events sector in the last 12 months in the **International AGF Awards** ceremony.

THE 'GET SET... GO!' OPENING PARTY
18:00–20:00

ILMC 38 kicks off *literally* this year with **The 'Get Set... Go!' Opening Party,** which is hosted by our friends at Live Nation.

The event is a major gathering that welcomes hundreds of live music professionals to two hours of complimentary wine, beer, and soft drinks as this year's edition gets underway.

ACCESS ALL AREAS
19:00–00:00

ILMC's **Access All Areas** programme allows delegates to venture forth for a few hours throughout the week in order to catch some of London's hottest shows by flashing their delegate pass.

Wednesday 25 February

THE ILMC EARLY-BIRD RUNNING CLUB
07:30–08:30

MORNING STRETCH CLASS
08:00–08:45

ILMC BURSARY SCHEME BREAKFAST
09:00–10:00

THE COFFEE & TEA-MWORK BREAK
09:00–11:45

NEW DELEGATES' ORIENTATION
09:30–09:55

THE HEAD COACH'S BRIEFING
10:00–10:15

CONFERENCE SESSIONS
10:00–17:00

ILMC's full programme of panels, debates, workshops and keynotes will be announced in the coming weeks.

If you have a suggestion for a particular topic or speaker:
jonathan@ilmc.com

ILMC TOURING ENTERTAINMENT LIVE
10:00–17:00

ILMC Touring Entertainment LIVE (TEL) brings together the world's top show and exhibition producers, rights holders, venue operators, and promoters for a dedicated day on this multibillion-dollar sector. It features multiple panel discussions, keynote interviews, and presentations of shows and projects, alongside curated networking and exhibitors.

If you have a suggestion for a particular topic or speaker:
james@ilmc.com
38.ilmc.com/tel









COMPLIMENTARY DELEGATE LUNCH
12:30–14:30

With ILMC's retro sports day fully underway, competitors can stock up on carbs with a nourishing five-star lunch. Lunches at ILMC are complimentary for delegates, and run across two hours, allowing plenty of time for convos and catch ups.

COMPLIMENTARY MASSAGE
14:00–17:00

THE HAPPY HOUR
17:00–18:00

Details of **The Happy Hour** are coming soon... but with 60 minutes of drinks and hundreds in attendance, it's the best way to get kick-start the evening.

SOHO CALLING
19:00–00:00

ILMC's flagship showcase event **Soho Calling** will return in 2026 for its fourth edition. The multi-venue event will welcome an audience of more than 1,500 music professionals and ticket-buyers, with ILMC delegates having free and priority access to all shows.

Soho Calling pays homage to the rich, diverse, and storied history of London's beating musical heart. Soho has nurtured legendary artists and hosted groundbreaking performances that shaped the global music landscape. The event is more than just a showcase – it is a tribute to Soho's profound impact on music and culture, and a commitment to supporting the next generation of talent.

38.ilmc.com/soho-calling

Thursday 26 February



THE ILMC EARLY-BIRD RUNNING CLUB
07:30–08:30

MORNING STRETCH CLASS
08:00–08:45

WOMEN IN LIVE MORNING MIXER
09:30–10:30

An informal networking hour for female-identifying live music execs and athletes. There's no specific agenda, just turn up, meet, and enjoy complimentary coffee, tea, and pastries.

THE PENAL-TEA & COFFEE BREAK
09:30–11:30

PRIVATE ASSOCIATION MEETINGS
09:30–18:00

CONFERENCE SESSIONS
10:00–17:00

ILMC's full programme of panels, debates, workshops and keynotes will be announced over the coming weeks.

If you have a suggestion for a particular topic or speaker: **jonathan@ilmc.com**

THE LGBTIQ+ MIXER
11:00–11:45

With *IQ Magazine*'s annual Pride edition now one of the biggest of the year, this gathering brings together the queer community IRL. Enjoy on-the-house refreshments and expand your network of LGBTQ+ executives at this informal get-together.



COMPLIMENTARY DELEGATE LUNCH
12:30–14:30

Stock up on carbs with a nourishing five-star lunch. Lunches at ILMC are complimentary for delegates, and run across two hours, allowing plenty of time for convos and catch ups.

THE NIKOS FUND GRAND PRIZE DRAW
13:30 –14:00

Swap your business card and a small (or large) donation for a chance to win some massive and not-so-massive prizes. Previous prizes have included hotel stays, free venue hire, gig tickets (unsurprisingly), and… scented body wash. Who knows what this year's prizes will be as we raise funds for the ILMC 38 charity.

COMPLIMENTARY MASSAGE
14:00–17:00

THE TRACK & FELD ICE-CREAM EVENT
15:00 –16:00

Feld Entertainment – creators of world-class family shows – dish out ice cream and mementos during their ever-popular ice-cream intermission, providing delegates with a welcome sugar fix and enough energy to star jump into the next round of conference sessions.

MATCH OF THE YEAR FOOTBALL
19:30–21:30

ILMC's distinctly on-theme annual footie match, hosted by **Aiken Promotions**, features the ambitious UK versus the colossal Rest of The World in a 90-minute display of epic skill, bombastic ball handling… and possibly mud. Back of the net! Want to sign up?: **peter@aikenpromotions.com**

THE ARTHURS AFTER PARTY & KARAOKE
22:30–02:30

The Arthurs After Party & Karaoke gives delegates the opportunity to showcase their athletic vocal "prowess" and demonstrate why they work on the *business* side of the music industry, in an event that stretches, inexcusably, into the early hours of Friday morning.

Friday 27 February

MORNING STRETCH CLASS
08:00–08:45

THE FRIDAY TEA & COFFEE BREAK
09:00–11:30

ILMC FUTURES FORUM
10:00–17:30

A full day of debate with an additional delegation of young and emerging live music execs. **ILMC Futures Forum** brings together the people that currently define the business with the emerging execs who will drive its evolution. The agenda features debates, keynotes, mentoring opportunities with senior figures, and lots of networking opportunities.

Young execs can attend Futures Forum as a day-only ticket, while ILMC delegates are free to attend all sessions.

If you have a suggestion for a particular topic or speaker:
lisa@iq-mag.net
38.ilmc.com/futures-forum

THE ILMC AUTOPSY
12:15–13:00

Delegates' have a chance to share feedback and views on ILMC 38 during this informal final conference session.





COMPLIMENTARY DELEGATE LUNCH
12:30–14:30

With the finishing line in sight, a final nourishing and complimentary lunch.

THE 'FINAL WHISTLE' CLOSING DRINKS
17:30-18:30

To commemorate the end of ILMC's sporty retrospective and the wrapping up of Futures Forum, delegates are invited to a final 60 mins of drinks and networking at **The 'Final Whistle' Closing Drinks.**

THE NETWORKING SCHEME

The Networking Scheme allows delegates to communicate with each other in advance of the conference in order to pre-arrange meetings.

The contact details for all delegates will be listed in The Globetrotters Guide (which you receive upon arrival at ILMC), but the Networking Scheme is the only way to access each other's details in advance.

The Networking Scheme goes live in January 2026.
38.ilmc.com/networking-scheme

MEETING SPACE

The Royal Lancaster offers unmatched networking spaces, including the Nine Kings Foyer, The Park Restaurant, and Strangey's Bar, which will once again be hosted by Legends Global. Each of these areas includes comfortable seating, tea & coffee, or bar service.

And we once again have our very own ILMC pub, The Swan, which is just a quick skip from the Royal Lancaster.

Additionally, delegates can book private suites to hold meetings in during ILMC.
Contact louisef@the-tourcompany.co.uk

THE 'GOING FOR GOLD' GALA DINNER & ARTHUR AWARDS

Thursday | 19:00–00:00

The live music industry's equivalent of the Olympic finals is set to reach epic proportions this year as The Arthur Awards 2026 take centre stage at The 'Going for Gold' Gala Dinner.

The evening begins with an opening ceremony featuring a sparkling champagne reception, followed by a five-star, four-course banquet designed by award-winning chefs. Each dish is paired with fine wines befitting the A-listers of live entertainment.

Five hundred of the industry's finest competitors – promoters, agents, venues, festivals, and more – will gather as the envelopes are opened and the winners summoned to the podium to collect their hard-earned Arthur Award medals: eleven categories, countless nominees, and only one victor in each.

38.ilmc.com/gala-dinner

WELLNESS AT ILMC

ILMC is stepping up its wellness offerings in 2026 with the return of the **Early-Bird Running Club** on Wednesday and Thursday, which will get the sportier delegates' blood pumping. For those who prefer a gentler start to the day, the **Morning Stretch Class** on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday will help them find their inner om, and if that's too much, ILMC's professional back massage therapists will be offering complimentary massages on Wednesday and Thursday.

Emerge reinvigorated and ready to get back in the game!

LONDON • 9–11 SEPTEMBER 2025

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL FORUM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH OFFLIMITS BY 7 MUSIC FESTIVAL



More than 1,000 delegates attended the International Festival Forum (IFF) during its 9–11 September encampment in London – and the world's biggest festival talent marketplace enjoyed a very successful 11th annual gathering.

Taking place in and around Central London venue Omeara, IFF was this year presented in association with OFFLIMITS Music Festival and featured the usual mix of agency pop-up offices, conference sessions, speed meetings, showcase concerts, and various mixers and social events, meaning even an afternoon of inclement weather couldn't dampen the mood.

Paul Wilson (CAA), Chris Payne (WME), Alex Bruford (ROAM), and Martje Kremers (Primary) shared case studies in a blockbuster agents panel, moderated by Kim Bloem (Mojo Concerts), and where delegates learned about the unique pulling power of Glastonbury Festival, as well as the different festival strategies agents employ for their artist clients.

Bruford, for instance, spoke of a "three-pronged approach" for Fontaines D.C., involving select festivals in summer 2024, highlighted by some major moments, including headlining Glastonbury's Park Stage, as well as a Reading & Leeds set, "and building into those, so that when the band hit those stages, it would be perfect timing for them." The announcement of an arena tour in April of that same year was also timed to coincide with the release of the lead track from the band's new album, and when it was released in August, "we were able to announce Finsbury Park for the following summer and have a festival summer [in 2025]," revealed Bruford.

IFF's keynote slots were filled by AEG's Jim King and a team from EXIT Festival in Serbia.

Weighing up the 2025 festival season, King, the CEO of AEG Presents UK and European festivals, observed there had been "great

















distress and great success" across the industry. His metrics of success include healthy sponsorship numbers and the raft of headliners under 30 – "a really good barometer for future success." On the other hand, the cost of operations has exacerbated spreadsheets to the point that, "small swings in sales or average net ticket price – 5% off feels like 50% off."

Flagging up the trend of local communities objecting to festival licences, King added that one of the biggest challenges for event organisers during 2025 has been the feeling that they are now unwelcome in urban and city-based environments.

Aside from the many conference debates and workshops, attendees were also treated to showcases by more than 20 acts, represented by the likes of ITB, Primary Talent, Runway, Motion Agency, and ROAM, as well as curated showcase events by Music Venue Trust, Music From Ireland, and The Spanish Wave, making it a truly international affair. Other partners included CAA and FKP Scorpio, who jointly hosted the IFF opening party; WME and UTA both proved as popular as ever with their happy hours; while mixers held by Rock am Ring, Fever, Montreux Jazz Festival, OFFLIMITS, and Pink Bows Foundation added to the social aspects of the event.

Alongside title partner OFFLIMITS, key partners included Eventim, SEE Tickets, Fever, iTicket.Global, Lowline Entertainment Group, LMP Group, TicketSwap, and Tysers Live. IQ



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PRIMARY
pure
ROAM
RUNWAY
UTA
WME
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TYSERS LIVE
iticket.global
tvg hospitality
ticketswap
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atVenu
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FKP SCORPIO
lily
MEGAFORCE The Stage Company
Montreux Jazz Festival
NORDIC WRISTBANDS
universe a ticketmaster company
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DAYLIGHT RAVINGS TIME

AS DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT GROWS IN POPULARITY, HANNA ELLINGTON SPEAKS TO THOSE LEADING THE CHARGE TO EXPAND PROGRAMMING BEYOND TRADITIONAL EVENING SLOTS.

While gig and club-going has traditionally been linked to a good night out, shifts in lifestyles and demographics have led enterprising promoters to look at alternative options. In the post-pandemic landscape, the latest must-see show may take place... well, during the day.

Recently, brands dedicated to afternoon gatherings, from concerts to clubbing, have cropped up around the world. Offering venues a viable revenue stream, and audiences an alternative to late-night antics, the increasingly popular trend of early entertainment is gaining momentum.

DAY TRIPPERS

For the people behind the UK's Day Fever, the daytime disco was supposed to be a one-off in Sheffield ahead of Christmas 2023. It sold out in minutes, and less than two years later, the pop-up event has sold over 210,000 tickets and been staged in nearly 30 different cities around the country.

Led by actress Vicky McClure and husband Jonny Owen, Reverend & The Makers frontman Jon McClure and brother Chris McClure (both unrelated to Vicky), and Tramlines co-founder James O'Hara, Day Fever has snowballed in popularity since its emergence.

"There are a bunch of people who feel a little bit left behind culturally and a bit like they don't know where their place is in the modern world," says Jon McClure. "There's something very simple and uncomplicated about Day Fever that people gravitate towards. It's not expensive, you can have a drink, and everyone's welcome. On the surface, that seems a little bit reductive and simplistic, but what I'm trying to say is that it's deliberately so."

With tickets priced under £20 and an audience chomping at the bit... "We literally open the doors and they pile onto the dance floor and make the most of the five hours they've got. They dance like mad," O'Hara says – the demand for the monthly afternoon event has been insatiable. So much so that the brand recently partnered with UK agency Coalition Presents to take it further.

"We've managed to create a safe environment for you to meet your friends, have a dance, but you're not in a taxi rank at midnight. You can get on public transport and be back at the house for nine o'clock. What we've ended up doing is creating a real sense of community as well," O'Hara says.

That community is not exclusive to an older demographic, with O'Hara pointing out that the crowd's age demographic has widened beyond the over-30 crowd pinpointed in the beginning.

"There are certainly people who are working in their 20s who also don't want to be out until 4am. Because it's become so communal and safe, it's attractive to people of all ages," he says.

In turn, roughly 80% of the Day Fever audience is women, which Jon McClure points out is multigenerational.

"We've got mothers, grandmothers, and daughters. One woman said to me, 'It used to be that I only saw my friends at weddings once every two years. Now, I go to Day Fever once a month, and I buy a new ▶

"CLUBS DOUBLE THEIR TAKINGS – IT'S BEEN A GAME-CHANGER FOR A LOT OF PLACES"

Vicky McClure | Day Fever



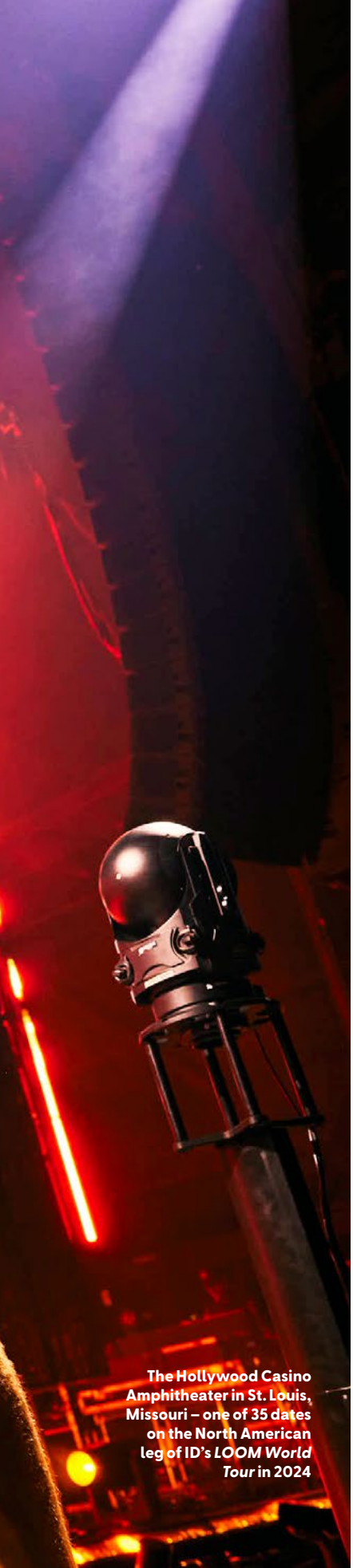
What started as a BBC Radio slot has evolved into a well-loved daytime disco © Guilty Pleasures

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THE YEAR OF THE DRAGONS



Having worked tirelessly since exploding into global consciousness in 2012, Imagine Dragons are now in that rare echelon of acts that can sell out stadium shows internationally. **James Hanley** talks to some of the professionals who are helping them do exactly that on their current *Loom* tour.



The Hollywood Casino Amphitheater in St. Louis, Missouri – one of 35 dates on the North American leg of ID's *LOOM World Tour* in 2024

With an ever-expanding playlist of towering anthems and ferocious beats, Imagine Dragons (ID) demand to be heard – and the world is listening. More than 1.5m fans in Europe alone packed into stadiums for their *Loom World Tour* this summer, underlining the Las Vegas rockers' status as one of the 21st century's biggest and most beloved bands.

That level of adoration is the culmination of years of meticulous planning, relentless touring, and unwavering dedication to their craft, without skipping a single step enroute.

"They have put the groundwork into touring the whole of Europe for the last 12 years," explains agent James Whitting, who represents the group worldwide with Wasserman Music colleague Corrie Martin. "The band have played over 250 shows and have gone deep into some of the countries we played many times. Not just playing the capital cities every time but building the whole region."

Origins

First setting foot on the grandest stages on their 2017–19 *Evolve Word Tour*, ID went a stage further for 2022–23's *Mercury* trek before turning it up to 11 for the 2024–25 *Loom* stretch.

"We planned to get to the point of being able to do a full European stadium run over the previous two tours by using greenfield sites and festivals as the steppingstone to get there in the markets where we were not already at stadiums," Whitting tells *IQ*. "They are relatively underplayed in Europe for the demand we see for them."

Whitting, who has worked with the band since 2012, describes the 90-date *Loom* outing, which has taken in North America, Europe, and Asia prior to its conclusion in South America at the end of October, as "the logical next step."

"The sales have been phenomenal, breaking some attendance records along the way, and seeing the demand is there for more is truly exciting and testament to the hard work everyone involved puts in," he continues. "It's gone incredibly well and has exceeded expectations."

Europe has proved an especially happy hunting ground for the Sin City trio in 2025. The outfit's 29 sold-out European shows represented the culmination of their irrepressible rise on the continent since their first London gig at Dingwalls 13 years ago.

"It's the core job of a promoter to work with an act and help develop them to the highest level they can achieve – and every one of our European promoters has believed in and championed this band, contributing to their growth," says Shane Bourbonnais, SVP of global touring for Live Nation, which promoted the lion's share of the *Loom* excursion. "It's taken collaboration and great local relationships to build this success story across the continent, but from day one of working with this band, we knew how hard working they were. They hold nothing back on stage, night after night, and it's a pleasure to watch and be a part of, and it's why over 1.5m fans in Europe have seen them on this stadium tour."

Evolve

Staged in support of Imagine Dragons' sixth studio album *Loom*, the European stint kicked off in Italy, where in excess of 200,000 tickets were sold across four shows in three cities. The tour opened in Milan on 27 May, drawing 76,000 fans to Ippodromo La Maura – a venue record – ahead of stops in Padua and Naples the following month.

Live Nation Italy general manager Corrado Rizzotto reports that ID have maintained a "strong bond" with the country since the start.

"Their credibility is not only down to their rock-band attitude and songwriting skills but also their kindness and professionalism," he says. "We knew they'd cracked the market in 2018 when 61,000 fans came to see them at Milan's Expo Arena. But 2025 marks a new level – four shows, three venues, more than 200,000 tickets sold, and a record-breaking 76,000 fans at Ippodromo La Maura.

"Fans of all ages from all over the world, going wild – that's what defines their success. We've always had a great relationship with their team and love having them tour here."

It was a similar story in France, where the trio played four sold-out stadium dates, including tw nights at Stade de France in Paris.

"Imagine Dragons' first show in Franc sold-out Divan du Monde in 2012 to s and every show since then has sold Olympia, Zenith, Accor Arena, L Chambord Castle, Lollapalo four sold-out stadiums a says Damien Chamard for Live Nation Fra

"They've alw French fans.

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METROPOLITAN MILESTONE

From modest beginnings, Metropolis Music has become one of the UK's foremost concert promoters, with a roster of acts that includes some of the biggest names on the planet – Björk, Blur, Coldplay, Eminem, Foo Fighters, Nine Inch Nails, Placebo, Raye, Robbie Williams, Teddy Swims, and Tyler, The Creator. As the company celebrates its 40th birthday, **Gordon Masson** learns about its storied history, on the back of yet another record-breaking year.

Studying for a degree in chemical physics doesn't sound like the ideal path to becoming one of the world's pioneering promoters, but for Bob Angus that's precisely the higher education route that set him on the road to founding Metropolis Music, which for the past 40 years has been helping artists and bands take their music to millions of fans.

Angus enrolled on a scientific course at the University of Surrey, and like so many of his peers was duly enticed to the students' union, where he quickly became the institution's social secretary, responsible for booking acts to entertain those on the campus, and providing a good training ground



METROPOLIS MUSIC STAFF ROSTER
Celia Adesina, Claire Ainscough, Rosa Roxo, Dan Roberts, Daphne Cantenot, Raye Cosbert, Alex Ampofo, Bob Angus, Sophie Pitchforth, Andy Robbins, Barbara Broggini, Ben Winter, Petra Smith, Oliver Brown

in the workings of the live music industry in the early 1980s, as he booked the likes of Wreckless Eric, John Martyn, The Vapours, and U.K. Subs to fill the 800-capacity venue.

Leaving university slightly disillusioned by his degree, he followed his brother into computer programming, where he lasted a year before live music irrevocably lured him back. "I've worked with a few other people, and I just felt I could do better, so that was the catalyst for creating Metropolis," Angus tells *IQ*. "I just saw other people doing strange things, and they didn't seem to actually understand things like VAT. So, I just decided to go out on my own."

As a result, Angus borrowed some money from his brother and applied for a Manpower Services Grant (a 1980s government initiative that provided start-up businesses with £40 per week for the first year). Then, basing himself in the living room of his mother's home, Metropolis Music was born.

Despite finances restricting Metropolis to a workforce of one, Angus got off to a decent start using The Clarendon in Hammersmith to host shows with Doctor and the Medics, The Godfathers, and The Pogues, with special guest Elvis Costello for his initial solo concerts. "It wasn't a bad way to get things underway," he notes. "I already knew some agents through my work as a social secretary, so I was able to tap into them to organise gigs that were maybe 600- or 700-cap."

That early success was gratifying, "But I was flying by the seat of my pants, to be totally honest, so it took a few years to really establish Metropolis. And that's when I was able to take on some staff and start getting some proper help."

Employee number one was Paul Hutton. "I worked very closely with the University of London students' union, where Paul was based, and we got on really well, so I asked if he'd be interested in working with me. From that point, we started bringing more people into the company, and we moved into offices on the Holloway Road. And that's when the volume of shows really started to go up. I remember doing Siouxsie Sioux, Pop Will Eat Itself, The Wonder Stuff and acts like that. They were mostly London shows, and we were always quite good at spotting new talent to work with, but when we first started doing national touring, we linked up quite a lot with Phil McIntyre, which was great, because the stability of having someone else who was more established in the touring market was really helpful."

Indeed, notable early successes for Metropolis included the company's first arena gig, when in 1988, Angus took The Mission to Wembley Arena. The company then made history by becoming the first UK promoter to take a rap act to an arena, courtesy of Public Enemy at London Docklands Arena in November 1990.

An independent landscape

With the 90s UK live music scene populated with independent outfits such as Metropolis, MCP, Dance Factory, and SJM, across the Irish sea, similar indie powerhouses included Aiken Promotions and MCD Productions. That network of promoters would get to know each other well through their co-promotion of tours, while many also joined Angus for early work on the Concert Promoters Association. "Everyone knows it's a difficult job, so I think we had more empathy for each other than anything else," observes Angus.

One company in particular he struck a bond with was Simon Moran's SJM. "A lot of the acts we worked with, Simon would do the gigs in the north, and we'd do the south. The agents – people like Jeff Craft, Ian Huffam, and Steve Strange, trusted us to get it right, so we did a lot of co-promoting with SJM – and we still do, to this day."

Indeed, one of the most noteworthy acts the companies have enjoyed working with is Robbi Williams, who originally landed at Metro through a coincidental connection with c managing director Raye Cosbert. "Raye was working at EMI, and when Rob That in 1995 and he was looking moters who were more rock ended up coming to us, be indie bands at the time

But it was far fr played a lot of ba Robbie to sta

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Stageco's circular stage design helped rapper Jul break records in his native France, including his show at Stade Velodrome in Marseille © Nicolas Chavance

SOLDIERS OF STEEL

Lisa Henderson dons a hard hat and high-vis vest in order to speak to some of the hardy individuals who provide stage infrastructure and scenery for the concerts and festivals we organise – come hell, high water, or mud – about the challenges facing the sector... and the successes.

On 16 July 2025, Stageco Belgium COO Wouter Van Mierloo received a call: the stage his company had supplied to Tomorrowland was on fire. With just days until the electronic music festival was due to kick off, the future of the 2025 edition was suddenly in jeopardy.

Acting swiftly, Stageco joined forces with other vendors and Tomorrowland's creative team to build a brand-new stage, pulling in staff and resources from across the region.

In just 36 hours, the team completed a 300 x 30ft replacement for the Orbyz stage – making what seemed impossible, possible – and allowing the 70,000-capacity event, which takes place in Boom, Belgium, to proceed as planned.

"We have a lot of people who are used to act ing in difficult situations," Van Mierloo told "That's the world we work and live in. It chaotic sector, and Stageco is tryi some efficiency in this chaos – tha worked for 40 years."

The emergency response traordinary, but for sea sionals, the flexibility tiveproblem-solvin honed further d one of the bu

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LIVING AFTER MIDNIGHT

Forging onwards and winning untold legions of black-clad devotees, even as the godfathers of the genre exit the stage, 2025 is an impossibly exciting time in the world of live metal. **Sam Law** catches up with the industry's heaviest hitters to hear how sounds from the lunatic fringe continue to drive a global phenomenon...

Whether standing proud as wrought iron or shape-shifting like quicksilver through impassable dead ends, heavy metal is music built to endure. Curtains dropped symbolically this July with the farewell celebration for genre forefathers Black Sabbath in Birmingham, UK, and, 17 days later, the passing of their iconic frontman Ozzy Osbourne, but *Back To The Beginning* was less heavy requiem than part of a rampant reinvigoration. As the generation of artists Ozzy helped springboard with his Ozzfest roadshows surge to unheralded heights and a new breed of superstars gets kids pulling on their black t-shirts, the future looks bright for the dark side of rock.

"Metal and hard rock are bigger than ever," says Kamran Haq, senior vice president of UK touring at Live Nation and new head promoter at Download Festival, which marked a massively successful 2025 edition with 75,000 fans and three brand-new headliners in Green Day, Sleep Token, and Korn. "Back in the early 2000s, commentators predicted that the genre was at its peak. But some of the biggest bands of that era, like Limp Bizkit or Slipknot, are far bigger now – 20 years down the line."

True to that, a resurgent Linkin Park shifted 70,000 tickets for Wembley Stadium in under a day last year. System Of A Down sold over 500,000 tickets at nine stadium shows in South America in early 2025 before adding massive two-night residencies in Chicago, New York, and Toronto. Deftones have left behind their academy venues of the early 2010s, selling-out 25,000 tickets for London's Crystal Palace Park in under 24 hours, with 2026's six-date UK arena tour quickly going the same way. Most re-



Dragged Into Sunlight performed at this year's Damnation Festival, held in Manchester's BEC Arena
© Em Coulter Photography

markably, Papa Roach have gone from the 2,300-cap Kentish Town Forum in 2019 to 12,500 at Wembley Arena in February and headlining to 110,000 at August's Wacken Open Air.

Beyond nu-metal, old favourites and rising stars are burning bright. On the same weekend as Linkin Park and Deftones, Iron Maiden played their biggest-ever non-festival UK show to 73,000 at West Ham's London Stadium, capping off a 32-date 50th anniversary run that saw more than 1m tickets sold. Ghost continue from strength to strength, sold out around the globe. Bad Omens have skyrocketed, stepping from Manchester's 1,500-cap Ritz to the cavernous 17,500-cap Co-op Live in just over two years. And London's 10,250-cap Alexandra Palace is set for mosh mayhem, with tickets snapped up in a frenzied flash for Turnstile and Electric Callboy.

"It's a generational thing now," Haq explains. "You've got 12- to 16-year-old kids discovering new music on TikTok. Then you've got parents – sometimes even grandparents – bringing their kids to festivals like Download. Metal is a genre people grow up with, then they pass their knowledge and taste to the next generation. Download will always book an Iron Maiden or a Metallica, but we've consciously shifted away from the Monsters of Rock-style bookings like Aerosmith and KISS in favour of younger acts such as Sleep Token and Bring Me The Horizon. In 2025, we had 44% new ticket-buyers – people who'd never been to Download before – and sales for 2026 are up 50% year on year. We've sold 30,000 tickets without announcing a single band. That's something that we've never seen before. It's phenomenal. Metalheads want to be entertained!"

HEAVEN & HELL

But as happy to lay down their souls before the gods of rock & roll as the average metal fan may be, it hasn't made the genre impervious to the socio-economic challenges impacting the broader live sector.

Touring costs continue to spiral. Logistical expenditure for festivals has spiked 40–50% in the space of a year. Increased reliance on live income has squeezed a relatively niche fanbase, too, with the runaway success of large-scale events leaving shows in the under-3,000-cap bracket eating dust, deprioritised by cash-strapped punters, many of whom won't bite until the week of the show.

"The cost of living continues to rise, but fans don't have more money in their pockets," nods Fabian Umiker of Switzerland's Mainland Music. "It's a problem for everyone. You can't raise ticket prices, so you can't offer higher fees and end up sending out offers that require oversells to break even."

Political instability has hamstrung matters as well. Ramifications from Brexit continue to impact acts from the evergreen UK scene. Tightening borders and a 14% decline in international visitors have been felt in the United States. Traditionally robust overseas metal markets like Russia, Ukraine, and Israel have effectively been taken off the board due to the spread of armed conflict.

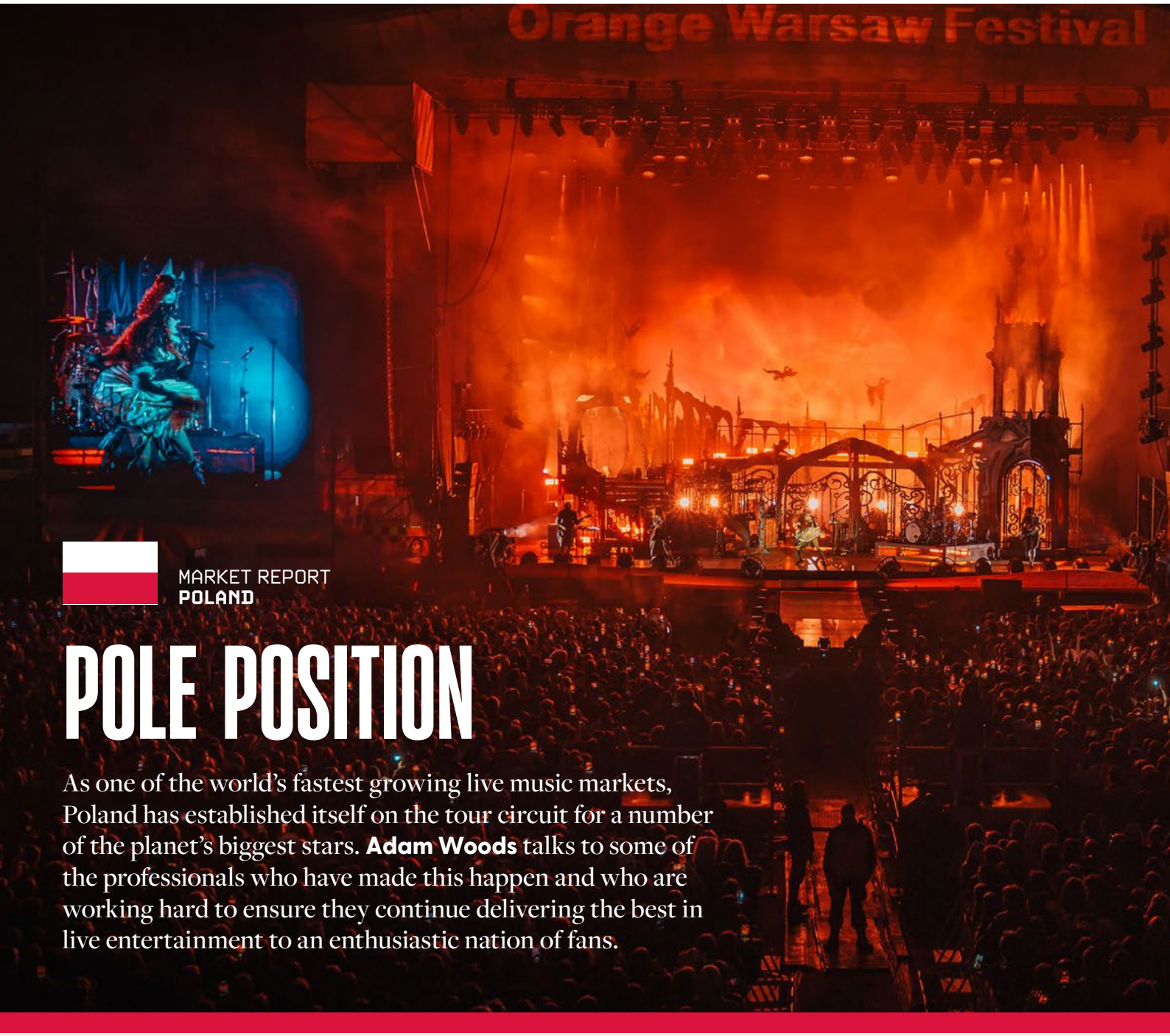
Where major players like Las Vegas's 60,000-cap Sick New World Festival and Slovenia's 25,000-cap MetalDays have closed shop, though, other events have gone from strength to strength.

There has been a resurgence in smaller-scale festivals in the US. For example, Wisconsin's Milwaukee Metal Fest and the Texan Hell's Heroes gathering emulating the success of the revered Maryland Deathfest. Stateside titans Danny Wimmer Presents will welcome over 1m fans across six festivals in 2025, thanks to headliners as varied as Slayer, Shinedown, and blink-182.

"We just hosted a record-breaking 230,00 fans, reaffirming our place as North America's l est rock festival," says Danny Wimmer, w brated a world-beating Welcome To R the Daytona International Speedwa do it in my home state of Florida artist give it their all – created perience for the 'Rockvilli

Vicky Hungerford, d dedicated metal fe (22,000 cap), str presents as m

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MARKET REPORT
POLAND

POLE POSITION

As one of the world's fastest growing live music markets, Poland has established itself on the tour circuit for a number of the planet's biggest stars. **Adam Woods** talks to some of the professionals who have made this happen and who are working hard to ensure they continue delivering the best in live entertainment to an enthusiastic nation of fans.

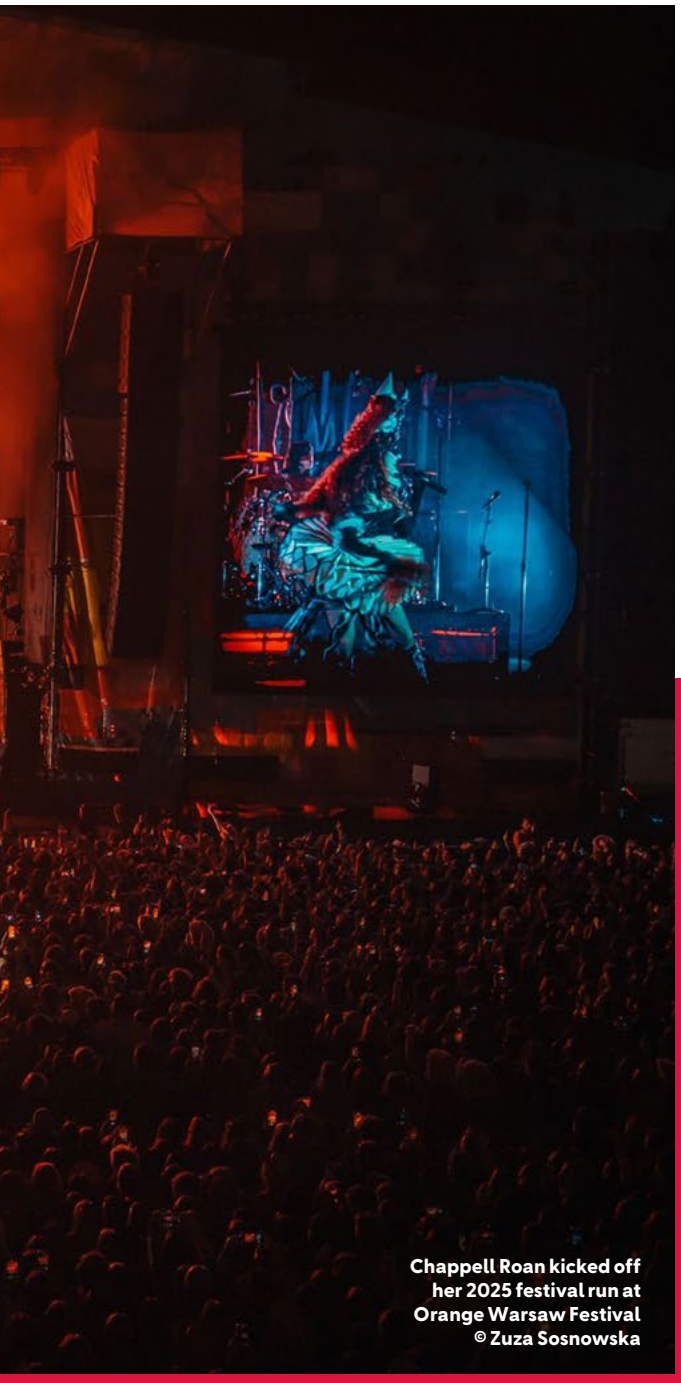
Poland is big – the fifth largest country in the EU by both population (about 38m) and land area (312,679 km2). What's more, that ranking is comfortably reflected these days in the country's status as a live music market.

"Poland is one of the top markets in Europe," says Mikołaj Ziółkowski, CEO of independent Polish promoter Alter Art. "It's still growing, but it's already very strong. The number of tickets sold for 2025, I believe, will be a record again."

Quietly – or perhaps not that quietly at all – Poland has entered the top rank of European live destinations. When Taylor Swift's *Eras Tour* came to Europe last year and didn't make it to Copenhagen, Oslo, Belfast, Athens, Istanbul, or Budapest, she played three nights at Warsaw's PGE Narodowy stadium, moving 195,000 tickets. Metallica, likewise, gave Warsaw two out of their 14 European dates in 2024.

This summer, Justin Timberlake, AC/DC, Guns N' Roses, Imagine Dragons, Iron Maiden, Kendrick and SZA, and Belarusian rapper Max Korzh all put in a night at the national stadium, and Polish star Sanah made it two. That's to say nothing of the busy arenas, the proliferating festivals, the numerous music cities. Poland, quite clearly, is a country that sells tickets.

"For many [acts], this is a very, very important market," says Ziółkowski. "Sometimes we've got stadium shows in Poland that are not going to Scandinavia at all, or we've got multiple stadium or arena dates. You've got top lineups at the festivals. Any regular tour that spends three or four weeks in Eu-



Chappell Roan kicked off her 2025 festival run at Orange Warsaw Festival © Zuza Sosnowska

rope, Poland is always there."

But given the serious festivals and the prestigious tours that now routinely make Poland their easternmost European stop, it is worth noting just how far the market has come in a relatively short time.

Reporting on Poland as one of the more promising markets on a slightly tentative Central European touring route in 2010, *IQ* found bruised promoters who complained of unrealistic artist fees and rued the dramatic disappointments of too many collapsing and loss-making shows.

"In many, many cases, it is a case of the guy on the ground losing a lot of money and then begging, borrowing, running away, or bankrupting to get around it," said one long-suffering promoter back then, of the wider region.

Fees, as any promoter will tell you, are now higher than ever, and collapses still sometimes happen, too – most notably thrusting indie Follow The Step's unfortunate unravelling in 2023. But in most other respects, Poland has solidly arrived at a place that, just 15 years ago, it was hard to picture it ever reaching.

"Poland has finally appeared on major artists' radar," says Weronika Tomkowska, who heads Charm Music's Polish office. "We see more and more established acts adding Poland to their headline routings, not only festivals. We can see more and more moves from promoters coming from Ukraine or Belarus, who are now promoting international acts, and not just focusing on diasporas. Poland has grown to be a quite significant market, attracting audiences from outside our borders. We've become a destination for many fans traveling to shows abroad."

As ever, the secret of the market's growth is all there in the numbers. Polish GDP per capita rose from $2,235 in 1991 to $12,567 in 2010 to $25,022 in 2024 [source: World Bank] – the highest rate of growth in Central Europe and one of the fastest in the world.

In September, PM Donald Tusk announced that Poland has joined the exclusive group of 20 nations with trillion-dollar economies, and in the past couple of decades that steadily growing prosperity has manifested itself in numerous ways, from consumer spending to venues.

"I have been working as an artist in Poland for 30 years," says Artur Rojek, former guitarist and lead singer of the Polish alternative rock group Myslovitz, now a solo artist and the co-founder of Katowice's OFF Festival. "I remember what this country looked like in the 1990s."

In addition to rising and evolving demand, says Rojek, who played 50 shows this year in his home country, there has been much meaningful investment. "The infrastructure in Poland has seen a complete transformation in the last 20 years," he adds. "There are many new places with a very unique character, such as the beautiful Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra venue in Katowice or the National Music Forum in Wrocław, with a capacity of up to 2,000.

"Each larger city has either a hall with a capacity of 12,000–15,000 or a stadium with a capacity from 40,000, up to 85,000 in Chorzów," he adds, referring to the Stadion Śląski.

While Warsaw is clearly the focus and the main destination for those coming to Poland, other big cities represent a significant draw for local, regional, and international artists, including Kraków and Katowice in the south, Łódź in the centre, Poznań further west, and Gdańsk on the Baltic coast.

The lack of a 20,000-cap arena in Warsaw, much lamented by ambitious promoters, inevitably contributes to steering tourers in the direction of arenas elsewhere in Poland – though plans are afoot to address that situation, with a €350m project under consideration on the east bank of the River Vistula.

Even Poland's tense location on the doorstep of Russia and Ukraine is, if only in one respect, an advantage of a kind.

"Before, most tours went to Germany and Czechia, then Ukraine and Russia, and then to the Baltics," Good Taste Productions' Sara Kordek told *IQ* last year. "And now, suddenly, artists that didn't inten
to stop in Poland have to cross
land, and when you have 8
metres to cross, it's actua
able to give it a try.
stop by and it work

So, where ne
growth in
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> **"The infrastructure in Poland has seen a complete transformation in the last 20 years"**
>
> **Artur Rojek** | OFF Festival

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YOUR SHOUT

What is the most unusual item that has ended up in lost and found at your events?

TOP SHOUT

At the Festival Hall in Melbourne, we've collected 115 single shoes, false teeth, and a detailed letter from a fan describing them "breaking into the artist's bedroom and vacuuming around him whilst he slept." (Yes, this was passed on to their tour security.) Meanwhile, at the Spark Arena in Auckland, the oddest item we've had cloaked was a white rabbit in a carry backpack. He was very well looked after by the security team. But a Piñata caused quite the debate amongst the team...

Iliana Perisanidis | Live Nation





Someone brought along the side panel of a car in the hope the Rolling Stones would sign it for them: they did not. And we also had a fan who made a load of cushions depicting images of Celine Dion, her husband, René, and their dog. Those cushions can still be found in certain offices at The O2...

Christian D'Acuña | The O2 London

Post Liam Gallagher gig to 20,000 people in a field, we had one customer who contacted the lost property department several times looking for a lost false tooth...

Dino Cafolla | Belsonic

After one particularly emotional concert, we found a notebook backstage. It turned out to be a love letter written by a fan, page after page filled with heartfelt words, drawings, and memories addressed to the artist. The artist had taken the time to read it after the show but somehow forgot to take it with them. A few days later, their team reached out to us asking if we had it. They didn't want the notebook back but asked if we could send them photos of every page, they were deeply moved by the fan's words.

To this day, we've kept that notebook safely stored in our office. It's become a little reminder of the powerful, often invisible connection between artists and their audiences, a symbol of how live music can spark real, raw emotion in the most unexpected ways.

Burak Çekiç | Blind Istanbul

A set of false teeth.

David Lamont | SSE Arena Belfast

Mallets and an engagement ring

Matej Chudic | Grape Festival

We had a rubber dingh
Royale gig, which w

John Drury | OVG

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